Messages Made Simple

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR EXPANDED LEARNING

every hour counts

Messages Made Simple

This messaging toolkit is for organizations that use expanded learning to improve opportunities and outcomes for youth. It builds on a collaborative process conducted by Every Hour Counts partners and is available to organizations working in expanded learning, organizations that are building expanded-learning systems, and anyone else who wants to communicate clearly about this important work.

The toolkit focuses on helping the field use clear, crisp, consistent language. In addition to providing strategies and tips for communicating effectively, it provides language to explain the value of expanded learning, the work of intermediaries, and the role of expanded-learning systems in improving outcomes for youth.

THE TOOLKIT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

Three Messaging Principles. The three principles that should guide all communications about expanded learning and expanded-learning systems.

Speaking to Your Audiences. A discussion of which messages resonate with different audiences, including tips for communicating with specific audiences and pitfalls to avoid.

Messages as Building Blocks. This document provides key messages for communicating about expanded learning and systems building — and selling expanded-learning systems as an important investment for communities and cities. Messages are presented as individual elements, or building blocks. Put them together in the order that best suits you, and add your own data and stories to customize them. For example, you'll find language to explain the need for expanded learning, the importance of investing in systems, and the benefits (positive results) of expanded learning. You'll also find ideas for transitioning to new language, such as ways to introduce the term *expanded learning*.

Three Strategies for Effective Storytelling. Personal stories about the young people you serve are your most effective tool. Use them to explain your work and encourage your audiences to act. These strategies will help you tell stories in ways that resonate, whether you are speaking, writing, or using social media.

Worksheet for Organizing Messages. Use this worksheet to make sure your communications are effective.

Messaging Research. This summary of Every Hour Counts' messaging research provides the rationale for the messages and recommendations in this toolkit.

three reasons to use this messaging toolkit

There are six sections to this toolkit, including a worksheet that you can fill out, in order to more effectively communicate with your specific audiences.

1   **It's yours for the taking.** Read through the entire toolkit and use the parts you find most helpful. Some organizations may use everything; others may have need for only one or two pieces. Feel free to cut and paste language, particularly from the **Messages as Building Blocks** section, and use the **Worksheet for Organizing Messages** to customize your communications for particular audiences.

2   **Repetition is a key part of persuasion.** People need to hear the same ideas repeatedly, from a variety of sources, before they sink in. And that repetition is most effective when the language is the same. If you use the same words, your audiences don't have to work so hard to realize they are hearing the same ideas over and over.

3   **You can make it your own.** Nine leading organizations (the Every Hour Counts partners) worked on this messaging, and they find it helpful. You can join a national movement by using the same basic messaging, such as the same terms and the same definition of an expanded-learning system — and you can customize the messages to make them your own. Add specifics about your organization and details about your neighborhoods, your students, your results, and your impact. Only you can tell these stories because they are about your community. And they can be the most powerful part of your messaging. But put them in the context of the movement to help you make your point.

Three Messaging Principles

The messages and strategies in this toolkit are based on three principles.

1. Focus on outcomes rather than process.

Process messages define an organization by how it does its work. *We build systems, we bring people together, we build bridges.*

Outcomes messages focus on the content of the work — the kids — and results: providing educational opportunity to students, particularly underserved students; improving attendance rates; and helping kids connect learning with the activities that most interest them.

The content and the outcomes — helping children — unify your work. And fortunately, that's exactly what your external audiences want to hear.

This does not mean that you can never talk about process. However, you should always lead with outcomes. And when you need to be brief, outcomes take priority over process.

