



Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

A. School District/School Personnel: Your best ambassadors

The first step is to help your staff understand and recognize CSAP as an opportunity to enhance communication with your community. This is a program they can be proud of, and it will help others understand what you do every day: educate youth to achieve high academic standards. Once staff understands the contents and value of these the CSAP reports, they will become your best ambassadors.

Larger school districts/schools may assign an assessment professional and/or a public information officer to co-manage the entire CSAP communications project--including production of an CSAP educational component for all staff--not just the individuals who may answer the district/school telephone(s).

Conduct a series of training opportunities for your staff. Then follow-up with flyers in pay envelopes, notices on bulletin boards, articles in your employee newsletter and other means of communication. If necessary, discuss only one aspect of CSAP per newsletter. Make your communication piece simple and visually appealing, so it is easy to understand and remember.

B. Parents: Let them help

Take your cues from parents who have looked at a variety of CSAP reports and expressed their opinions. Then, invite parents from your own community to help plan your CSAP communication tools/process.

If you have an existing parent advisory committee, introduce CSAP to them so they can form their own opinion. Ask what they would like to know, what kind of communication tools work best, and how they would like to receive the information ("Friday folders," letters, newsletter, etc.)

If you don't have an advisory group, consider forming one--just for the purpose of guiding you as you develop your CSAP message. Invite representatives of your stakeholders or key communicators--such as a Homeowner's Association, Chamber of Commerce, Real Estate Association, the local fire department, academics, civic and service clubs or local AARP or League of Women Voters to help you. Listening to these groups can go a long way toward improving credibility and trust. And the result will be better communication and interpretation of your CSAP scores--to your community and to those who live outside the community.

Look for other ways to communicate as well:

- Conduct surveys (informal or formal)

- Hold a series of town hall meetings
- Make presentations at civic and service clubs
- Solicit input from everyday contact with parents

C.Media: An essentially

Your local media may be one of the most important ways you have to communicate with parents and the general public about district/school CSAP scores. That is why it is important to be proactive. Contact your local media (editorial or news staff) and ask for a special meeting to discuss CSAP. This is an opportunity to provide valuable information to the public. If you have existing CSAP reports, bring those with you and talk about the value of educating the public about the information. If not, get samples from those school districts/schools who have already produced a CSAP report, or an equivalent. Take these examples with you when you meet with the media.

Whether you invite local media representatives to your district office/school or go to their office, be prepared to answer tough questions about every aspect of the CSAP report. Take this time to establish your district/school as a resource for the media on all matters related to improving student achievement.

It may also be helpful to solicit third-party spokespersons from the educational community or a local university to enhance your credibility and serve as "sources" for the media.