

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.

Don't Sell Us Short™

All schools should update their wellness policies regularly and are required to include policies to address food and beverage marketing in school.

- Schools should address marketing of junk food on vending machines, through posters, on menu boards, beverage cups, trash cans, prizes, awards, and much more.
- Schools should apply these standards to fundraisers and celebrations.

Often parents aren't aware that junk food marketing happens in school.

- Some examples include:
 - fast food coupons as incentives or prizes;
 - restaurant benefit nights promoted to students
 - candy sales as fundraisers
 - advertisements on educational materials and school-assigned homework websites
 - vending machines wrapped in advertisements for soda.
- Young kids can't differentiate between advertising messages and other messages they receive about health and nutrition while they are at school.
- These prizes and awards build brand loyalty in kids. And, we see the outcome – children with chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Junk food is no longer sold in schools and that is good for kids. But junk food is still being advertised on school grounds. It just makes sense that if a food can't be sold at school, it shouldn't be promoted at school.

Companies and schools can work together to serve and market healthy food in schools.

- The national rules provide an opportunity to change the conversation about food marketing in schools.
- Instead of focusing on what can't be marketed in schools – junk food – there is an opportunity to focus on what can be marketed in schools – healthy food.
- Schools should move quickly to implement strong wellness policies that ensure healthy food and beverages are promoted throughout the school day.

Schools are places of learning – not places for advertising.

- Parents work hard to help their kids make healthy choices – and they expect their local schools to support these same choices.
- Schools are putting time and resources into teaching kids about health and nutrition.
- As a result, school meals and snacks are getting healthier, and some schools have gardens where kids help grow fruits and vegetables.
- Junk food marketing at school undermines the work of parents and schools to help kids make healthy choices.
- Kids spend most of their time in schools so they should not be a place for promoting junk food.