



# Messages That Motivate

Reaching and  
engaging parents  
**WITHOUT**  
overwhelming  
them

ParentPowered

# Welcome!

## Meet Your Presenters

**Empower Families with  
Actionable Early  
Learning Insights**



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Chief Curriculum &  
Content Officer



**Mary Westervelt**

Director of  
Marketing & Communications

Strength based, accessible, inclusive communication is a critical ingredient when building trust. **Trust** is THE cornerstone of family-school partnership.





# GOALS

1. Manageable Messages
2. Motivating Language
3. Maximizing Access
4. Using Your Canvas
5. Get Read

# If You Remember ONE Thing

Always consider who's doing the  
communicating.

Whenever possible, start where there  
is already trust in place.



- Home Visits
- Family Liaisons
- Community Based Organizations
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Early Childhood Centers
- Festivals and Cultural Events
- Playgrounds
- Meet-and-Greets
- Tours (in person or virtual)
- Community Workshops



# Tip 1:

**Always consider who's  
receiving the message.  
Picture families and reflect.**





# Questions for Reflection

- Is this accessible?
- Is this inclusive?
- Is it doable?
- Is it strength based?
- How does it feel?



# Tip 2:

*Clarity comes with a What, Why and How*

**What's** the  
thing?

**Why** is it  
important?

**How** can you  
act upon it?

# For example:

**[WHAT]** Ask your child questions about school.

**[WHY]** Asking questions builds your child's language skills and thinking skills. It lets them know you are interested in their experiences. And it gives you insights into their feelings about school.

**[HOW]** In the morning ask, "What's one thing you are looking forward to doing or learning at school today?"





## New Message



To Zev's Parents

Subject Math and Zev

Hi Jana,

Zev got 66% on their test. We just went over it and there were a lot of things that went well. On the division is where there were issues, mostly small mistakes. We are going to work on this after break during math club.

Hope you guys have a great week!

Send





## New Message

To Zev's parents

Subject **Supporting Zev**



Hi Jana, I'm reaching out because, Zev might need a pep talk about math. He struggled a bit on his math test this week and seemed upset about it. The better he feels about math the better he'll do in math! I'm hoping you can assure him there's no need to worry. Lots went well on the test. The mistakes were small. He just needs a bit more practice with division. There will be lots of time for that practice after break. If he mentions the test or seems worried, you can read him this note from me " I see how hard you work in Math, we'll work together after break to make sure division clicks. You've got this!!

Have so much fun over break! Ms C.

# Tip 3:

*Leveling counts!*

**Readability  
= Access**

**Cognition  
decreases  
under stress**

**Average reading  
level in the US is  
7th/8th grade**

# Quick Tips for Leveling

- Look for short sentences. Try for a period instead of a comma.
- Eliminate uncommon words/jargon
- Fewer syllables
- Fewer descriptors and more action



**Student Advisory Groups** ~ In keeping with our goal of increasing student voice in our District, I am launching Student Advisory Groups to the Superintendent. These groups, designed for high school, middle school, and upper elementary students, will serve as a platform for our students to actively participate in shaping the decisions and planning processes that impact their educational experiences. We believe that involving students in these critical discussions is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. To ensure that these advisory groups truly represent our diverse student body, I invited the faculty and staff to give input on student participation. I look forward to sharing their ideas and insights in the coming weeks and months ahead.

**Flesch Kincaid 13.3**



Our goal is to increase student voice! Hearing from students helps us create a school that's more inclusive and supportive.

That's why we are launching Student Advisory Groups.

### **What are Student Advisory Groups?**

These groups give students the chance to meet with the Superintendent every month. Students will share ideas and concerns. They'll join in discussions about school policies. They'll have the chance to help make decisions that affect their classes and the whole school.

### **Who can be a part of Student Advisory Groups?**

Students in 4th through 12th grade can join. Teachers are meeting right now to talk about ways to include as many students as possible!

We'll keep your student updated on how and when to sign up.

**5th Grade Reading Level**



**AFTER**

# Tip 3:

## *Adding Scaffolding*

- Scaffolding leads to strength based engagement.
- When asking families to do something it needs to be doable.
- Lack of do-ability can activate a stress response.
- Leads to families feeling, “I can’t do this. This is not for me”
- Scaffolding creates and supports the path to action.
- Scaffolding gives that “can do” feeling which leads to trust and partnership.



