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What’s in this issue…

Bond measure election tips and lessons
Most districts don’t propose bond levies often enough to develop election expertise. The process is easier with a thorough and strategic planning and election process. Here are the questions to ask and the steps to check as you work toward election day. **Success comes from understanding the obstacles and clearly communicating to voters.**

When and why you should meet with your editorial board
The “influencers” in your town are not just the social media power users. You can make a big impression within your community by seeking opinions from traditional sources, your newspaper’s editorial board. **Newspapers still wield profound influence.**

Know your community
During the busy school year, it is easy to think that your parents are your main audience, but it is equally important to reach people who are outside of your school doors. Put together a community survey. **True knowledge of a community comes through taking the time and exercising the patience to pursue multiple strategies, asking the right questions, going to the right places and listening intently.**

Leveraging pets in the classroom, Part two
People love pets. If your district allows pets in schools, be sure to capitalize on the positive attention they can bring. Read part two of this topic to learn how to leverage this attention and amplify your messages. **Are your schools eligible for grants for pets in the classroom?**

Recognize your staff and education partners
Everyone likes being acknowledged, recognized and appreciated for the work they do and especially for doing the extras that are not required but make such a difference. That’s true of staff and also of school volunteers and other educational partners. Here are ideas to recognize your team. **Sometimes the best appreciation is a simple handwritten card, thanking volunteers for a specific task.**

Insights for Parents: Teach your child about money
Money management is an important skill. Kids need to learn the basics of money management early and often, including how to earn, save and spend wisely. Read tips for teaching children about money and find resources to help you get started.
**BOND MEASURE ELECTION TIPS AND LESSONS**

Every year, districts go out for and fail in their endeavor to pass a bond or operational levy. Passing any kind of bond levy is difficult, but districts can improve their chances by taking the time to do a thorough and strategic planning and election process. This takes a lot of time and resources but, when done correctly, districts can dramatically improve their chances.

I will use a sports analogy for this process. “The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win” (Vince Lombardi).

You should view this process as a marathon and not a sprint. Depending on the size of your district, this process takes somewhere between 18 months and two years before the election day.

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**Pre-season**

This part of the process is extremely important for a successful bond campaign. First, put together a District Facility Advisory Council (DFAC), which consists of people who are knowledgeable about building and construction. Get an overview of the current state of your facilities and the potential costs for improving facilities. Second, if you are growing and need to add space, do you have data? Do you have a population study which helps validate what you are saying about growth and lack of space?

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Along with this, you should get out into your community and hear what is on voters’ minds and what they are concerned about. You need to make sure that you fully understand the conditions of your facilities.

You will need a lot of help in order to run a successful bond campaign, so make sure you are reaching out to your associations, parent/teacher groups, local
government, local businesses, your chamber of commerce, service clubs and faith-based organizations in your community.

Finally, if you or people on your staff have never been through a bond campaign, consider hiring a consultant who can help you with your process. There is a lot of science and best practices that need to be leveraged in order for you to be successful with your campaign.

Once you have determined your district’s needs, then you need to hire a firm to do an initial survey that helps vet questions you want to get feedback on. Important questions might be:

- How much are your voters willing to tax themselves?
- What are your community’s top concerns or priorities about the district’s facilities or the programs the district does or does not provide for its students?
- What other measures might be on the ballot at the same time as your measure?
- Does your community trust you to spend their money?
- What is your district’s history on bond levies and is there something your need to make sure you do or don’t do in order to ensure the success of your levy?

Game time

Engage in actively informing and campaigning for your measure six to nine months before your election date. During this time, your school board needs to decide the amount to ask voters and what it is exactly that you are going to ask for. At this point, you have to decisively communicate the “why now” and “what it is” about your bond or levy. The district and certain employees may communicate in a non-partisan manner and be spokespersons for the district. Usually, you will be making sure patrons know that you are doing this because you need more space or that the space you have is inadequate or that in order to improve learning you need to reduce class sizes or add certain programs to the district.
As part of this process, get out into the community and hold meetings in your schools, talk to your local Chamber of Commerce, service clubs and other local government agencies, about why you are asking for this levy.

