

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A message wheel is a simple visual format for organizing the messages that are key to your issue. Your most important message – that one thing you always want to share – is placed in the middle of the wheel. Supporting statements – which would likely include the problem, solution, and one or two other key statements - are placed around the wheel like spokes. Points that explain or expound on your supporting statements are added under each heading.

You will want to use the central message every time you communicate about your issue, whether you are writing a letter to the editor or Op-Ed, speaking to a neighborhood group about your issue, answering questions about your cause, or being interviewed in the media. Sounds simple, right? When you are the one in control of the message, like writing a letter to the editor or preparing a presentation, it should be. You don't have to use every point every time. Just select the supporting messages that are most likely to resonate with your audience, add examples, stories, and descriptive language to paint the picture for the audience. Make it your own!

However, in situations where you are responding to questions, such as during an interview, following a presentation, or when meeting with a decision maker about your issue, making sure you are coming back to your central message can become a little more tricky. This is when the visual layout of the message wheel can be an especially helpful tool for you and your spokespeople. The message wheel helps show the connections between your

supporting messages and your central message. When you are asked a question, find that thread that can take you back to a point under a supporting statement and bridge to that. Once you have made it to your supporting statement, you can link back to your central message.

To use this tool most effectively, spend some time digging into it and thinking about examples from your school, your neighborhood, or your family that you could share to personalize your messages. When you are writing, use those examples to make your cause more relatable to others. When you are preparing for an interview, think about the arguments that those who disagree with your position might bring up and plan a response that can bring you back to your central message – and then practice your response.

By bringing the most important points for your issue into one place and using it, you'll be sure to keep your messaging on track.

The Building Blocks of a Healthy Future

Kids need healthy food and beverages.

- By providing meals and snacks rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, children get the nutrients their bodies need to grow and minds need to develop.
- Sugary drinks, such as fruit drinks, sweetened waters, and soda, are the largest source of added sugars in the diets of children as young as two and should not be served in early care and education settings.
- When kids are thirsty, water and milk are the best choices.

Kids should not spend too much time in front of a screen.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time—time in front of TVs, computers, and tablets, before age two—and limited screen time after that.
- A child's brain develops rapidly during the early years and young children learn best by interacting with people rather than screens.
- Reducing screen time allows for more time to explore, spend time with books, engage in active play, and interact with caregivers and other children.

All children, no matter where they live or go for child care, deserve healthy food and time for active play.

Parents support clear and consistent standards in early care and education settings for food and beverages, active play, and screen time, and providers want to offer an environment that nurtures healthy children.

Early care and education standards support the needs of children, parents, and providers.

Providers want clear standards and agree they won't be a burden to implement. Standards will ensure that all kids are:

- Being served more fruits and vegetables and drinking water or milk instead of sugary drinks;
- Engaging in active play for at least one hour each day;
- Keeping the time they spend in front of a TV, computer, or tablet limited.

Kids need time every day to play and be active.

- Active play helps children build and improve fine and gross motor skill development, coordination, balance and control, hand-eye coordination, strength, dexterity, and flexibility—all of which are necessary for children to reach developmental milestones.
- Preschoolers should engage in one to three hours or more per day of physical activity that promotes health and movement skills. In fact, preschoolers should not be sedentary for more than an hour at a time, except when sleeping.