

## PRincipal Tips

- ✓ **Talk to a local seniors group** to ask about becoming pen-pals with some of your students. Such programs help seniors better understand your students and your school, and writing and reading the exchanges can be a good education for your students. Know some tech-savvy seniors? Ask them about becoming e-mail pals with your students.
- ✓ **Devote a section of your school newsletter** or a portion of a parent meeting to encourage parents to ask their children what was the best thing that happened in school today. Ask your teachers to end their class day with the same kind of discussion as well. The move will help students, parents and teachers to take a minute and reflect on the important accomplishments of the day.

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## Keeping That Home-School Connection As The Year Winds Down

A crucial time to take stock of how well your school communications are working comes every year at this time — as one school year winds down and the time to start planning for next year arrives. A number of activities can help you, your students and your staff successfully complete the current year while preparing for next fall.

Consider adapting some of these ideas to help you and your teachers end the year right and pave the way for a smooth school opening after the summer.

*Create materials to go home to parents with suggestions on how vacations can include learning activities.*

- Talk to students about the things they wished they had known before the current school year began. Use their insights to revise opening exercises and bulletins in the new school year. Do the same with parents. Use these comments to help you decide on what kinds of information to include in back-to-school materials, in your school newsletter and on your web site.
- Ask students to think about the coming school year and have them write a note to the student who will be sitting at their desk next year. Use their notes and thoughts as part of opening of school or class exercises in the new year.
- Talk to parents and teachers about what students will be doing during the summer and how the school and its teachers might help channel their activities so they'll continue their learning adventures over the break. Create lists of nearby muse-

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ums, monuments, libraries and other learning spots that can be good places to visit on a summer day.

- Compile a roster of appropriate learning web sites that parents can direct children to during the summer. Pass out blank calendars for the summer and ask students to plan a learning event for each week.

- Don't forget TV. Suggest ways of using television programs and movies in writing lessons,

and encourage parents to create related activities involving art, music or drama.

- Also create materials to go home to parents with suggestions on how vacations can include learning activities. Include ideas on how simple summer chores, like cooking and shopping, can be designed to include reading, math and writing activities as well.

Source: NSPRA  
Resource Files

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*Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.*

— John F. Kennedy

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## BEST PRACTICES

### Planning Now Assures A Great New Year

Everyone involved with your school can get involved in activities to keep students learning and home-school relationships budding over the summer (see main story). Principals too need to get ready for the new year before the summer slips away. Some communication ideas to consider for your to-do list for the summer months:

- Visit the homes of new students during the summer to introduce yourself, welcome students to your school family and simply say “hello.” Use discussions to learn more about your new students and their parents — their personal interests as well as their expectations about your schools. A brief introductory visit can make a big difference to anxious children and their worried parents.
- Can't visit? Then call or write. Make personal phone calls or write brief, handwritten notes to your new students. Introduce yourself. Tell them how thrilled you are that they'll be coming to your school. Such personal contacts help all new families to your school feel welcome well before they even arrive.
- Do you have a mentoring program pairing younger and older students? If so, ask the volunteers to contact their students before the new year begins by writing a brief note or making a phone call. This contact too can help ease the anxiety of incoming students and get the program off to a quick start.

Source: NSPRA Resource Files

Welcome back! The new school year is upon us... Are you ready for the challenges that lie ahead? Take time this month to finalize all your plans for the year. And as always, be prepared, but also be flexible as you may need to alter these plans throughout the year.

# AUGUST 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
<p>WELCOME BACK! HAVE A GREAT NEW YEAR!</p>		<p>Meet with staff to set priorities on communication.</p>	<p>The dream begins, most of the time, with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you on to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth. — Dan Rather</p>			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		<p>Finalize PR and communication plans for the upcoming school year.</p>		<p>SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE FOUNDED (1884)</p>	<p>Walk your campus and identify any safety issues.</p>	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	<p>Meet with parents and community leaders to discuss your PR plan for the year.</p>			<p>Consider giving all students a pencil with the school's name on it. #2 PENCIL DAY</p>	<p>Knowledge is power. — Francis Bacon</p>	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<p>Knowledge — that is, education in its truest sense — is our best protection against unreasoning prejudice, and panic-making fear. — Franklin D. Roosevelt</p>					<p>Host luncheon for influential women in the community, students and media.</p>	<p>WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY</p>
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
	<p>MARTIN LUTHER KING'S "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH (1963)</p>	<p>Good schools, like good societies and good families, celebrate and cherish diversity. — Deborah Meier</p>		<p>Do something special for your new parents and students.</p>		

