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*Tangible Tools and  
Resources to Educate  
and Protect Our  
Children*

Communication Strategies in School Settings

# Also in this session

- ❖ **How to Facilitate Curriculum Change**  
Felicia Ceaser-White, Secondary Health Specialist, Houston Independent School District *CONFIRMED*
- ❖ **Communicating with Parents**  
Paula Cuccaro, Ph.D., Associate Director, Training, Health Promotion and Behavioral Science,  
The University of Texas School of Public Health *CONFIRMED*
- ❖ **Engaging Health Educators & School Nurses**  
Gwen Johnson, Ph.D., R.N., Nurse Manager, Houston Independent School District *CONFIRMED*
- ❖ **Audience Reflections and Toolkit Review**

# Communication Strategies in School Settings

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Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES)

# Why Communicate with Schools?

- ❖ Schools have a captive audience - for 13+ years of a child's life
- ❖ Valuable setting for prevention and intervention services
- ❖ About 22% of US population can be reached through schools
- ❖ Efficient conduit for reaching families

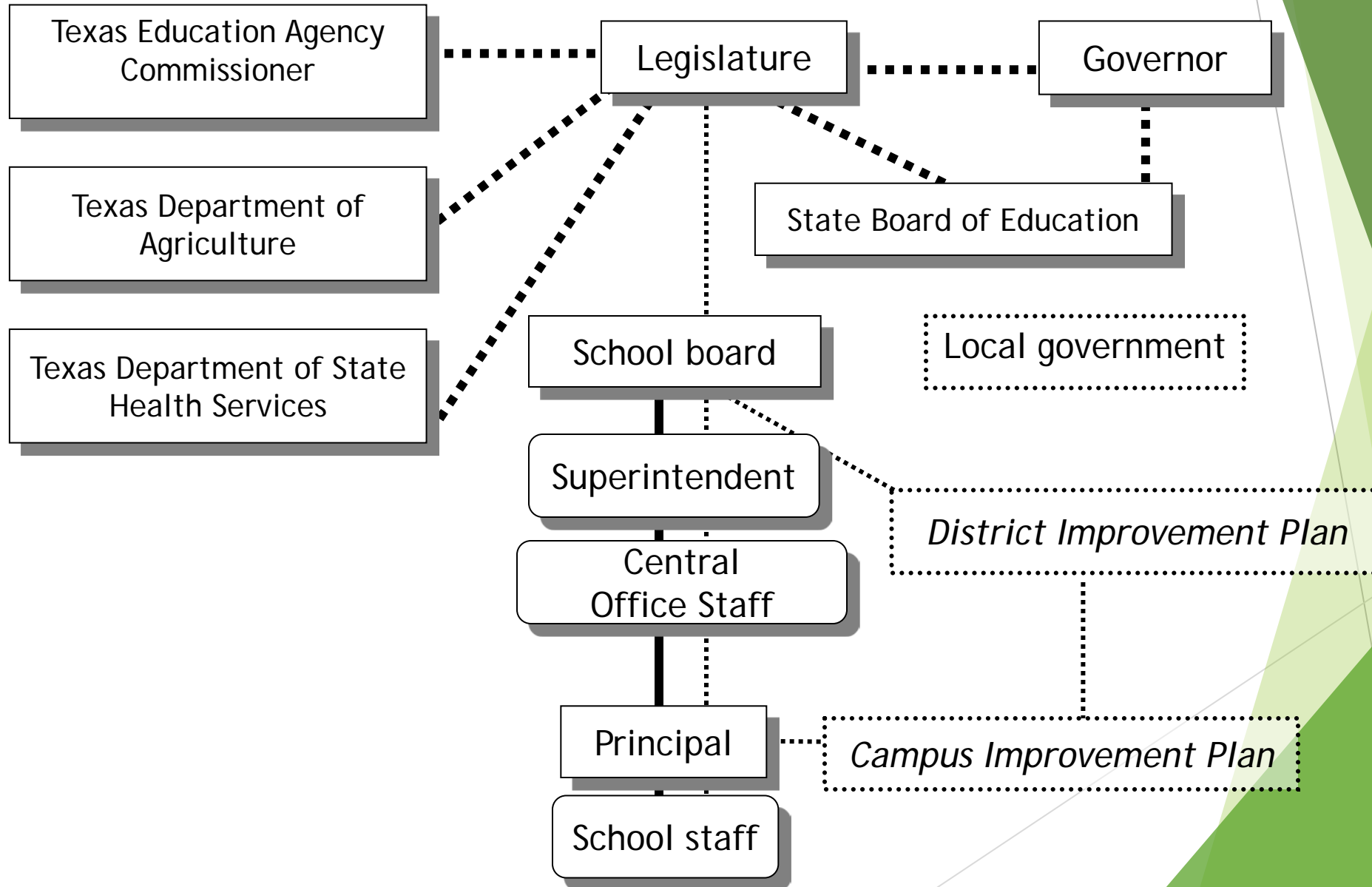
## More Reasons...