> **NOTE**
>
> Outcomes can be defined in a variety of ways. For example, if you are helping providers increase program attendance, explain your goal and cite your increased program attendance figures to show results. And include research data that links program attendance with better performance in schools. (It does not have to be your own research; it can be any research from the field.)
>
> If you don't have data from your own program, use national facts or data from similar programs. You will find national data in the *Messages as Building Blocks* section of the toolkit.
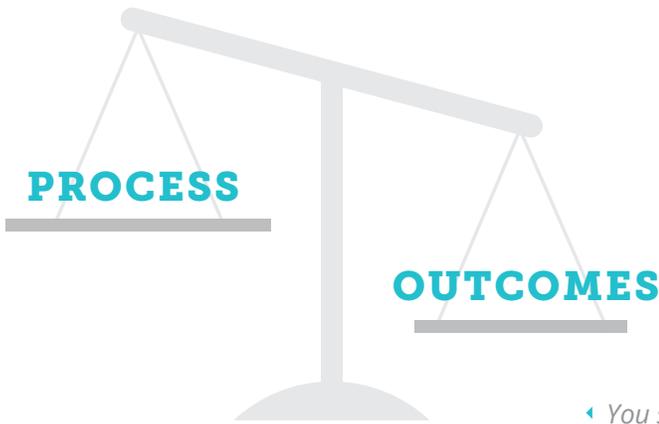
PROCESS

OUTCOMES

‣ You should always lead with outcomes. And when you need to be brief, outcomes take priority over process.

2. Use language that makes sense to external audiences.

For most systems builders, external audiences will include a combination of funders, policymakers, local government, parents, students, and educators.

Your messages must speak to these external audiences — to the people you want to convince. Otherwise, you're essentially talking to yourself.

In crafting these messages, we spoke to members of these external audiences. They don't want to hear about process or jargon or about the importance of systems. They want to hear about results — the end game. So keep the focus on the children you are helping, why they need this help, and the difference your work makes.

3. Tell key audiences what's in it for them.

As stated in principle #2, above, external audiences care about outcomes, not process. They care about results — in particular, results that help them attain their own goals.

Some of these audiences already are on board with what your organization is doing. For example, they appreciate messages about the intrinsic value of social and emotional learning and systems. But we can't effect change by talking to those who already agree. We have to show audiences how the work helps them reach their own goals.

For example, policymakers have to get re-elected, and school leaders are concerned with meeting state requirements. For them, we have to connect the work to the educational outcomes they desire — such as the development of 21st-century skills, better performance in school, higher graduation rates, and college readiness.

Speaking to Your Audiences

Focus on Your Audiences' Motivation

While most of your audiences need to know the same things about your organization, you should emphasize parts of your messages with different audiences.

Your decisions about what to emphasize will depend on factors such as how much your audiences already know about your work and what actions you want them to take. Most important, you need to know what motivates each of your audiences. For example, policymakers have to get re-elected and school leaders need to meet state requirements. Effective messages connect your desired action — what you want an audience to do — with the audience's existing motivation. The Worksheet for Organizing Messages can help you think through key messages for each audience.

Tips for Communicating With Key Audiences

For all audiences, focus on your organization's unique value. Then, connect your value to the issues that matter most to each of your audiences (e.g., helping underserved students, balancing their budget, or helping their schools).

- **Policymakers** need short, persuasive summaries with background information that provides more detail. Focus on the need and solutions, with emphasis on cost savings

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Include student voices whenever possible. In many cases, youth are the best messengers to communicate your impact.

or efficiencies that allow more students to get the support they need. Make your case more tangible with stories, quotes, or in-person meetings with students. If possible, invite policymakers to see your program in action. Lead with results that show why building an expanded-learning system works rather than with a discussion of what system building is.

- **Funders** usually have very specific goals, so tie your approach to their funding priorities. If they are focused on improving academics, focus on your programs' connection to and support for in-school learning. If they are focused on community building, emphasize your role in building relationships and nurturing students and their families. Make your case more tangible with stories, quotes, or in-person meetings with students.

- **Educators** are interested in support that helps them do a better job without compromising their autonomy or adding to their already-full workload. Teachers often feel as if many people are telling them how to do their jobs. Start from your common ground — helping their students succeed — and build, respectfully, from there.

- **Parents** are interested in what is best for their children and programming that meets their logistical needs. Explain what you offer their children and how their children will benefit. And emphasize anything you provide that simplifies their logistics, such as free transportation or meals and snacks. Do not include explanations of systems or intermediaries, but do include student stories.

