

Center for School Change Reminders for Reformers

1. Have some clear, measurable goals. Use multiple measures to report progress. (see CSC Report, *What Should We Do?*, at www.centerforschoolchange.org, publications area)
2. Set priorities for the next week, month, 6 months. Everything can't be an immediate priority.
3. People will talk...the only issue is how much accurate information they'll have. How will you communicate with people who rarely if ever come into your school?
 - a. Parents, community members, state legislators and members of Congress (House and Senate) should know your school well. Students and parents are your best allies in getting these people to your school. Your school should have a strong, ongoing effort to communicate about itself. Political leaders often like to talk, as well as listen. So invite them to speak to classes.
 - b. Begin the school year (in August) with a family / student / educator conference (see separate info on this issue). Remember, families will get questions. How much help will you give them in answering those questions?
 - c. Speeches / presentations to service groups, senior citizen groups, business organizations, etc.
 - d. Student work placed in grocery stores, fast food franchises, gas stations, banks, libraries, etc.
 - e. Radio talk shows
 - f. Brochures placed throughout the community (libraries, barber shops, beauticians, etc.)
 - g. Participation in community events (parades, community music and theatre, etc.)
 - h. Public exhibitions every 6-8 weeks of student knowledge
 - i. **Think about the 15-20 most influential people in your community. Can they be members of a community advisory committee that meets once or twice a year?** Think about real estate agents, ministers, beauticians, barbers, etc, as well as newspaper editors and elected leaders.
4. Ask for a meeting before school starts with education reporter and person(s) who write(s) editorials - review your goals, strategies, evaluation methods. Give her / him your home phone number. Return calls immediately.
5. Create an annual report. It can include information regarding student achievement, community activities, parent and family involvement, financial information, major achievements of the school, etc. As soon as possible, begin surveying graduates and sharing results.
6. Look for ways to combine classroom work and community service. **Become known as a place where people/organizations can go to get help.**
7. Mistakes will happen. If you openly acknowledge mistakes and agree to try doing better, the vast majority of people will forgive you.
8. Develop rules for disagreeing. You can wipe out a program quickly with internal politics and squabbles. Agree on how you will handle internal disagreements. Agree ahead of time how you will disagree -without being disagreeable.
9. Identify some qualified "outside" individual or group that can help you with periodic assessment. This can give you a more useful assessment, and add to the credibility of your evaluation work.
10. Retain a sense of humor. This is very hard work. Laughter will help keep you sane.
11. Singing can really help. It's not a bad idea at a staff or community meeting to use music to help deal with anguish, as well as to celebrate. That leads to...
12. Celebrate accomplishments.
13. **Make sure you have a life!** This is an ultra-marathon, not a sprint.
14. **You are on the right side of history** - you are a part of a broad effort to expand opportunity.

Helpful resources; Miles Horton, Herb and Judy Kohl, *The Long Haul*, Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers* (Jossey Bass, Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, Barbara Lewis, *Kids Guide to Social Action*, Free Spirit Press, Joe Nathan, *Charter Schools*, (Jossey Bass), Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns* (Beacon Press) Reactions welcome, joe@centerforschoolchange.org