You may also conduct another survey early in your bond campaign to help you hone your messages to voters.

Supporters should form a political action committee to raise money for your campaign. Work with your local education associations and possibly a consultant who understands campaign strategies. They can bring a lot of expertise and assistance to help you work on specific campaign tasks such as phoning, canvassing and mailings.

In general, lawn signs and billboard advertising are not effective and, in fact, can serve as a reminder to your opponents that they need to vote no. Make sure you get out your natural supporters—parents with kids in school, teachers, other school employees, PTA folks, alumni and booster clubs—and make sure you remind them to vote as you move through your campaign of explaining “why” you need this measure.

District administrators can help during this phase of the election by being “educational experts” who talk to various community groups about the specifics of the bond package. While district administrators can’t campaign as freely as others, they can certainly inform patrons as to why you are proposing the measure. They can reiterate district needs and what exactly you are going to do with their money.

After months of tireless work, election day will arrive. Win or lose, your work will have just begun. You will either retool to go out again for an amended proposal, or you will have a whole bunch of work ahead of you to implement the work you promised your voters.

BOND ELECTION FAILED, NOW WHAT?

Post-game: Loser

If you are not successful with your proposal to voters, and after you overcome your deep depression, you will need to take a look at your precinct data to see where you did well with voters and where you failed. You may also send out a survey to all district patrons to get feedback about what they liked or did not like about your bond package or campaign.
There may be a variety of reasons why your bond or levy did not pass. Who helped your cause? Who hurt your cause? What are your next steps? You will need to go back out into your community and hold more public meetings and begin to retool your plan and look for other options for your district in the future. At the end of the day, you still have the needs you originally identified and those needs generally don’t go away or become less important to children’s education. Return to the “pre-game” advice and see if you perhaps missed a few things…like running your bond campaign on a November with a presidential election and several other local levies for police and fire departments. Those elections have high voter turnout and your natural supporters may be outnumbered. Reload and move forward.

**Post-game: Winner!**

If you did manage to win your election…congratulations! Now you are embarking on a journey that will require new and exciting work. You will need to work closely with your bond counsel and your bond seller to decide the total amount of sale that the district is willing to seek, as you may be able to actually get more money through a “bond premium” than your stated campaign amount. You will also need to get into the details of each project you are doing by utilizing a project manager, architects, bid packages and ultimately the contractors and sub-contractors that build the capital projects you have asked for.

The work you are doing with your bond money will ultimately help you with future bonds and voter trust if you do what you said you would do and complete all of your stated projects within the stated budget and schedule. Be sure you deliver on what you said you would deliver.

**Bond vocabulary: A primer**

**District Facility Advisory Committee (DFAC):** Districts that are considering a bond levy should consider convening a DFAC to inventory the state of the district’s facilities. This group should be comprised of local citizens who have an interest in the district’s facilities. It is even better if members of the DFAC have knowledge of and
experience in your schools and/or construction and building knowledge. This committee can help the district develop a bond package that would go before the school board to be approved and then used to develop a bond levy for an election.

**Bond Oversight Committee (BOC):** After a successful election, the formation of a BOC is a good idea. The BOC serves as a citizen “oversight” committee to ensure that the district is doing what it said it would do during the election with the tax money. This provides another set of eyes as the district moves forward to spend taxpayer dollars, and this group also serves as key communicators. Finally, this group will hopefully help with future potential capital projects or operating levies.

**Political Action Committee (PAC):** This group of volunteers raises money and campaigns for your bond or levy. District employees cannot engage in any type of political action or campaigning during their work hours. Administrators and the superintendent need to be particularly careful of their work with a bond campaign.

**Bond Counsel:** Districts need to hire bond counsel to help them comply with legal requirements for their measure. Bond counsel will review materials the district produces to communicate about the bond to ensure that they are not partisan. Bond counsel will also help you craft the ballot explanatory statement to ensure that it meets election campaign laws. Finally, your bond counsel can also assist you in selling your bonds after you pass a capital bond and ensure that you have maximized the possible levy given the authority you have been granted by the voters. One example of this is “bond premium” which is a financial instrument which allows you to leverage more dollars from your levy.