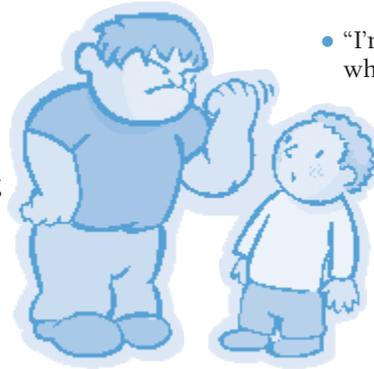
# TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS

## principal communicator

### Warning Signs that a Child is Being Bullied

#### What is bullying?

Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take many forms, such as hitting and/or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation using gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by phone or computer e-mail (cyber-bullying). Many children, particularly boys and older children, do not tell their parents or adults at school about being bullied. It is important that adults are vigilant to possible signs of bullying.



- “I’m worried about you. Are there any kids at school who may be picking on you, teasing you or bullying you?”
- “Are there any kids at school who leave you out or exclude you on purpose?”

#### Some subtle questions:

- “Do you have any special friends at school this year? Who are they?”
- “Who do you sit with at lunch and on the bus?”
- “Are there any kids at school who you really don’t like? Why don’t you like them?”

#### Warning signs

Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- Comes home with torn, damaged or missing belongings;
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises and scratches;
- Has few, if any, friends with whom he or she spends time;
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus or taking part in organized activities with peers (such as clubs);
- Takes a long, “illogical” route when walking to or from school;
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school;
- Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed when he or she comes home;
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments;
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams;
- Experiences a loss of appetite; or
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem.

#### What to do if you suspect that your child is being bullied?

If your child shows any of these signs, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is being bullied, but it is a possibility worth exploring. What should you do? Talk with your child and talk with staff at school to learn more.

1. **Talk with your child.** Tell your child that you are concerned and that you’d like to help. Here are some questions that can get the discussion going... Some direct questions:

2. **Talk with staff at your child’s school.** Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child’s teacher. He or she will probably be in the best position to understand the relationships between your child and other peers. Share your concerns about your child and ask the teacher such questions as:

- “How does my child get along with other students in his or her class?”
- “With whom does he or she spend free time?”
- “Have you noticed or have you ever suspected that my child is bullied by other students?” Give examples of some ways that children can be bullied to be sure that the teacher is not focusing only on one kind of bullying (such as physical bullying).

Ask the teacher to talk with other adults who interact with your child at school (such as the music teacher, physical education teacher or bus driver) to see whether they have observed students bullying your child.

If you are not comfortable talking with your child’s teacher, or if you are not satisfied with the conversation, make an appointment to meet with your child’s guidance counselor or principal to discuss your concerns. If you obtain information from your child or from staff at your child’s school that leads you to believe that he or she is being bullied, take quick action. If, after talking with your child and staff at his or her school, you don’t suspect that your child is being bullied, stay vigilant to other possible problems that your child may be having. Some of the warning signs above may be signs of other serious problems. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child’s school.

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Source: Stop Bullying Now; [stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

## PRincipals' Point of View

PRincipals' Point of View lets you hear from principals around the country on a variety of communication topics. If you like their ideas and want to find out more, we've included an e-mail address to connect you with them directly.

**This month's question:** What is the best advice you can give a new principal?



**Tracy Vitale** ([vitalet@svsd.net](mailto:vitalet@svsd.net))  
Seneca Valley Middle School — Harmony, PA

Use multiple forms of communication — write letters, post on web site, hold parent informational meetings, advertise on school district television station (if district has one). But most importantly, be visible and greet parents whenever you see them in your building.