- ❖ Often is a focal point or anchor of community
- ❖ Connections between health status and academic performance
- ❖ Behaviors that are established during youth affect people for a lifetime

# Objectives

- ❖ Increase understanding of where decisions are made in the education system
- ❖ Identify “who’s who” in education decision-making
- ❖ Identify strategies for engaging education leaders to improve school health-related policies and practices

# Public Education Governance in Texas



# Basic Background about Schools

- ❖ Educational systems - no “one size fits all” approach
- ❖ “Local control” - limited federal and state roles
- ❖ Superintendents and principals have broad authority
- ❖ Change must often occur district by district and school by school



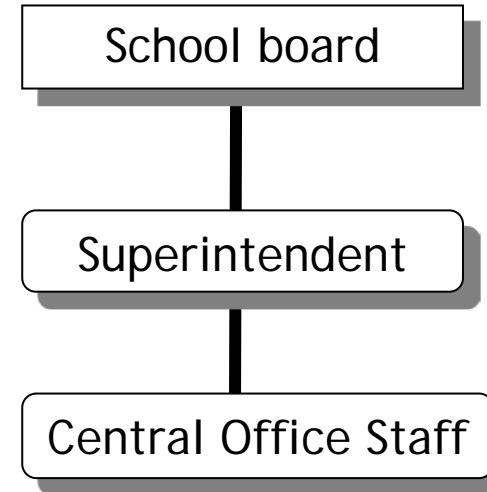
# District-Level Leaders & Stakeholders

School Board

Superintendent

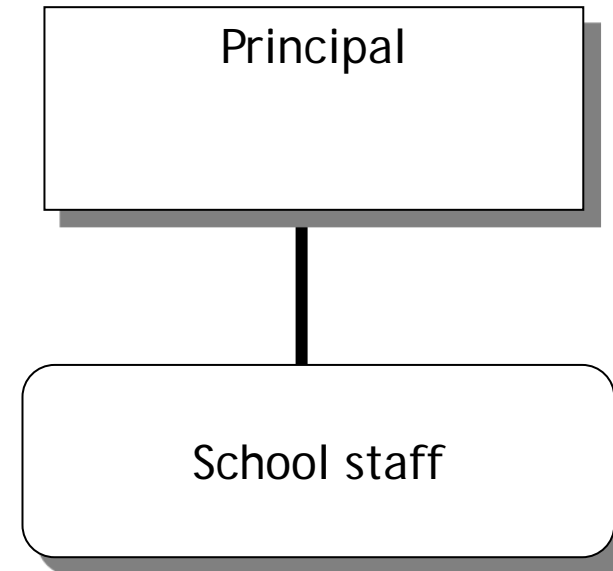
Directors & Coordinators of:

- Health Education
- Physical Education
- Child Nutrition Services
- Health Services
- Counseling, Psychological and Social Services
- Facilities/ Maintenance/ Transportation
- Family & Community Involvement



# School-Level Leaders & Stakeholders

- ❖ The principal is key
- ❖ Entry points at this level
  - Campus improvement team/ plan
  - District Wellness Policy
  - Nurses
  - Counselors
  - PE teachers
  - Classroom teachers (sometimes)
  - Parent organizations
  - Student organizations



How can you communicate with  
these leaders & stakeholders?

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# How to Work with School District Leaders

## ❖ Formal approaches

- Serve on school board, SHAC, or other committees
- Testimony at meetings and public hearings
- Written communications

## ❖ Informal Approaches

- Direct contact with board members and administrators
- Enlist influential “key stakeholders”
- Make presentations at meetings and conferences

# Tried and True Strategies

- ❖ Become familiar with district's needs, issues, climate, etc.
- ❖ Talk to a stakeholder - at least three times - about the change you want to see happen
- ❖ Be an invaluable resource
- ❖ Align with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- ❖ Become known as their "go to" person
- ❖ Follow-up and follow-through
- ❖ Offer to be on their SHAC
- ❖ If you feed them, they will come

# Reasons for Resistance to Change

- ❖ People don't know enough about the change
- ❖ Poor communication about the changes
- ❖ Afraid of failure
- ❖ Lack of trust
- ❖ Lack of leadership for the change
- ❖ Inadequate resources
- ❖ Change isn't aligned with the school culture
- ❖ Belief that change isn't worth while
- ❖ No clear case for the change

# Strategies for Addressing Resistance to Change

- ❖ Build stronger relationships
- ❖ Have dialogue re: negative aspects of change
- ❖ Gather data to understand the basis of resistance
- ❖ Develop plans for addressing the concerns and needs
- ❖ Create a shared vision

# Persuading Education Leaders

- ❖ Link to existing policies, programs, and goals
- ❖ Use current terminology ('education reform', 'ready to learn', 'academic achievement')
- ❖ Be honest about costs and potential implementation problems
- ❖ Note serious problems/needs, but emphasize solutions



# Presenting Information

- ❖ Keep presentations brief - stick to most important points
- ❖ Submit a succinct written rationale
- ❖ Present research findings from credible organizations
- ❖ Use clear language (avoid health and social services jargon)
- ❖ Charts and graphs illustrate key findings
- ❖ Present a compelling story

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