**Secretary of State Elections Division:** Compliance officers are charged with ensuring that elections are fair and that any complaints regarding election activity are addressed in a lawful manner. The Secretary of State ultimately certifies the elections.

*Contributed by Jim Golden, Superintendent, Greater Albany Public Schools*
WHEN AND WHY YOU SHOULD MEET WITH YOUR EDITORIAL BOARD

Who are the key people in your neighborhood and your community? The “influencers” are the people whose opinions you value?

These days, many of these influencers are found on Facebook and other social media. But do not overlook a traditional source: your local newspaper’s editorial board.

Why? Because if you want to influence the community’s opinion of your school or school district, it makes sense to start with the community’s influencers.

Newspapers still wield profound influence. Their print circulation is shrinking, but their online reach is growing. Along with their own websites, newspapers produce much of the news and commentary shared via social media.

**Editorial board = opinion**

The editorial board operates independently from the news-reporting and news-editing staff.

Editorials are a way that newspapers exert civic leadership by examining issues and seeking answers. Editorials are the institutional voice of the newspaper, which is why they commonly are unsigned. They represent the view of the editorial board, not the newspaper staff as a whole. They are published on a newspaper’s Opinion, Editorial, Viewpoints, or similarly named page.

At some newspapers, generally very small ones, the editor or publisher is a one-person editorial board who decides the newspaper’s stances and writes the editorials. However, most newspapers have editorial boards that include the publisher/president, editorial page editor and any editorial writers. Newspapers differ as to whether the top editor and/or other newspaper employers sit on editorial boards. Community members

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Editorial boards operate by consensus when possible, although the newspaper publisher/president retains the ultimate say. The person assigned to write the editorial is like a speechwriter presenting the board’s opinion, not her/his own view.

**Why should we care?**

A well-informed editorial board is a tremendous asset to a community. Its members are people who know the community, who keep up on issues, and who are unafraid to take strong stands. A well-written editorial does not tell readers what to think; it informs readers, presents the editorial board’s view, and spurs readers to action. In the end, readers always get the last word through letters to the editor.

On the pro side, an editorial can advance a school district’s cause, explain a controversial decision, or bring healing amid sorrow. On the con side, an editorial can blindside a school district, shaping community opinion that lacks nuance or context. Savvy communicators can encourage the former and deter the latter.

**Your expertise matters**

As an editorial writer/editor for more than 25 years, I wrote several thousand editorials and participated in hundreds, maybe thousands, of editorial board meetings. I appreciated hearing from thoughtful, well-informed, and respectful civic leaders. Their insights enhanced our knowledge. They influenced what we said in our editorials and, even more important, what we decided not to say.

On the other hand, some editorial board guests were ill-prepared, verbose, or condescending. They did themselves, and their organizations, no favors.

**When and why to meet**

When a crisis hits, it’s too late to nurture good relationships with an editorial board. Like any trusting relationships, those develop over time. Nevertheless, school leaders should meet with the editorial board as soon as possible when there is a school-community crisis. Otherwise, one of those aforementioned uninformed or blindsiding editorials could be published.

Start building those relationships by arranging editorial board meetings on cycles that make sense both for the board and the school district. For example, meet with the editorial board before the start of the school year, when next year’s budget is being proposed, when a major policy shift is proposed, and always when a tax increase or bond measure is being considered.
Make contact early in the process, so the editorial board knows what’s going on. Editorial boards don’t like being blindsided, and neither does a community.

**Contacting the editorial board**

Editorial boards are on a journalistic treadmill. They need to get something from meeting with you: information and context that can generate an editorial. They don’t have time for meet-and-greet or get-to-know-you sessions.