Hello it's MBE,  
Your child is marked as absent today. Please contact us as soon as possible to let us know the reason for your child's absence.

Subject: Absence



Hello it's Milton Brook Elementary.

Your child is marked as absent today. Please call 413-238-0967 as soon as possible. Leave us a message with your child's name and the reason for their absence.

Subject: Absence





**AFTER**

*With Scaffolding*

Hello it's Milton Brook Elementary.

Your child is marked as absent today. Please call 413-238-0967 as soon as possible. Leave us a message with your child's name and the reason for their absence.

We are here for you. If it ever becomes difficult to get your child to school please reach out. There may be ways we can help. Call 413-238-7789 and ask to speak with Will. If you need an interpreter let us know "I need a [Spanish] interpreter."



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# Reaching Families: Insights from Marketing

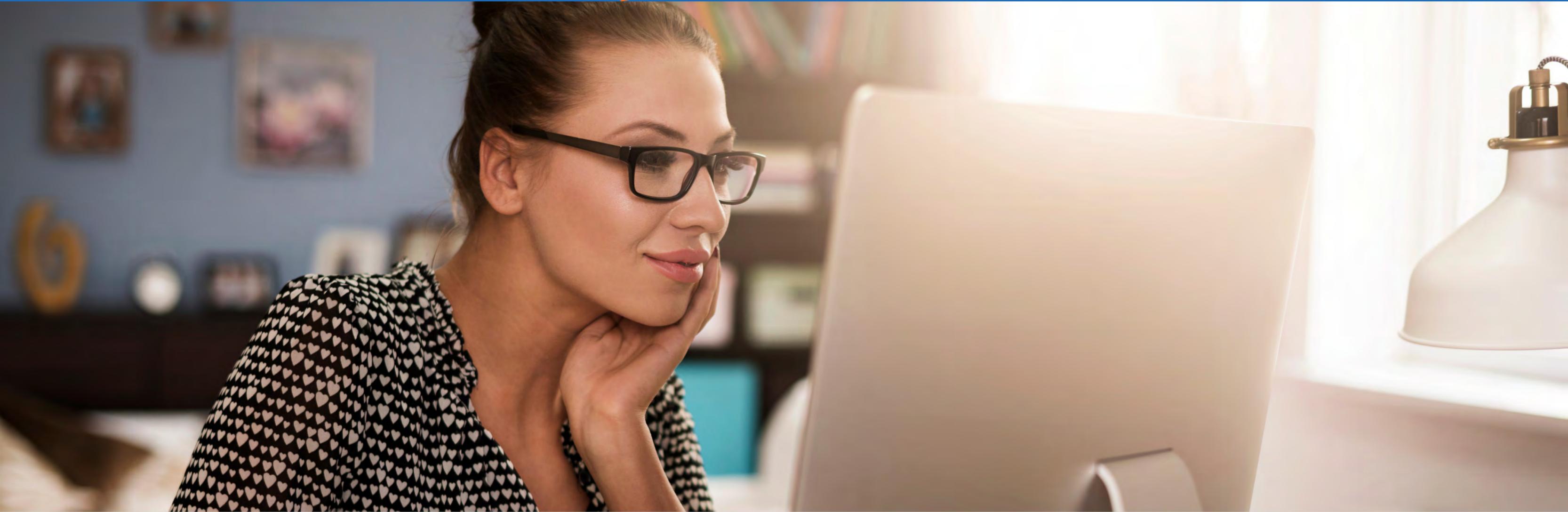
# Center the Reader



- What are they doing when your message arrives?
- What are their concerns?
- What would make them feel successful?