- **Students** need the same information as parents but with a language and tone that will appeal to them. The youth voice is invaluable for this audience.

Pitfalls to Avoid With Any Audience

PITFALL #1. USING JARGON OR VAGUE TERMS.

Audiences get frustrated when organizations use words that are important to them but mean little to others.

For example, in interviews with external stakeholders, one person responded to a jargon-laden paragraph with, *"Where is the child in all of this language?"* Another example of frustration with language was, *"Don't use the term 'sustainable.' I'm not sure what that means."*

Make sure every word you use carries meaning to your audience.

PITFALL #2. FORGETTING TO PUT YOUR AUDIENCES' NEEDS FIRST.

You want to gain understanding and support (and funding) for your ideas. You want to change behavior and influence policy. And that means reaching and convincing those who don't already agree with you.

You are unlikely to win hearts and change minds by asking external audiences to think about, care about, and buy into what matters to you. Instead, tie your work to what *your audiences* already care about. Make their needs the priority.

This is not to say that you should pull back on what you believe. You can make the case for the value of your work. But your audiences are more likely to hear that argument if you start by explaining your work in terms of what is important to them. Do they care about helping students? Saving money? Helping their schools do a better job? Start where your viewpoint intersects with theirs, and build from that common ground.

PITFALL #3. FOCUSING ON WHAT (PROCESS) INSTEAD OF WHY (OUTCOMES).

Avoid responding to the question "What does your organization do?" with an answer about process, such as, "We set up structures that help community organizations teach perseverance and problem-solving skills." This response doesn't mention what your audiences most care about: the students you are helping. And it positions your organization at least three steps away from the action.
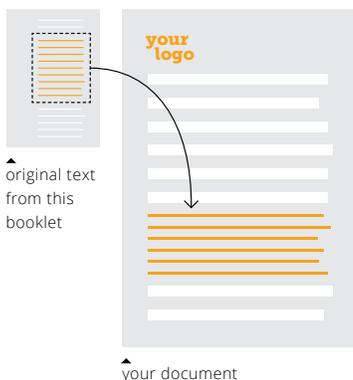
Even though the question begins with *what*, focus on the *why* when you answer it. You do this work to help students, so make sure that comes through in your response. For example: "We improve underserved students' access to high-quality learning and enrichment through after-school and summer initiatives. The content of these expanded-learning activities varies, from science to performing arts, nature studies, and sports. But they all help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, develop critical-thinking skills, and connect with caring adults.

Messages As Building Blocks

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In the following pages, this sidebar will have insights and tips for you to consider when developing your messages.

The following pages provide key messages about the value of expanded learning and systems building — as both important investments and agents of community improvement.

The messages are presenting as individual elements, or building blocks. The left column describes the type of message, and the right column provides the language.

Use the messages that meet your needs for each audience, and put them together in the order that best suits you. Most important, emphasize your distinct value. Add your own data, details about your work, and stories about your students and community. Those are the elements that will bring your messaging to life. Other elements in this toolkit — Speaking to Your Audiences, Worksheet for Organizing Messages, and Three Strategies for Effective Storytelling — can help you customize these messages.

Cut and paste the language into your own document so you can customize it to reflect your particular expanded-learning system. Note that some points appear more than once because they fit with more than one message. If you are combining messages that use the same idea, edit the text to eliminate the repetition.

The document begins with definitions for expanded learning, expanded-learning system, and intermediary. These definitions can help you explain your work. Elements of these definitions also are woven into the messages, which follow the definitions.

Copy text from this document & place into your own templates.

original text from this booklet

your document

key terms

Expanded Learning

* This language can be helpful during a transition from OST or another term to expanded learning.

Expanded learning engages students in high-quality academic support and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. While it incorporates the best aspects of after-school and OST programs, it goes beyond these efforts in a variety of ways. Expanded-learning systems may coordinate efforts with schools so academic support is continuous, engage community members in teaching and supporting young people, and provide long-term adult mentors. Through expanded learning, students learn by exploring content that interests them, often with hands-on experience.