The newspaper’s Editorial/Opinion pages usually list whom to contact, such as the editorial page editor. Call or email the person. Be concise but specific about why you want to meet. For example, the school board is starting the search for the new superintendent, and you want to update the editorial board on the process.

**Tip 1:** Never call on a Friday. Editorial page editors have a full weekend’s opinion pages to produce, and are even more stressed than usual.

**Tip 2:** Research shows that mornings are best for having everyone’s attention — achieving your preferred outcome in a meeting — but meet at the editorial board’s convenience.

**How to prepare**

Put together a one- or two-page bulleted list of your key points. Email it to your editorial board contact ahead of time and bring copies to the meeting.

Prepare as if it were a job interview. In some ways, it is. The meeting will determine whether the board agrees with you. Expect tough questions; that is the editorial board’s role. Gather the statistics, stories and other details that buttress your case. Be prepared to present them succinctly.

**What to expect**

You might meet with one person or several. Ahead of time, ask about the format and what the board prefers. Expect a discussion. Don’t dominate or pontificate. Don’t come in with an agenda that you expect the editorial board to follow. Most want their guests — you — to give no more than a five-minute opening summary, and then the board members will plunge in with questions. Go with the flow.

Be prepared if the board asks what you want from the meeting. Examples: We hope you will endorse our bond measure.
Afterward

Editorial board members might or might not indicate their opinions during the meeting. As editorial page editor, I saw my role as being a surrogate for the community and asking probing questions. I was looking for information and insights to help shape an editorial. As such, I tried to keep a poker face; even if I had an opinion, I didn’t know what the overall editorial board would decide.

Sometimes a reporter attends the meeting and writes a story; however, that reporter does not participate in the board’s decision. Editorial board members meet in private afterward and decide the newspaper’s viewpoint.

Newspapers vary as to whether the finished editorials, as well as other content, are posted online immediately or in conjunction with print publication.

Editorial writers = juvenile

It might help to think of editorial writers as being a bit immature. Here are 10 tips — slightly exaggerated — for meeting with editorial boards.

1. They have the attention span of a gnat. (No offense to gnats.)
2. They expect you to get right to the point instead of beating around the bush. As journalists say, don’t bury the lead (or lede).
3. What matters is what they want to know, not what you want to tell them.
4. It’s a good sign when they’re asking questions. It’s even better if they’re arguing with you. In either case, that means they’re engaged instead of bored.
5. Let them control the conversation.
6. They tend to procrastinate and do their work at the last minute. They often can’t say when an editorial will be written, what it will say, or when it will be published.
7. Keep it simple. They may not find time to read the budget books or other documents you provide, which probably will disappear on their cluttered desks in their messy offices.
8. Their mood varies throughout the day and the week. The conversation will go better if you accommodate your schedule to theirs, instead of vice versa.
9. They don’t like being lectured.
10. If they disagree with what you’re presenting, don’t get offended or take it personally. They have a right to their opinions. That includes the right to be wrong.

Contributed by Dick Hughes, communications consultant. He was a board member of the National Conference of Editorial Writers, led its editorial-critique sessions and conducted editorial-writing seminars throughout the United States. Contact him at TheHughesisms@gmail.com.

**KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY**

Your school district’s success is largely determined by how well you connect with individual community members and groups.

One of my friends recently said to me, “We only hear from or see school district staff when the district has a measure on the ballot or wants something from us. I am active in a lot of community groups that would like to know the people who work in our schools, but they just don’t participate. I guess they figure they don’t need to give anything back. We will vote for their operating levies and bond measures anyway because we care about the kids in our community.”

School levies and bonds are passing in that community, but if the leadership of that school district is involved in a controversy, chances are they will lose support.

Community support depends on establishing relationships that generate trust. Schools that are good neighbors and make themselves an integral part of the community enjoy enormous benefits.

