

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A **message wheel** is simply a 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.

Every child - and community - deserves a safe route to school.

- A common goal of a safe route to school builds a sense of community, bringing families, neighbors, school officials, and community leaders together.
- Encourages increased parental involvement at school and beyond.
- Promotes driving safely in school zones and in the larger community.
- Safe routes to school is good for health and the economy: Studies have found that health care costs associated with physical inactivity decrease by almost \$3 for every \$1 invested in safe pathways for pedestrians and cyclists.

Safe Routes to School programs keep our kids safer.

- Neighborhoods are becoming increasingly clogged by traffic.
- It's very dangerous for kids and families to share lanes with cars and trucks.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes and crosswalks lead to fewer car crashes and help us feel safe walking in our neighborhoods and surrounding areas.
- Safe Routes to School programs teach our kids important traffic rules so they can be active *and* safe.

When our kids have safe routes and are able to bike or walk to school, they're more eager and ready to learn, they are healthier, and our streets are safer.

Safe Routes to School programs help keep our kids healthier.

- Children and families become more active with access to safe routes to walk or bike to school.
- By ensuring our children have a safe route to walk or bike to school, we are protecting them and building healthy habits that can last a lifetime
- Kids who walk or bike to and from school are more likely to reach the recommended goal of 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Leaving our cars behind, reduces traffic and improves air quality.

Active kids are better learners

- Kids who walk or bike to school arrive more ready to focus.
- Healthy students perform better academically, have better attendance and behave better in class.
- Students who are regularly physically active have been shown to have higher academic scores.

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