



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 work, 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.

Healthy School Meals for All

We have the opportunity to ensure every student in our state is set up to succeed.

- Federal child nutrition waivers passed during the pandemic decreased child hunger and poverty, allowing all students to have access to free school meals. That funding has expired, and now children who depended on it are going hungry again.
- Programs that provide healthy school meals for all help students learn better, improve students' attendance, reduce students' experiences with food and nutrition insecurity, and increase their nutritional intake.

Healthy school meals for all benefit students' health and academic success.

- Students who eat school lunches tend to take in more whole grains, vegetables, and dairy and fewer refined sugars and empty calories than those who bring their lunches from home.
- Students who have more nutritious diets tend to perform better and pay more attention in school.
- When all students can participate in healthy school meals for all, it reduces the stigma associated with free or reduced-price school meal programs.

All students should have access to no-cost, healthy school meals to support their health and academic success.

We must act now to ensure all students have access to no-cost, healthy school meals.

- In lieu of a federal policy, states are stepping up to fill in the gap and ensure that all children, regardless of family income, can obtain healthy meals throughout the year and have the best chance to learn and thrive in school.
- As of 2022, California, Colorado, Maine, and Vermont have already passed legislation to ensure no child goes hungry.

Healthy school meals for all help school budgets and food service programs.

- Healthy school meals for all will eliminate issues of unpaid school meal debt and reduce administrative paperwork, freeing up school nutrition staff to focus on feeding kids.
- Participation by all students in school meal programs increases when meals are provided for free, resulting in increased revenue by way of federal reimbursements.
- When New York City opted into healthy school meals for all, it not only increased student participation in school meals, the school food service program in the city also received nearly \$62 million more in federal and state meal reimbursement for a single school year.