Advocating for School Health: Presenting an Effective Case to Decision Makers

Cheryl Vince Whitman
WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
Health and Human Development Programs
Education Development Center, Inc.

Mega-Country Meeting: School Health Component
IUHPE, France

July 15, 2001
Our Challenge:

Convince *decision makers* to take actions that invest in and strengthen school health programmes.
FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health): 4 core, cost-effective strategies, carried out together:

- Health-related school policies
- Safe water and sanitation
- Skills-based health education
- Health and nutrition services
School Health Programmes are Important Because They....

- Improve academic performance
- Improve enrollment, retention add absenteeism
- Build on investments in early childhood
- Benefit teachers’ health, morale, & quality of instruction
School Health Programmes Are Important Because They:

- Are cost-effective
- Reduce social and gender inequities
- Reduce disease in the community
- Promote youth development and prevent or reduce risk behaviors
Objectives for This Session

- Discuss principles of persuasion & communication strategies
- Share how these principles & strategies apply to your experience
- Develop & present case to decision makers
- Provide resources & tools to take home
Agenda for This Session

- Discuss & share principles of persuasion & communication strategies 10:00 – 10:35
- (In small groups) Develop case to present to decision makers 10:35 – 11:15
- Present your case to large group 11:15 – 11:45
- Summarize and review resources 11:45 – 12:00
Principles of Persuasion

- What factors cause one person to say “Yes” to another person?
- What techniques produce this result?
“Gravity Curves Space”

–Einstein

- Influence works like gravity: It doesn’t actually touch others. You can’t force people to think or act a certain way.
- Instead, your ideas and knowledge can shape the environment of their thinking.

From Communications Briefings, 101 Ways to Influence People on the Job (Briefings Publishing Group, 1998)

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
Six Principles of Persuasion
(Meeting Audience Self-Interest)

1. Commitment and Consistency
2. Social Proof
3. Scarcity
4. Reciprocation (Give and Take)
5. Authority
6. Liking the Person Who Is Persuading You

Each of these principles makes a person want to say “Yes” to another person


HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
1. Commitment and Consistency

- Once people commit, they tend to behave consistently with that commitment.
- Even small acts gain commitment.
- A written statement helps secure commitment.
2. Social Proof

People often use information about how others behave to decide what they do.
3. Scarcity

“The way to love anything is to realize it might be lost.” —G.K. Chesterton

- Is this opportunity available only once?
- If I don’t act now, will I lose this chance?
4. Reciprocation (Give and Take)

- People usually try to repay, in kind, what another has given.
- How do societies tend to treat people who don’t return favors?
People with titles and significant knowledge can exert a lot of influence.
6. Liking

We prefer to say “Yes” to requests from people we know or like.
The Tipping Point

How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference

Malcolm Gladwell

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
Tipping Point – Social Epidemics

- Law of the Few – change is driven by small numbers of exceptional people
- Making an Idea Stick – power of a memorable idea
- Power of Context – the surrounding community supports these people’s beliefs and decisions
How might these principles apply to your experience with making a case to support School Health Programmes?
Communication Strategies: 3 Essential Components:

Presenter ➔ Message ➔ Audience
The Presenter Needs To Be . . .

- Attentive to the audience’s needs
- Trustworthy
- Confident
- Clear
Assess Your Audience

◆ Does your audience understand the issue?

◆ Can your audience do something about it?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Extremely Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understands</td>
<td>Doesn’t understand</td>
<td>Understands</td>
<td>Doesn’t understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No constraints to act</td>
<td>Once understands can act</td>
<td>Opposes action</td>
<td>Once understands opposes action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How easy is it to influence your audience?**

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
Message Triangle:
3 key points and the action you want your audience to take

1. _______
   message

2. _______
   message

3. _______
   message

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
Effective Messages ...

- Are simple
- Balance facts with emotion & human stories
- Avoid jargon & complex data
- Use specific examples
- Use vivid language and images the audience can easily imagine
- Use analogies, metaphors, or one-liners
What will your case for school health emphasize?

- Quality of life for children and teachers?
- A link between education and health?
- A way to achieve national educational goals?
- The cost savings of prevention?
- A national investment in human capital?
- The chance to be part of the growing global movement?
Imagine...

- You enter the elevator and find your minister of education, or another important person, who can advance your school health programme.
- In the short ride to the 10th floor, what will you say to encourage this person to take a specific action to support school health?
In small groups, we would like you to:

- Assess your audience
- Use the message triangle to develop a case to your audience
- Each group chooses 2 people to present the elevator speech: the presenter and the decision maker
Who is the audience you want to influence?

- Name:
- Title:
- Role:
Assess Your Audience:

What are his or her major self-interests?

1.

2.

3.
Plan Your Message:
What action do you want the person to take in support of school health?

1. What action?________

2. Why?________

3. What benefits?________

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
How easy or difficult will it be to influence your audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Extremely Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understands</td>
<td>Doesn’t understand</td>
<td>Understands</td>
<td>Doesn’t understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No constraints</td>
<td>Once understands can act</td>
<td>Opposes action</td>
<td>Once understands opposes action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pick a box and write in it what the decision maker knows and why that person might oppose action.
What will your 3 key points be?

1. What action?_________

2. Why?_________  

3. What benefits?_________
In Summary, the Three Messages of Making a Case

1. Assess and know your audience.

2. The Message Triangle can focus your message development.

3. Effective communication involves Presenter ↔ Message ↔ Audience

HHD/EDC, WHO Collaborating Center to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities
For further information, please contact:

Ms. Cheryl Vince Whitman
Senior Vice President
Education Development Center, Inc.
Director, Health and Human Development Programs
55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458-1060, USA
E-mail: Cvincewhitman@edc.org
Phone: 1-800-225-4276
Fax: 1-617-527-4096