Establishing those relationships takes time and effort. You need to know who to reach out to and how to do that. You need to know who lives in your community, what they face in their daily lives, and how to reach common ground for building meaningful relationships. This requires research into the hidden corners of your community.
Here are some suggestions for how to do that:

**Find out who they are**

A formal survey: Every community is unique with its own social composition, status symbols, and accepted norms. One way to get an overview of community attitudes is a formal survey. A well-designed formal survey can identify opinions about a given issue or attitude, but it is only a general overview of entire community sentiment. Unless it is limited to one community group, it does not give much guidance about individual groups that need to be reached.

Some districts have a succession of formal surveys and can gradually build a community profile, but they need much more than that to build good communications. True knowledge of a community comes through taking the time and exercising the patience to pursue multiple strategies, asking the right questions, going to the right places and listening intently. Here are some places to start.

A news media scan: News stories, opinion columns, letters to the editor and online comments on news stories indicate current hot issues and the response of the most vocal community members.

Demographic websites: Websites such as city-data.com give insights into many areas of your community. Most of these condense census and public record data: rental rates; major employers; types of employment for women and men; average home cost; taxes; occupancy rates; distance traveled to work; lists of schools,
churches, parks and other public and private facilities and organizations; and much more.

**Social media:** Social media awareness can provide information about opinions and attitudes and inform you about community gatherings.

**In-person communications:** Some groups congregate in a given place, such as a restaurant, gym or athletic event. Going to these places to observe and listen can provide a lot of information and help you be seen as a friendly face that shares community interests. Get out there and talk to people.

**Staff members:** Your fellow staff members who live in the community are one of your greatest resources. They talk with neighbors and belong to community groups. Ask them what they are hearing and seeing and then look for common threads that reveal community conditions, sentiment toward schools and areas where you need to work on relationships.

**Find and connect with the opinion leaders:** Communities are made up of a myriad of social, business and political groups and many community members belong to a number of these groups. One way to identify community opinion leaders is to ask members of each group who he or she believes is the most influential person in that group. List those names and the number of times each name appears. You will have a list of top opinion makers and the scope of influence of each of these. You can then strategize the best way to communicate with these leaders so they, in turn, can support their schools through disseminating accurate information and voicing their trust in schools and school leadership.

**Know your community: A worksheet to help identify community groups and attitudes**

This worksheet should help you think about your community, the groups you need to reach and possible ways to reach them. Since every community is different, you will want to modify it to meet your own needs.
Community beliefs
What gives a person status? Rank these in order of importance to your community.
___church attendance
___location of residence
___kind of work one does
___service to the community
___length of residence
___amount of education
___wealth
___family background
___economic success
___Other: ____________________________

Answer the following questions:

How do people react to new ideas?
How are newcomers received by local people?
Do people or organizations here cooperate with those of nearby communities for their mutual benefit?

Traditions
What are the major historical developments of your community and how are they viewed by community members?
What has been the role of schools and school staff members in developing traditions?
How is this viewed by the community?

Decision making/leadership
Who are the outstanding leaders in the community and how did they attain their status?
Who decides the big issues in your community and what process is used?
How is the leader’s influence exerted?

Physical setting/ population data
What is the size of your community?
What are the different neighborhoods and what distinguishes them?
Population characteristics
What are the age groupings in your community? What is the portion of parents to non-parents of school-age children?
What percent of the population is foreign-born? What nationalities are represented?
What percent of families are single-parent families?
What is the rate of in-migration and out-migration? Why do people move to your community and why do they leave?
What percent of students attend private schools? What percent are home-schooled?
What are the reasons for these choices?
What percent of the population finished high school, college, or have advanced degrees?

Community economy
Who are the major employers and how many people does each of them employ? What are the characteristics of these places of employment and what does that say about the workforce?
What is the unemployment rate?
What is the per-capita income?
What is the tax rate?

Community groups
What are the religious denominations? What percent of the population belongs to a religious denomination? Which ones are dominant?
How many social service agencies are there? What are they? What services do they render? Do they adequately meet community needs?
What is the form of local government? What is the level and extent of public participation in government decision-making?
What recreational opportunities are provided? How are they supported?
What health services are available, including public health?

