



COMMUNICATING ABOUT CHILDREN'S ISSUES

- **Make it personal.** Without a feeling of *intimacy* Americans won't get involved. Your issue needs to be about them, their hometowns, their future, and, of course, their children. This is NOT about numbers or statistics or dire predictions from wonky experts.
- **Equal opportunity regardless of geography.** Your issue should be a right for every child, every family, every community, every state. Children in Mississippi should have the same opportunity as children in Massachusetts. Every child...every community...every state. Plain and simple.
- **While positive imagery and arguments are comforting and popular, it's the negative ideas and the fear of failure that move people to action.** Your efforts and outreach must deftly combine both the carrot and the stick in order to succeed. One without the other is not nearly as effective.
- **Younger children draw the most sympathy.** Every time we asked parents to identify the children they were most concerned about, the vast majority focused on pre-teens. So should you.
- **The most negative word: "consequences." The most negative imagery: boredom.** The visuals you use are just as essential as the words you employ. A disinterested, detached child today will suffer the consequences tomorrow.
- **People want to get "back to the basics."** Americans want tried and true, not modern or experimental or revolutionary. Remember when our schools were the best in the world? So does your audience. "*A return to what works*" is a message that works.
- **Let others argue over the details for now.** Don't get caught in the crossfire of specifics. You cannot win a battle of details. Talk in terms of principles and mission. Let the politicians fight over the facts and figures.

Source: First Focus/Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research
Standup Language Dictionary