# Tip 5:

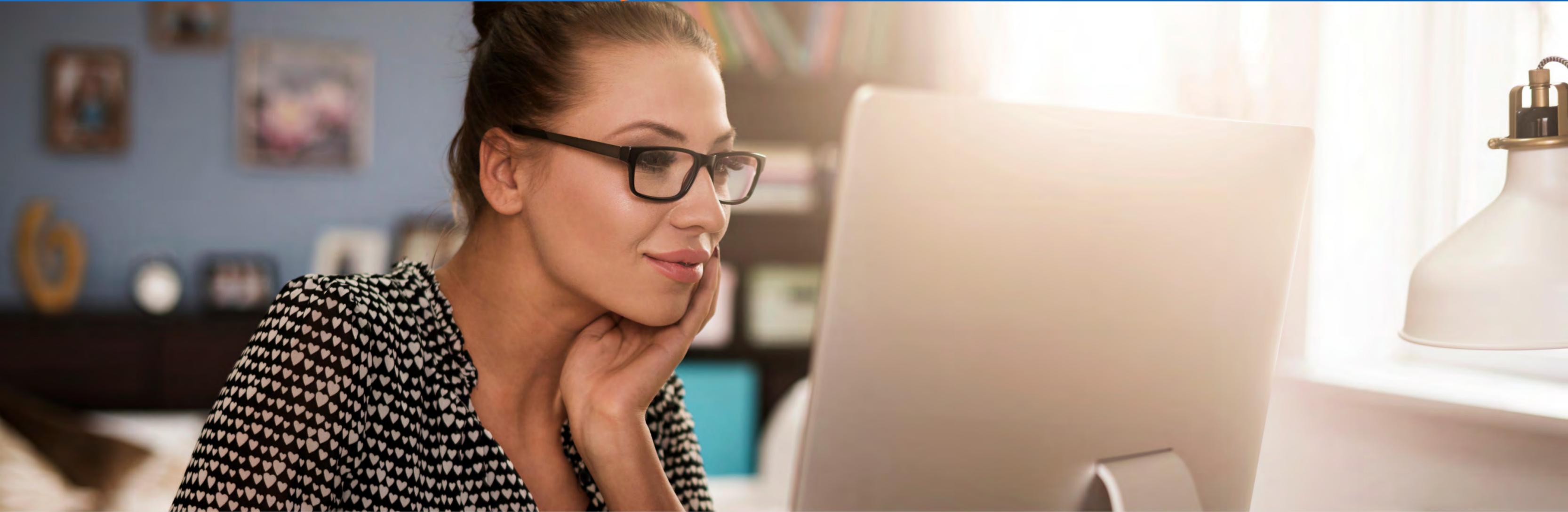
## Your Subject Line is Your Headline



**Subject... Springfield School District Digest -- October 2023**

# Tip 5:

## Your Subject Line is Your Headline



**Subject... College & Career Fair, New Benefits, & Hispanic Heritage Night**

# Tip 6:

## *Bite-Sized Messaging*

- Busy lives make it hard to take in lots of information
- Dense updates are far less accessible
- Key activities and engagement opportunities get lost
- Prioritizing information helps us focus our engagement efforts
- There are other opportunities to communicate less urgent information



As we begin another week together, I'd like to take a moment to appreciate fall. Chilly air, colorful leaves, misty mornings. Wow. As the leaves change, I reflect on the many changes students experience over the school year. What an exciting time of life.

Here are some things I wanted to share with you ~

Congratulations & Welcome ~ Cindy Beckett has taken on the role of Accounts Payable & Grant Manager here at MSUSD. Cindy's expertise and hard work make her a perfect fit for this new role! And please join me in extending a warm welcome to Juan Elliston, the new Executive Assistant to the Superintendent. Juan comes to us with a wealth of experience and enthusiasm!

Grant Kick-off ~ This week marks the Ascend Grant kick-off for the MSUSD Core Team. We are privileged to be part of a collaborative effort with Districts from across the nation. We eagerly anticipate sharing the knowledge and insights gained with our Community Teams, as well as with all of you. Stay tuned for updates and next steps in the near future!

Save the Date: Joint Community Conversation ~ We invite you to mark your calendars for a special Joint Community Conversation with the Superintendent & School Committee, scheduled for October 7th, 2023, at 7:00 pm in the RRL. This meeting will have a sole focus on the Proposed 6 Town Regional Agreement, and your input and questions are invaluable to ensure our communities have the information they need to make an informed decision on the potential merger.