Expanded-Learning System

An expanded-learning system replaces a patchwork of fragmented service providers with a cohesive team that includes public agencies, service providers, businesses, funders, and schools. This team engages students in high-quality expanded learning — academic support and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. It emphasizes improving access for underserved students, using resources efficiently, improving quality, and delivering results.

The content of expanded-learning activities varies, from science to performing arts, nature studies, and sports. But they all help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, develop critical-thinking skills, and connect with caring adults. Expanded-learning experiences typically are coordinated with in-school activities, and in a growing number of cities, they are incorporated into the school day.

Intermediary

[Name of your organization] is often referred to as an intermediary. That term describes an organization that builds and develops an expanded-learning system. We unite stakeholders around a shared mission, coordinate and maximize resources, and drive improvement throughout our system.

messages

The need for expanded learning

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Focus on needs that will resonate with your community, such as better academics, keeping students safe, etc.
Paint a picture of what is missing in your community, and focus on the gaps your organization fills.

1. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Giving-Employers-What-They/139877/

Today we expect more from our students and graduates than ever before. Not only are academic expectations rising, but also employers say they want more emphasis on critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.[1]

With ever-increasing expectations, it's not surprising that schools struggle to squeeze everything — academics as well as social and emotional skills — into a six-hour day. So where and when do students learn these skills?

Learning has to continue outside of school, with music lessons, sports, academic support, and other activities. Unfortunately, students from underserved communities, who typically have the greatest need for additional enrichment, are least likely to get it. They also are less likely to know about the world around them — that they live a mile from the ocean, can visit their city's museums, and are welcome to walk through a nearby college campus.

The solution

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Show how your services meet the needs you described.

2. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_National_Report.pdf

An expanded-learning system engages students in high-quality learning and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. It emphasizes improving access for underserved students, using resources efficiently, improving quality, and delivering results.

While expanded learning incorporates the best aspects of after-school and OST programs, it goes beyond these efforts in a variety of ways. Expanded-learning systems may coordinate efforts with schools so academic support is continuous, engage community members in teaching and supporting young people, and provide long-term adult mentors. Through expanded learning, students learn by exploring content that interests them, often with hands-on experience.

Expanded-learning fills critical gaps in students' education and life experiences. Expanded learning teaches students about academics, collaboration, and problem solving. Young people not only learn how to do better in school, they find new ways to ignite their passions — and to engage in learning and life.

3. Retrieved from http://www.russellsage.org/node/4036

4. http://expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.wzLSv0lQ.i5bVKU2Z.dpbs

Expanded learning also leads to measurable results. A decade of research and evaluation indicates that young people who regularly participate in quality after-school programs benefit in terms of academic performance, social and emotional learning, prevention, and health and wellness.

Yet despite these benefits, more than 19 million young people in America lack access to high-quality after-school programs.[2] In most cases, families' income levels shape their options. Affluent families typically spend close to $8,900 per child each year on enrichment, compared to families in the lowest income quintile, who spend slightly more than $1,300 per child each year.[3] As a result, by 6th grade, kids born into poverty are likely to suffer a 6,000-hour learning gap compared with their middle-class peers.[4] This has less to do with time spent in the classroom than with what happens beyond the traditional school day — after-school activities, summer camp, and weekend day trips to cultural institutions.

Expanded-Learning Systems in Action

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Concrete, specific examples and results are the best ways to explain the value of your work. This messaging uses stories from a few Every Hour Counts partners as examples. Customize it with a story about your organization.

The content of expanded-learning activities varies, from science to performing arts, nature studies, and sports. But they all help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, develop critical-thinking skills, and connect with caring adults.

For example, at PS 188 in Manhattan, **ExpandED Schools** has joined with the school's leadership to redefine how learning is delivered. Teams of teachers and community educators develop lessons that complement the in-school curriculum. These lessons, taught by teachers and community educators, happen either after school or during the school day. For instance, a 1st-grade teacher worked with an after-school teaching artist to help students perform puppet shows using the short stories that they wrote in language arts class.

