



Making Policy Lemonade out of Statistical Lemons:

The NCLB Communications Challenge

The Challenge

Communicate to parents, citizens, and key community stakeholders that some schools need improvement... without suggesting that schools, or school system, is “failing.”



A Brief Michigan Background

- Michigan one of first states in nation to implement AYP
- Since 1997, Michigan has required schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress in math, reading, science and writing.
- The NCLB Act of 2001 put us further down the “ladder of consequences” than other states.



The Plan

- Define the Message
- Develop a **POLICY-BASED** Improvement Plan
- **COMMUNICATE PLAN – Not Problem**



Defining the Message

- **Ban the Word Failure**
- **Focus on What the Data Can Do**
- **Focus on the Spirit of the Law**



Michigan's Key Message

Nearly 90% of Michigan's schools achieved new federal guideline goals...but we cannot leave ANY child or school behind.

The data gathered through NCLB allows us to focus with laser-like precision on the 10% of schools that need our help the most.



Michigan's Improvement Plan

Michigan will focus its resources and support on assisting “high-priority” schools that immediately take specific, rigorous turn-around actions to improve performance for their children.

**AYP Challenge =
Community Challenge**



Michigan's NCLB Partnership

Schools That:

- Develop an AYP-specific improvement plan
- Attend a “Principal’s Academy”
- Conduct Summer Leadership School

Can Count on Support of NCLB Partnership



Michigan's NCLB Partnership

The Partnership Offers:

- State of Michigan directed resources
- Mentor Michigan partnership
- Faith/Community partnerships
- Business partnerships



Communicating the Plan

Identify Key Stakeholders:

- Superintendents
- Administrators
- Educators
- Parents
- Community/Business Leaders



Communicating the Plan

Identify Department/Executive Office Roles

Department of Education

- Direct communication with districts
- Development of materials
- Compilation of data
- Implementation of policy directives



Communicating the Plan

Identify Department/Executive Office Roles

Executive Office

- “Air Cover” for communication w/districts
- Policy Development
- Strategy Development
- Compilation of data
- Implementation of policy directives



Communicating the Plan

Implement Tactics:

- Direct communication with districts and Supers well in advance
- Use Media as Conduit to communicate with parents and the community



Michigan's Plan Implementation

- MDOE notifies districts of internal staff meetings to develop Improvement Plan
- Governor reaches out to labor, education, biz, and faith community to secure buy-in to plan
- MDOE sends AYP data to schools; schools have 10 days to appeal
- MDOE advises media (via call to one key reporter) data will be released in 10 days



Michigan's Plan Implementation

- Governor schedules AYP Partnership Meeting – asks Supers to invite key participation
- Media staff schedules press conference to announce plan following Partnership Meeting
- Roundtable w/press to explain Governor's improvement plan, review data, NCLB process
- Partnership Meeting & Press Conf.
- Other Options – Op-Eds, letters to editor



Michigan's Results

“Governor Outlines Plans to Help Underperforming Schools.”

- Detroit Free Press, April 14

“Granholm Vows to Fix Failing Schools”

- The Detroit News, April 15

“Poorly Performing Schools Say They Welcome State Help”

- Booth Newspapers, April 15



Where We Go From Here

MEAP Issues

Media Seminar

Outreach to Partnership