Grant Funding ~ Our district has been awarded a sizable Mental Health Grant. This grant represents a third-year state and federally funded continuation that aims to bolster our multi-tiered systems of support to better address the needs of our students, families, and educators.

~Ms. C.



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~Ms. C.



Mark your calendars! Your attendance is so important.

We are considering merging our school with another school district and want to hear what you think about it. In order to hear your thoughts on this merger we are hosting a community conversation.

When: October 7th at 7:00

Where: The Reading Regional Library, 123, East Bay Road

At this meeting we will tell you all about the merger and what it means for your student and family. We'll also answer any questions you have.

We look forward to hearing your feedback, concerns, and ideas. Your input helps all us to make informed decisions!

Spanish interpreters will be at the event.



# Tip 7:

***Format it!***





Eyetracking by Nielsen Norman Group [nngroup.com](http://nngroup.com) NN/g

“

People scan in an F-shape when all of these 3 elements are present:

- A page or a section of a page includes text that has little or no formatting for the web. For example, it has a “wall of text” but no bolding, bullets, or subheadings.
- The user is trying to be most efficient on that page.
- The user is not so committed or interested that he is willing to read every word.

Source: Nielsen Norman Group, “F-Shaped Pattern of Reading on the Web: Misunderstood, But Still Relevant (Even on Mobile)”

”

# Subject... Merger Meeting: Your Input Matters / Reunión de fusión: su opinión importa



*Traducción al español disponible a continuación.*

We are **considering merging our school** with another school district and want to hear what you think about it. In order to hear your thoughts on this merger we are hosting a community conversation.

When: **October 7th at 7:00**

Where: The Reading Regional Library, 123, East Bay Road

At this meeting we will:

- Tell you all about the merger and what it means for your student and family.
- Answer any questions you have
- Listen to your feedback, concerns, and ideas.

Your input helps all us to make informed decisions!



# Tip 8:

## *Crystal Clear Call-to-Action*

ABHS Students and Families,

I hope you enjoyed the first week of school. This email is to inform you that students will be getting high school textbooks next Monday-Wednesday. Please be sure to bring a backpack. I've attached a newsletter for you to enjoy. Have a wonderful weekend.

Ms. Smith  
Principal

BEFORE

# Tip 8:

## *Crystal Clear Call-to-Action*



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Ms. Smith  
Principal

**IMPORTANT**





ABHS Students and Families,

I hope you enjoyed the first week of school. This email is to inform you that students will be getting high school textbooks next Monday-Wednesday. Please be sure to bring a backpack. **I've attached a newsletter for you to enjoy.** Have a wonderful weekend.

Ms. Smith

## AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER

### Welcome Back To School!

ABHS Students and Families,

It was such a pleasure to see all of our students this week. I understand how challenging it was to return back to school, however, I am excited to start this new school year with you all!

We spent the week getting reconnected with one another with fun and interactive activities. We had an assembly to remind students of our goals and expectations.

Our 9th & 10th graders got their ID cards today. Our 11th & 12th graders will get their IDs next week.

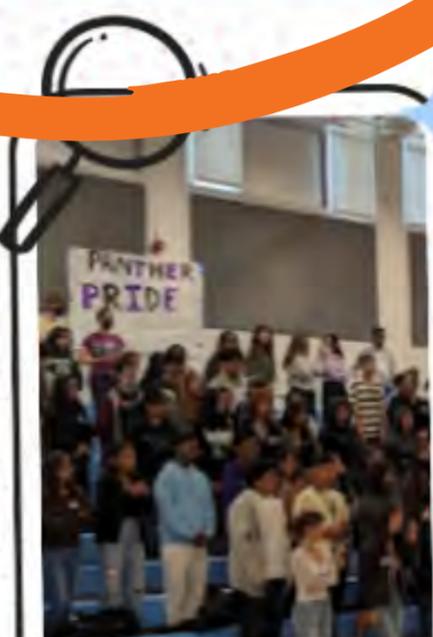
### What's In This Month's Issue?