Boston Public Schools partnered with the community group Sociedad Latina to create a pilot summer school program that improves students' math and literacy skills. Using a hands-on approach to learning, teachers presented concepts like fractions and then reinforced them with activities, such as playing music and cooking, that built on the students' interests.

Through its after-school and summer enrichment programs, *Providence's* **AfterZone** gives students time to discover their passions — and adult support to build on what they enjoy and to develop skills for their futures. Students participate in a range of programs, from sailing, which teaches them math and meteorology, to solar-powered go-kart construction, which introduces them to green engineering and mechanics. All programs are led by community educators with expertise in relevant professional fields. "AfterZone offers support figures," recalls a program alum. 'They offer adults who care, who listen to you, who ask you what you want to learn. It's student motivated. That's the gap that AfterZone fills."

AfterZone is led by the **Providence After School Alliance (PASA)**, which continually assesses the initiative and uses the findings to improve. It builds quality into its programming by bringing educators together, agreeing on indicators for success, monitoring program quality, and creating shared action steps based on evaluations. This commitment to continuous improvement is paying off: Independent evaluators have found that 99 percent of middle school students who attended more than 100 days of PASA's AfterZone program graduated from high school. Among students who attended between 50 and 100 days, 97 percent graduated.

Why Invest in System Building: Expanded Learning Results

5. Katz, C. (2004). "Afterschool programs a top municipal priority, survey finds." Nation's Cities Weekly 27(20).

The expanded-learning system is the most effective way to give underserved students quality educational and enrichment activities beyond the school day, and a growing number of cities are recognizing the benefits these systems provide. In fact, in a 2004 survey, 22 percent of local elected officials said after-school care is their community's most critical program need.[5]

A decade of research and evaluation studies, as well as large-scale, rigorously conducted meta analyses, indicate that young people who regularly participate in quality after-school programs benefit in terms of academic performance, social and emotional learning, prevention, and health and wellness. They have improved school attendance; higher graduation rates; lower dropout rates; stronger academic performance; and improved positive behaviors, work habits, and persistence.

6. Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents." American Journal of Community Psychology 45: 294–309.

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These are examples from research in the field and Every Hour Counts partners. Use your own data or, if you don't yet have results, use national data or data from programs similar to your own.

7. Kauh, T. J. (2011). AfterZone: Outcomes for youth participating in Providence's citywide after-school system. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

8. Traill, S., Brohawn, K., & Caruso, C. (2013). More and better learning: Year One report on ExpandED Schools. New York, NY: The After-School Corporation.

9. George, R., Cusick, G. R., Wasserman, M., & Gladden, R. M. (2007). After-school programs and academic impact: A study of Chicago's After School Matters. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

10. Durlak et al., 2010.

11. Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007). Outcomes linked to high-quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs. Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

ATTENDANCE AND GRADUATION RATES IMPROVE

- Students who participated in after-school programs that followed evidence-based practices for skill building showed a 6-percentile increase in attendance.[6]

- After two years of participation in Providence's AfterZone, students were absent from school 25 percent less than their peers who did not participate.[7]

- After one year, ExpandED Schools in New York City reduced chronic absenteeism from 17 percent to 15 percent. At the same time, the percentage of students with exemplary attendance increased from 49 percent to 55 percent.[8]

- Chicago teens who were part of After School Matters for at least three program cycles were nearly two and a half times more likely to graduate than their non-participating peers.[9]

ACADEMIC SKILLS, GRADES, AND TEST SCORES IMPROVE

- Students who participated in after-school programs that followed evidence-based practices for skill building showed a 9-percentile increase in grades and an 8-percentile increase in test scores.[10]

- Low-income elementary and middle school students in cities and rural areas who regularly attended quality after-school programs demonstrated a 12-percentile increase in standardized math test scores relative to their peers who did not attend.[11]

- A 2012 study of students in three California communities showed that students who participated in high-quality summer learning programs improved their vocabulary by one-third of a grade level.[12]

- After two years of participation in Providence's AfterZone, 7th graders' math performance was nearly one-third of a grade level stronger than that of their peers who did not participate.[13]

- In 2011–12, New York City students in ExpandED Schools improved their math proficiency at more than double the rate of citywide improvement.[14]

12. Public Profit. (2013). Summer Matters: 2012 program evaluation. Retrieved from http://partnerforchildren. org/storage/documents/2012- 13-summer_matters_ casestudy_stc.pdf

13. Kauh, 2011.

14. Traill et al., 2013.

15. Durlak et al., 2010.

16. Vandell et al., 2007.

17. Halpern, R. (2006). "After- School Matters in Chicago: Apprenticeship as a model for youth programming." Youth and Society 38(2): 203–235.

