

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.

Out-of-School Time

Being healthy and active helps kids succeed.

- Kids need healthy meals and snacks that help their bodies grow and their minds develop.
- Water and milk are the best choices for thirsty kids, not sugary drinks.
- Active kids tend to perform better academically. They are able to focus, think more clearly, react to stress more calmly, and behave better.

Out-of-school time programs can help keep kids on a healthy path.

- 10 million+ kids attend out-of-school time programs.¹
- Programs should be places that instill lifelong healthy habits.
- Program providers should offer nutritious foods and drinks, provide safe places for play, and limit time on digital devices.

Every kid deserves healthy food and opportunities to be physically active when school is out of session.

Decision-makers can ensure that out-of-school time programs help kids grow up healthy.

- Parents and providers believe there is an opportunity to make out-of-school time programs healthier places for kids.
- Clear, consistent standards for healthy eating and physical activity exist, but many programs lack the resources they need to implement them.
- Every state should provide funding for technical assistance to help programs meet the national standards for healthy eating and physical activity.

Parents and program providers support healthy out-of-school time standards.

- Parents want programs to provide healthy foods and keep children active.
- Providers want to offer an environment that nurtures healthy children.
- Support these national standards for healthy eating and physical activity:
 - ✓ More fruits and vegetables
 - ✓ No sugary drinks
 - ✓ At least 60 minutes of physical activity
 - ✓ Inclusive activities for children of all abilities
 - ✓ Limited time on digital devices²

1. Afterschool Alliance. *America After 3pm. Kids on the Move: Afterschool Programs Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*. 2014. www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/Kids_on_the_Move.pdf

2. National AfterSchool Association. *HEPA Standards*. 2015. https://naaweb.org/images/NAA_HEPA_Standards_new_look_2015.pdf