Relationships of groups:
Do organizations cooperate with each other?
What, if any, organizations seem to be in conflict with each other?
What groups consistently support public schools? Which groups do not appear to support public schools?
What groups have a major interest in keeping down the tax rate?

Contributed by Gay Campbell, communications consultant

LEVERAGING PETS IN THE CLASSROOM, PART TWO

In part one of our “pets in schools” series, we posed this question: Given the choice of a cute kitten video or your quarterly message from the superintendent, where do most web clickers go?

Although it’s pretty obvious, we showed that animals elicit the positive emotional reaction you want for your schools. Here’s a glance at the excitement teachers across the country have discovered regarding how classroom pets affect learning and engagement. When teachers are on board, they spark other followers, and because teachers are among your best “spokespeople,” their message builds support and loyalty.

Amplify what teachers say

The American Humane Association’s Pets in the Classroom study, conducted through the Pet Care Trust, surveyed nearly 1,200 teachers to learn that teachers believe classroom pets have real educational, leadership and character-building value. The program provides grants to Pre-K through eighth-grade educators to adopt and provide ongoing care for small animals in their classrooms.

Teacher testimonials included praise for pets at school:

“I’ve noticed that kids who would never choose to socialize and interact will get in groups and talk and laugh over something the guinea pig did.”

I don’t think a day goes by that Puff is not involved in some way in our room. It is not always in the written plans but just seems to happen. Students often make connections with something we are doing and relate it to Puff in some way.”

“When it has come to Norbert, every student in my classroom is engaged and excited to learn new things and be the first one to bring new information back to share with the class. I have a student who did not want to do homework of any kind, who is now volunteering to do research on his own time to discover what foods are best for bearded dragons … This has been by far one of the very best things that I have ever done for my classroom.”
These observations are great material for social media posts when talking about how your students are “learning to take more responsibility,” which is one of the most important messages that resonate with the age group that votes in your school and bond elections. Any chance you have to share that type of learning will increase support… like this comment from another teacher:

“Students have a huge incentive to get their work done in a thorough manner so that they get a chance to watch the lizards,” one teacher wrote in a thank-you letter to Pets In the Classroom. “It has especially helped two particular “work-avoidant” students a lot!”

Creative ways to bring pets into your classroom

Visual “bait”: The easiest and most effective use of pets in the classroom projects is to post great photos or short videos as “bait” to draw your audience to other content on your website or social media.

Start simple with a great visual so, while they’re catching a cute kitten photo or reptile video, they spot other information you want them to read, such as how well your students are performing on tests, or an important message from the board chair.

Just make sure you post the “bait” prominently, like on your homepage or at the top of social media feeds.

Storytelling: Anybody — including a kitten, dog or reptile — can write a blog, right? If you have a creative teacher, or any staff member willing to ghostwrite fun antics and observations through the eyes of a pet in a classroom, the content lends itself to clever stories (plus likes and comments). A good example of a blog written by dogs: www.ablogbydogs.com.

Take this idea a step further with the dog “observing” how kids in the classroom are learning and how proud he is when “test day” comes around. Have him speak about how hard the teachers are working.

If you’re an administrator or board member who’s known for bringing a dog to events, or just being an animal lover, use that opportunity to occasionally couch some of your observations — from reading to good sportsmanship — through the eyes of your pet. You might be surprised at the “humanizing” effect being pictured with your pet will have on your audience.

A great Instagram user

Many teachers use Instagram rather than Facebook these days, so we found an elementary teacher who does an outstanding job on his Instagram page — Josh
Renaud, who now has 1,588 followers and 1,475 posts about his projects and reptiles. www.instagram.com/mr.renaud/. Direct message your questions to @mr.renaud.

As you can see, classroom pets can give you a fresh approach to messages that reinforce what your voting public wants to hear — and draw your audience to your websites, social media, even newsletters and publications.