- Upcoming Events
- Important Reminders
- Student Bus Pass Info

### LINK CREW-PANTHER PRIDE

A huge shout out to our Link Crew teachers, Mr. Ross & Ms. Williams, and Link Crew leaders for coordinating an amazing student orientation full of fun activities, get-to-know-one-another sessions, and a campus tour for our incoming 9th graders. The experience was very positive for everyone involved.

I hope our 9th graders felt welcomed and



# Tip 8:

## Crystal Clear Call-to-Action



ABHS Students and Families,

I hope you enjoyed the first week of school. To keep things running smoothly, **please read the attached bulletin** for important information, including:

- How to get a complimentary bus pass for your student
- How to get your student enrolled in the education benefits program
- Upcoming picture day details

**Access the  
bulletin**

Also! Make sure your student **brings a backpack next week**, because they will begin getting their high school textbooks.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Ms. Smith  
Principal



- **Make a button to drive action**
- **Link, don't attach**

# Tip 9:

## Digests are Digestible

### Multi-Item Communications

From: B. O'Brien -> (ADMINISTRATOR@LMNOP)  
Date: August 25, 2023 at 2:58:27 PM EDT  
Subject: LMNOP Reminders August/September 2023

Hi everyone!

I hope everyone enjoyed the summer! Please see below for a few reminders for August and September at LMNOP. We are looking forward to seeing the children next week!

[August 29 - FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS!](#)

[August 31 - Grades 8 Curriculum Night - 8:00 - 8:00 pm @ LMNOP for PARENTS ONLY - Having/Knowing your child's schedule will be very helpful prior to coming. Thank you!](#)

[September 4 - LABOR DAY - NO SCHOOL](#)

[September 7 - Grades 7 and 8 Curriculum Night - 8:00 - 8:00 pm @ LMNOP for PARENTS ONLY - Having/Knowing your child's schedule will be very helpful prior to coming. Thank you!](#)

[September 8 - LMNOP ONLY - Early Dismissal @ 1:00 pm](#)

[September 18 - PTO Meeting - 9:30 am @ LMNOP](#)

[September 28 - NO SCHOOL](#)

[September 29 - Picture Day - 8:00-11:00 AM. More information to follow. Make Up Day - November 14](#)

[September 29 - Homecoming Community Carnival 4:00 - 7:00 @ YICSH](#)

#### \*\*\*Cell Phones/Airpods (from our student handbook)

Students may bring cell phones and AirPods to school. However, they must be locked in their lockers during the school day. If cell phones and AirPods are not in a locked locker, they will be able to retrieve their phones and AirPods at the end of the class period. If students have their phones/AirPods or any other unauthorized electronic devices in their lockers and turned into the office. Consequently, after-school detention will be assigned, and parents will be notified. Students will be responsible for picking up their phones. Once in the office, they can give up their phone until the end of the day, or they may choose to remain with their phone (in the Referral room) until the end of the day. Damage or misuse of any items brought to school by a student. Emergency telephone calls should be made in the office.

#### \*\*\*Food Services:

If you are looking for your child's ID number for the school safe, or your child's PIN number which they use to go through the lunch line, please contact Food Services.

#### \*\*\*Stepping Up Focus for the month of September:

# Tip 9:

## Multi-Item Communications

Digests  
are  
Digestible



From: B. Oldman <[b\\_oldman@fakeusd.edu](mailto:b_oldman@fakeusd.edu)>

Date: August 25, 2023 at 2:58:27 PM EDT

Subject: Curriculum night details, accessing food programs, cell phone rules and more!

Hello to the LMNOP school community!

Welcome back to school! Our team knows that when our families have the information they need from us, students thrive.

Each week, we'll be sending you a weekly bulletin as a part of our effort to keep you informed and engaged.

This week, that includes:

- **Fall Schedule:** including community events and picture day
- **Food Programs:** how to access food programs for school and at home
- **Cell Phone Policies**
- **Curriculum Highlights:** Stepping Up and Computer Science

Feel free to reach out directly to the office (555-1234) or your child's teacher ([staff directory](#)) with questions or for more details.

### Fall Schedule: For Students and Families

*Events for families are highlighted in red*

August 29 - FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

August 31 - **Grades 6 Curriculum Night** - 6:00 – 8:00 pm @ LMNOP for PARENTS ONLY - Having/Knowing your child's schedule will be very helpful prior to coming. That being said, copies will be available upon arrival.