**Gary Davison** ([GDavison@forsyth.k12.ga.us](mailto:GDavison@forsyth.k12.ga.us))  
Settles Bridge Elementary — Suwanee, GA



- Go to every community event you can, especially as a new principal. Listen and always give positive examples from your school.
- Get to know the community organizations in your area and work together with them for the children and families.
- Invite people to visit your school and provide a tour focusing on all the positive activities going on.
- Be positive and brag.
- The best advice I ever received is: When the press arrives to celebrate or showcase a success, be friendly, talk with them and build positive relations. Show your face, get your picture taken, etc.



**Scott Taylor** ([STaylor@lindberghschools.ws](mailto:STaylor@lindberghschools.ws))  
Crestwood Elementary School — St. Louis, MO

Keep communication flowing with: **Staff:** I write a weekly "Monday Memo" with important information for the staff. I usually email staff on a daily basis too.

**Parents:** I write a weekly *Monday Mailing* newsletter. I also call parents daily. **Students:** I start each day by sharing announcements with students. I also work hard to get to each classroom every day. This helps students see how much you care. **Others:** Keep your central office staff aware of exciting news from your school.

**We'd like to hear from you!** If you would like to respond to a future question, or have a question that you would like answered, contact us at [editorial@nspra.org](mailto:editorial@nspra.org).

## GETTING ENGAGED

### Be A Good Neighbor And Build Goodwill

You might be able to solve two challenges at once by asking the neighborhood around your school to help in preventing vandalism. Strong neighborhood partnerships can result — while vandalism rates go down.

Some ideas for getting started:

- Know the kinds of problems you've seen in the past, or are concerned about seeing, so you're prepared to talk to neighbors about what needs to be done. Be sure to coordinate your findings and plans with school security personnel or local law-enforcement officials serving your school.
- Establish a neighborhood advisory committee to assist in developing plans and programs to reduce and eliminate the problem. Invite nearby business owners who may have suffered from vandalism to participate.
- Tie into existing neighborhood watch programs or be the catalyst for helping the neighborhood begin one.
- Sponsor an anonymous hot line where students, staff and community can report actual incidents, rumored incidents or suspicious activity.
- Develop materials and messages to help parents talk with children about the effects and costs of vandalism.

Source: NSPRA Resource Files

## Quotable

A great quote can say it all. Consider these for your daily bulletins, newsletters and web sites. Have one you want to share with your peers? Send it to [editorial@nspra.org](mailto:editorial@nspra.org).

One never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done.

— Marie Curie

The longer the excuse, the less likely it's the truth.

— Robert Half

A man's interest in the world is only an overflow from his interest in himself.

— George Bernard Shaw

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.

— Mark Twain

If you don't make mistakes, you aren't really trying.

— Coleman Hawking

To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance.

— Buddha

Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you. Most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted.

— Aldous Huxley

There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still.

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

## GETTING ENGAGED

### Watch Those Negatives

Sometimes innocent comments can take on negative connotations when people speak before considering the impact of their words. School staff dealing with the public should look for positive ways to communicate basic information. Some examples:

#### Instead of saying:

"We can't supply those records until you sign a release form."

#### Try saying:

"We'll be happy to supply that information as soon as we have a signed release form."

#### Instead of saying:

"The school office closes at 4 o'clock."

#### Try saying:

"The school office is open until 4 o'clock."

### Media Quick Tips

Handling media requests depends on carefully listening to their questions and avoiding some common pitfalls when it comes to question-and-answer sessions. Some quick tips:

- If the reporter repeats a question, repeat your answer. Don't fall into the trap of giving a different answer to the same question.
- Rephrase long or loaded questions to help mold your answer.
- Avoid falling into the trap of answering "what if" or hypothetical questions. Stick to what is real and known.
- If you can't answer a question because of legal issues or it asks about issues outside of your area, you can still be helpful. How? Link your response to a related topic you can discuss. Example: "I can't talk to you about the specifics of that case, but I can tell you that our discipline policy is very specific about the rights of students."