

The ABCs of Communication

“Communication is the key to trust, positive relationships, and strong family and community involvement. Effective schools communicate frequently and use many strategies to ensure that all parents are engaged.” Martha Dunsworth and Dawn Billings, *The High-Performing School*

Assemble

Creating effective two-way communication between the school and home requires the touch of a chef. To establish a main course that will not only fill the stomach but inspire the mind and the senses requires an understanding of the ingredients and how they affect the dish. The modern chef seeks to assemble a meal that is unique, delicious, and memorable.



Unfortunately, few of us qualify as master chefs or as “chefs” at all in the sense of the word. One person’s idea of a good meal may be going to the local diner or a fast food establishment. You may be one of the few that cook from scratch to make great grandma’s lasagna or Uncle Ted’s spicy buffalo wings. The key to making any meal is:

1. Work with ingredients you like,
2. Use ingredients that are proven to make the meal successful,
3. And adventure a little!

A home-cooked meal sometimes turns out bland when little exploration occurs beyond the confinement of a recipe.

People before you explored the possibilities of cooking in order to create the recipes you now use. As a result of their efforts, you are able to experience food in a whole new light and experiment to create a family favorite for future generations.

Creating true two-way communication between the school and home is similar to cooking your favorite meal. You have to first know your audience when deciding on a solution/meal. You can take the easy and cheap solution that just requires microwaving, or you can make something that is, as was mentioned before, unique, delicious, and memorable. Communication solutions that adhere to the uninspired standards of mass notification systems cannot hope to help school districts rise above the diverse and complex problems faced by administrators today.

School districts should have tools that will combat the myriads of problems that you may encounter. Compare the modern auto-dialer system to an omelet. The ability to send thousands of notifications in minutes and in multiple languages through diverse delivery methods is interesting. But, like the regular omelet, such “differentiators” are not new. Notification systems require little planning to send notifications and cultivate purposeless communication. Without unique and diverse solutions, a mass notification system becomes nothing more than an auto dialer.

Ingredients

- Surveys
- Multilingual capabilities
- Advanced attendance
- Grades
- Assignment and class tracking
- Pre-registration

Build

Having the right ingredients, or assembly materials, undoubtedly affects the project of building a true communication solution. No amount of planning or luck can make up for a lack of resources or poor quality materials.