18. Public Profit, 2013.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS IMPROVE

- Students who participated in after-school programs that followed evidence-based practices for skill building increased their positive social behaviors by 11 percent.[15]

- Low-income elementary and middle school students in cities and rural areas who regularly attended quality after-school programs demonstrated significant gains in work habits and task persistence.[16]

- Teens who participated in Chicago's After School Matters improved their ability to work in groups, communicate effectively, plan and meet deadlines, and cooperate with flexibility.[17]

- Nine of 10 parents of students who participated in California's Summer Matters reported that the summer programs helped their children get along better with other children.[18]

Budget Implications

Expanded-learning systems in cities across the country have successfully leveraged funds to bring opportunity to young people. For example:

- For every dollar initially invested by Open Society Foundations (OSF), ExpandED Schools raised $6 in public and private funds to establish the first citywide system of daily, comprehensive after-school programs. All together, in its first decade, ExpandED Schools generated $538 million— more than a 4:1 return on OSF's original $125 million investment —and scaled a robust, evidence-based model.

- Through ExpandED Schools' early work in New York City, the mayor invested in a sustainable system for after-school programming. Today, the city's annual investment is more than $340 million.

- Through outreach and technical assistance, Partnership for Children and Youth has helped schools in Bay Area low-income communities bring in more than $90 million in public dollars for after-school and summer programs.

- In Nashville, community builders, led by the Nashville AfterZone Alliance, have worked with the mayor and city council to invest $5.5 million in new funding for high-quality expanded learning over the past six years. As a result, more than 5,000 high-need middle and high school students have experienced invaluable opportunities after school and during the summer, at no cost, with transportation provided.

The Role of Intermediaries

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Be specific and include results. For example, don't provide the vague statement, "We build bridges." Instead say, "We build relationships that …" and complete the sentence with concrete benefits: "We build relationships that increase efficiency, leading to savings of $1 million over three years."

The engine of an expanded-learning system is an organization called an intermediary. It unites stakeholders around a shared mission, coordinates and maximizes resources, and drives improvement throughout the community.

AN INTERMEDIARY'S WORK INCLUDES:

- **Increasing access** by raising funds and targeting resources to where they are most needed, as well as guiding policy change that supports expanded learning.

- **Driving improved student outcomes** by coordinating expanded learning with in-school learning.

- **Improving efficiency** by building relationships that help public agencies, funders, service providers, schools, and parents work together. Intermediaries also streamline logistics and operations, from scheduling facility use to providing transportation and snacks, creating a unified, cost-effective system.

- **Promoting continuous improvement** by collecting data about program effectiveness; setting shared expectations for quality, leading multi-year planning efforts; and providing training and professional development.

An intermediary elevates a community's expanded-learning programming by helping stakeholders become a cohesive team that can plan for the whole community's needs, make better use of resources, and learn from one another.

Intermediaries have helped raise millions of private and public dollars and create dedicated funding streams for expanded-learning opportunities. They have developed cost-effective program models to reach and engage more young people, and they have established quality standards and systems to improve quality and accountability.

elevator speech

Tips for Crafting an Elevator Speech

The elevator speech — a succinct description of an organization and its work — is a key part of any organization's messaging. An elevator speech can take a variety of forms, and it must be unique to your organization. If you are developing an elevator speech, consider these questions:

1

What is your distinct value?
What sets you apart?

2

What problems do you solve,
and how do you solve them?

3

What results can you demonstrate?

The answers to these questions can provide the basis for a strong elevator speech.