If you are considering purchasing a classroom pet, consider a grant through Pets in the Classroom, visit their website for resources:

**Things to consider before getting a classroom pet**
www.petsinthe classroom.org/considering-a-classroom-pet/

**Care sheets for your pet**
www.petsinthe classroom.org/pet-care-sheets/

**Grant application**
www.petsinthe classroom.org/grant-app/

*Contributed by Shannon Priem, APR, former communications director for the Oregon School Boards Association and board member of the Willamette Humane Society.*
RECOGNIZE YOUR STAFF AND EDUCATION PARTNERS

Two of the most powerful words in any language are, “Thank You.”

Everyone likes being acknowledged, recognized and appreciated for the work they do and especially for doing the extras that are not required but make such a difference. That’s true of staff and also of school volunteers and other educational partners.

A thank you is not the reason people contribute their time and expertise to our schools, but it may make all the difference in them continuing to do it.

It would be nice to be able to reward people with a little extra in their paycheck or perhaps a gift card to a nice restaurant to thank them for their service. But in truth, those who contribute so much to our schools don’t expect or even want that. Most say that the thanks that means the most is much simpler. It’s a hand-written note of appreciation, a phone call or a shout-out during a meeting.

With educational partners, it’s nice to say thanks publicly whenever possible. That not only conveys appreciation for their efforts but sets an example for other businesses or volunteers to follow.

The goal in recognizing people — whether staff, volunteers or other partners — is to make them feel valued, respected and appreciated. So, it’s important that your thanks seems sincere and heartfelt, and not just something else to check off the list.

Saying thanks takes some thought because not everyone responds in the same way to being recognized. Some enjoy stepping in front of their co-workers to receive a certificate, but others shun any spotlight. Some would just toss a certificate in a drawer while others would frame it to proudly display in their home or office. It’s good whenever possible to tailor the recognition to the person being recognized.

However, you recognize people, the simple act of doing it pays big dividends. Studies show that companies — and that includes school districts — with a solid strategy for recognizing team members see increased employee morale and lower turnover.
Here are some ideas for recognizing staff and volunteers:

**Staff**

- **Personal profile:** Highlight a different staff member every week on your school or district website or in your school newsletter. This is a great way not only to recognize individual staff members but to allow other staff and parents to get to know them better.

- **Personal touch:** Send a personal, handwritten note that gives a specific reason for the thanks.

- **Invite others to recognize coworkers:** Close each staff meeting with time where staff can recognize and thank their colleagues for whatever reason — from bringing yummy treats to share to pitching in with a project.

- **PA announcement:** Give public thank yous over the morning announcements when a staff member does something beyond the expected. For example, “A big thank you to Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones for writing and directing the second-grade holiday performance.”

- **Decorate their door:** Surprise a deserving teacher by having a small team of parents or other teachers decorate their door with fun decorations, along with a big thank you sign.

- **Food:** You can’t go wrong with food. Organize a staff breakfast or bring special treats for break time or staff meetings.

- **Car wash:** Parents could set up a car wash in the school parking lot, and wash teachers’ cars during the school day.

- **Duty-free day:** Appreciative principals could relieve teachers from recess, bus, lunch or whatever other duties they perform.

- **Kind words:** Never underestimate the impact of a sincere thank you delivered face to face.
Volunteers and other partners

- **Public thanks**: Give a shout out on social media. Adding a photo is even better. Or post a message on the school reader board or in the school newsletter, thanking volunteers and business partners.

- **Volunteer event**: Invite volunteers and other partners to a thank you lunch or dessert. Decorate the cafeteria with thank you posters made by students. Have students create special place mats.

- **Public recognition**: Getting recognized can be even more meaningful when it’s done in front of friends and community. Present a certificate of appreciation at a school board meeting. Or introduce the volunteer or community partner at a basketball game or other school event.

- **Use the media**: Have the superintendent write a letter to the editor or op-ed piece in the local newspaper, acknowledging the contribution of business partners who make a difference in your school.

- **Bulletin board**: Design a bulletin board display thanking your school volunteers and include a list of volunteers or perhaps even their photographs.

- **Enlist students**: Ask students to create thank you cards that can be given to volunteers or business partners.

- **Provide food**: Provide snacks for volunteers as they work.

