

ABOUT MESSAGE MAPPING

Message mapping is a scientifically based process for developing the core statements that define an organization and assembling those statements in a framework that can be used to guide all public discussions (media interviews, speeches, presentations) as well as printed and electronic collateral (publications, websites, emails).

The process is based on decades of research, including findings that the brain processes information in series of threes (maybe fives if we are particularly gifted, with little stressors and competition for our attention). By focusing on key concepts and sound bites, we take messaging from a laundry list of bullet points with no particular order and break it down into three key communications streams that align with the goals and work of the organization.

This process was originally developed by the public health industry as a way to effectively relay complex information to a wide range of stakeholders. It has since been adopted by a number of industries, and Collaborative Communications Group currently uses it to provide structure, organization and a sense of priority to message development.

An effective message map consists of several key components:

Core Statement – This is your defining message, better known as the first sentence of your “elevator speech.” When someone asks what the campaign is about, the Core Statement is the declarative, identifying what the need is, why the campaign is credible and what you hope to achieve.

Key Messages – When you offer your Core Statement, the likely question is, “What does that mean?” The three Key Messages are designed to support the Core Statement. One (or all) of these three messages should be in all future communications related to Connected Educator Month’s efforts. These are how you explain how the ideas behind the campaign translate into calls to action for key audiences.

Support Points – When one delivers a Key Message, there can be pushback for specific proof that the message is true. The three support points under each Key Message are designed to support the Message. Ideally, these Support Points are statistics, case studies or stories from the field. As the campaign progresses, these Support Points will change to reflect new data and new ideas from your member organizations. These are only used when necessary to illustrate a point or support a statement.

As originally intended, the Map is designed to be read from top-to-bottom, left-to-right. For these purposes, the left-to-right construction isn’t as important, as we have constructed a triad of Key Messages that all feed the Core Statement. Supporting Points are ordered in place of importance, so a user of the Map knows that Support Point 1-1 is the first to deliver if pushed on Key Message 1.

The structure is intentional. The boxes are designed to keep the messages short and of useful value. As currently proposed, some of our messages run a little long. We have allowed that because we recognize this is a major shift in approach, and the messaging process will be evolutionary over the short term. As new research data or recommendations become available, for instance, that would be reflected in the Map. So please consider this an organic platform on which future communications would be rooted. We don't have to follow it word-for-word in every instance, but the key intentions should be followed so all audiences see and hear the primary messages in all vehicles, whether they be in person, in print or online.

This map is intended for a general audience, meaning was developed to have some appeal for most stakeholders. As the campaign grows and expands, we recommend developing a series of stakeholder audience-specific Message Maps, which would address the specific needs and viewpoints of priority audiences (educators, partner organizations, ed-tech leaders, administrators, policymakers, community leaders, etc.). These audience-specific Maps would be tailored from the general Map, and would reflect the same key messaging, with adjustments for specific audience needs.

As the campaign evolves, we may also consider Maps on specific issues, such as funding or other key concepts that will trigger public interest or stakeholder questioning. The map is a tool, providing a visual blueprint for effective messaging. This is not only true of the message as a whole; it also applies to the key issues or priorities for the Initiative moving forward. Ultimately, Message Maps demonstrate priorities and flow, and can be successfully used by speakers, writers and intermediaries to carry the CEM message forward.

If you are curious, many organizations will train their senior personnel on Message Maps (think of government offices dealing with multiple issues and multiple stakeholders) so the message is consistent regardless of who is delivering it. When used properly, the Core Statement and three Key Messages can be delivered to a reporter or to a stakeholder in less than 30 seconds. But that takes a little practice.

CORE STATEMENT

KEY MESSAGE #1

KEY MESSAGE #2

KEY MESSAGE #3

SUPPORT POINTS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SUPPORT POINTS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SUPPORT POINTS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.