Three Strategies for Effective Storytelling

Storytelling That Inspires People to Act

Storytelling is the key to powerful messaging. It paints a picture that allows people to envision your work. It makes your work concrete. And most important, it makes your work personal. Use these strategies to craft stories that inspire people to care — and to act.
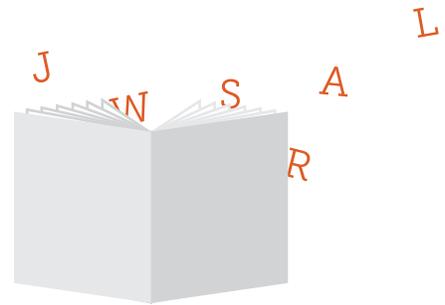
1. Find the right storyteller.

You have many good stories about your work — and many potential storytellers. The most likely candidates are those who most directly benefit from your actions: students and their families.

But other storytellers might be effective for certain audiences. A teacher can talk about how his or her students improved and your program's effect on his or her teaching. A community member can encourage others to volunteer by sharing his or her experience working with students. And public officials can talk about the impact of policies on the community.

If the situation allows, pair storytellers with complementary perspectives so audiences can hear multiple points of view.

2. Craft a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

A story is not a list of needs or accomplishments. It's a narrative that engages people. It has a beginning that sets the stage, a middle that draws people in, and an end that provides a satisfying resolution or questions to ponder.

One way to construct an effective story is to use this model: problem, solution, result. Here is an example told from a student's perspective:

- **Problem.** Explain the situation, such as: "Last year, I wasn't doing well in school because I felt different from the other kids. They weren't nice to me so I couldn't be myself. I felt isolated, and I was having trouble at home so there was no place where I felt comfortable."

- **Solution.** "My English teacher suggested [summer program]." Or, "My mom heard about [after-school program] at a back-to-school night." Explain how the student got involved and include specifics that help listeners envision what he or she did. Go into detail about an activity, such as dance class, building a go-kart, extra math help, etc. Describe the people who made it powerful, such as mentors who listened or peers who accepted me.

- **Result.** Talk about the program's impact. "Now I have friends I can talk to," or "I'm ready to try things that would have scared me before," or "I believe I can do anything if I try."

3. Ask people to act.

You are telling your story to engage people and encourage them to act. Other elements of this toolkit help you identify what you want audiences to do. Storytelling is an entry point for asking them to do it. Explicitly ask people to take whatever action you want them to take: Help more students like [name of student] have these opportunities by donating (money or time), supporting a particular policy, etc.

Storytelling Through Social Media

Social media is about building community. Don't depend on it to raise money or get a particular result from your audiences. Instead use it to share stories, tell people about resources they can use or ways they can get involved, and build trust. Most important, use social media to get feedback from your audiences — and then add their voice to your own.

STRATEGIES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Use the same approach to storytelling, but keep your posts brief. If possible give a few sentences and link to a video or print version of the story.

- Use images whenever possible because images put your posts higher in people's feeds. (Video is best, but still images work, too.)

- Encourage others to comment on your stories by asking questions. And encourage them to share your stories with others.

- Post multiple times about the same story because people won't necessarily see your first post. Use different angles (a different perspective, a different emphasis, etc.) so you aren't repeating the same post.

- Use trending themes, such as Throwback Thursday, as a hook to discuss what's important to you.

- Be bold. Social media works best for you when others share your postings.

Worksheet for Organizing Messages

Use this worksheet — along with Messages as Building Blocks, Speaking to Your Audiences, and Three Strategies for Effective Storytelling — to develop and organize your messages. Use one row for each audience.

Start with the columns on the left — your desired action and audience's goals.

It can be tempting to jump to column 4 and say, "We need to tell people X." And perhaps you do need to convey that information. But first be clear about whom you need to reach, what you want them to do, and what their goals are. The most powerful messages motivate audiences by connecting those three items. And don't neglect column 6. That content will bring your messages to life by making them personal and concrete.