September 4 - LABOR DAY - NO SCHOOL

September 7 – **Grades 7 and 8 Curriculum Night** - 6:00 – 8:00 pm @ LMNOP for PARENTS ONLY - Having/Knowing your child's schedule will be very helpful prior to coming. That being said, copies will be available upon arrival.

### Accessing Food Programs: Essential Information

## Tips for **Great Content**

1. Pause to Reflect
2. What-Why-How
3. Leveling is Key
4. Scaffolding paves the path

## Tips for **Getting Read**

1. Subject Line is Your Headline
2. Keep it Bite-Sized
3. Formatting is Your Friend
4. Crystal-Clear CTA
5. Make it a Digest

## Big Ideas

Trust is essential. Consider who's speaking and who's listening.

# Adding Voices

Nothing About Us  
Without Us

Validation by peers is  
a HUGE influencer



Take Away!  
The link to download  
*Crafting Communications  
That Connect with Families*  
is in chat!  
Plus, keep an eye on your  
email inbox.

## Crafting Communications That Connect with Families

Tips to communicate with families in a way that supports and engages them as partners in their children's education.

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### 1 Break down complex topics into manageable activities.

Families are great partners in building children's academic and social-emotional skills, but they also have a lot on their plates. That's why clear, concise, and actionable communication is a must. Break it down by WHAT, WHY, and HOW.

WHAT do you want families to do or know?  
WHY is it important?  
HOW can they do it?  
HOW can they keep this learning going?

Write a WHAT, WHY, and HOW that leverage families' relationships with their children and fit into daily routines.

Here's an example:

**FACT:** Describing the things you do builds language skills. These skills make it easier for kids to share their thoughts. Their reading skills get stronger, too!

**TIP:** Describe your actions during daily activities. As you do the dishes, talk about it. Try, "I'm pouring in the blue soap." Make sure you use lots of details.

**GROWTH:** Now it's your child's turn. As they play a game, ask "What are you doing?" Ask for details like, "How do you play?" and "Why do you like it?"

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### Formatting is your friend.

To help families find the most important information in your message quickly and easily, use strategies to focus attention on the most important words and phrases:

Use bold text  
Use numbers  
Use bullet points  
Use color  
Use icons  
Use font size

#### PLAIN TEXT

ParentPowered complements the work of teachers by helping families act on teachable moments.

accomplish this by requiring no more than 15 minutes to develop curriculum or lessons, giving families stand-alone insights targeted to their child's age or grade and covering a variety of curriculum that includes SEL, academic, and physical development, and adult support content.

Research shows this strategy can lead to 27 months of growth over a school year.

#### FORMATTED TEXT

ParentPowered complements the work of teachers by helping families act on teachable moments.

**How We Support Teachers**

• **No teacher time is needed** to develop the curriculum or enroll families.

• **Standards-aligned insights and activities** targeted to a child's age or grade level.

• **Whole-child curriculum** that includes social-emotional learning, academic, physical development, and adult support content.

This research-based approach can lead to 27 months of growth over a school year.

### 6 Create a crystal clear call-to-action.

If you have something you need families to do — whether it's to attend an event, fill out a survey, or return a form — make it very clear, unambiguous, and easy to act on.

If families don't respond, evaluate. Ask yourself these questions: Did they receive the communication? Is there another way I can reach out, like with a phone call? Did it reach them in their home language? What are other potential reasons they were not able to act, i.e. work schedule, lack of child care, lack of transportation, etc.? Now, brainstorm a list of ways you can shift your events and asks of families to be more inclusive and doable.

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Interested in learning more about ParentPowered's evidence-based family engagement program for birth through grade 12?



**LET'S TALK!**



**info@parentpowered.com**



http://

**bit.ly/3LpI0N2**



**ParentPowered**

A photograph of two young women with dark hair, smiling and laughing together. The woman on the left is wearing a light blue denim shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing a dark blue shirt with a colorful floral pattern. They are standing in front of a brick wall. A blue speech bubble graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "What questions do you have?".

**What  
questions do  
you have?**

**ParentPowered**