- **Give certificates**: At the end of each year, give regular volunteers certificates of appreciation.

- **Give small gifts**: Give volunteers a small thank you gift, perhaps a bookmark with a quote about the important role volunteers play.

- **Handwritten card**: Sometimes the best appreciation is a simple handwritten card, thanking volunteers for a specific task.

*Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant*
Kids are influenced by what they see in the media, on social media and from their peers. This outside influence can affect their grades and social status. And it can shape how they view money and financial decisions.

Considering that many adults do not model good financial habits, early conversations with kids about money is essential to help them develop lifelong positive financial habits.

Consider these statistics about American finances:

- 19% have $0 saved to cover an emergency expense; 31% have less than $500 in emergency savings.
- Not surprisingly, about 49% of Americans are “concerned, anxious or fearful about their current financial well-being.
- Roughly 63% of American adults carry credit card debt balances.
- While the average household savings balance is $33,766.49, the median is just $5,200.
- 29% of households 55 and over have no retirement savings or pension.
  - The median net worth for Americans age 35-44 is $14,226.
  - The median for ages 55-64 is $45,447.

Teaching children about money

It is clear that more — and earlier — education would help children and teens understand how to manage money now to help them build good financial habits as adults. Understanding personal finance basics can give kids an early financial foundation and help them be prepared to absorb the lessons of their high school personal finance class.

Start with the basics: earning, saving, spending wisely and investing:

1. **Money doesn’t grow on trees.**
   When kids see parents using a card for purchases or getting money out of a machine, they may believe there is an endless supply of money. Be sure to teach them where that money comes from.

2. **Money is the reward for work we do.**
   Teach them and remind them how you get your money through your work. Money that comes from a card may seem like easy money.

3. **If it’s worth having, it’s worth saving your money.**
   Do not give in to every request for a new toy or game. Learning patience and delayed gratification at a young age will help children build savings habits and avoid debt.
4. Spending means making choices. Help your child set goals for saving money so they can be thoughtful about what they buy and whether it supports their long-term goals.

5. Understand the basics of credit and investing. It’s never too soon to start teaching kids to make good money choices. As they get older, they can begin to learn about credit, mortgages and investing.

Teach your children these 5 crucial personal finance lessons, http://bit.ly/2FK1cRg

Allowances

There are different schools of thought about whether to provide an allowance:

Kids get an allowance without doing chores.
Considered an allocation to help kids learn money management without tying it to chores, which they can simply refuse to do and forego the cash. It can also come with requirements to save some portion of the allocation.

Kids do not get an allowance at all.
No money is given, but children are expected to perform chores for the benefit of the family as a member of the family. Children can learn the value of work and contributing to the common good beyond the financial reward.

Kids get an allowance for chores.
Money is linked to chores. If children don’t do the work, they don’t get paid. The benefits are a sense of empowerment and personal control of finances through hard work. The disadvantages are that kids may refuse to help out if they aren’t motivated by money.

There doesn’t appear to be one right approach to whether allowances are helpful or not. Any of these approaches, combined with communication about costs and wages would help. Some parents choose to combine approaches — they give a base allowance and provide opportunities for additional earning for additional chores.

Resources for teaching kids about money

It’s clear that many adults could benefit from better financial literacy. Talking about money isn’t easy, but we can raise our children to be smarter about finances if we focus on education. There are many websites, games and training programs to help kids learn more about finances.

Kahn Academy has a personal finance course that covers nine different topic areas, including saving and budgeting; interest and debt; investments and retirement; income; housing; auto; taxes; paying for college; and keeping your information safe.
www.khanacademy.org/

Financial website, mint.com, has compiled links to resources to help parents raise financially savvy kids.
“Besides giving them an understanding of the value of a dollar, teaching children about fiscal responsibility helps prepare them for life in the real world. Money management is a vital life skill and it is never too early to teach kids about economics.”

This list is extensive with links to sites that have money and math games, lesson plans, podcasts, articles, activities and printable worksheets for kids.

**Ultimate resources for teaching kids about money**