Target Audience: **Who are you speaking to?**					
Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
What do you want this audience to do to support your agenda?	What does this audience need or want to happen? (For example, policymakers have to get re-elected and school leaders need to meet state requirements.)	Which messages from Messages as Building Blocks (e.g., the need or results) will best connect column 2 to column 3 and motivate this audience?	What message from column 4 is most important? This is the message you should lead with.	Organize the other messages from column 4 in order of priority.	Be sure to highlight local data and/or stories about students and families.

Target Audience: **Policymakers**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
1	2	3	4	5	6

Target Audience: **Funders**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
1	2	3	4	5	6

Target Audience: **Educators**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
1	2	3	4	5	6

Target Audience: **Parents**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
1	2	3	4	5	6

Target Audience: **Students**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
❶	❷	❸	❹	❺	❻

Target Audience: **Others**

Your desired action:	Audience's goals:	Relevant messages:	Priority message:	Secondary messages:	Local Details:
❶	❷	❸	❹	❺	❻

Messaging Research

Why Conduct Research?

Every Hour Counts conducted research to inform its messaging work — and ultimately to inform the information in this toolkit. The research focused on how best to explain expanded learning, systems, and intermediaries.

This summary of the messaging research provides the rationale for the messages and recommendations in this toolkit. We hope these findings provide useful insights for your own messaging work.

Messaging Research Process

Every Hour Counts worked with Next Chapter Communications to re-name the organization and develop messages for the field.

This work included research with the field. In summer 2013, KSA-Plus conducted telephone interviews with 15 people whose work is connected to the field of expanded learning or who are opinion leaders in education. Interviewees included foundations, school systems, systems builders, policymakers, and education thought leaders.

The initial research tested perceptions of the field, names and taglines for the organization, and specific messaging language. In fall 2013, Next Chapter Communications conducted follow-up research on a few key points by email.

The summary of research findings begins on the next page. All bullet points in italics are direct quotes from interviewees. The quotes are representative of the overall findings.

Messaging Research Findings and Recommendations

TOP THREE FINDINGS

1. Interviewees were most enthusiastic about language that emphasized children and learning.

2. Interviewees recommended that the field clearly explain what makes systems building different from other work with students, with a focus on outcomes for students.

3. Interviewees wanted the work explained in terms of what matters to them.

Examples of Interviewee Statements

"It should be about the what, not about the how."

"Focus on the kids, not the system, not the entity that is building something."

"My bias is toward outcomes. [Messages] that start with 'coalition' or 'building systems' hurt me in the stomach. They seem super input-oriented. They don't seem to be about kids, which is really problematic."

> " You have to talk about children and achievement. In my city, we're trying to bring early childhood in from the cold and integrate it into the K–12 system. It's interesting to see what that means in terms of how people in that industry talk about their work. They have to give up some of what they consider special in order to be heard and understood outside their own sector. "

"The human being wants to know what happens to other human beings. Talk about the systems work after you talk about the impact."

"I know the goal is quality enrichment, but that's an input. It would be better to know the outcomes."

"People who work in niches often believe the things that make sense to them implicitly have value to others. You have to show why it matters."

"Focus on helping young people reach their potential."

"Don't tell your process. Tell your goals and outcomes. Talk to people about people."

"People don't want to know about the process or the how. They want to know results."

"A focus on being cost-effective is always great."

"People talk all the time in platitudes about doing more and coordinating more. It will have more impact if you talk about outcomes — reducing dropout rates and raising graduation rates. The later language about connecting kids to caring adults and skill building gets at the specifics more."

Findings related to the terms *system* and *intermediary*

The research tested terms to replace the terms *system* and *intermediary*. No single term captures all of the nuance, and any term would need to be defined. Several interviewees, however, said that *expanded-learning system* was clearer than *system* as a standalone.

Thus, the Every Hour Counts team decided to continue using the term *intermediary* and to begin using *expanded-learning system* in place of *system*.

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEWEE STATEMENTS:

"Expanded-learning system is better than system. It's better with some context."

"The description of intermediary is very good."

> " Intermediary is a term I use, and it's a tough one, but it's what they are. It's more important to define it [than to rename it]. This definition captures it. "

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS