

EDUCOMMUNICATOR INSTITUTE

With so many organizations and individuals jockeying to be heard in the education sector, breaking through the white noise is more important than ever. It is no longer enough to have a strong mission or the right idea. Today, it is essential to have a strong mastery of both the technical skills required to be an educommunicator (a marketing communications professional in the education space), along with the policy and research understanding to be a true exemplar in the field.

Across the nation, effective communications is often defined through a corporate, technology or even political lens. We speak of the sophistication and complexity of the myriad issues facing the education sector, but rarely take the time to ensure that our marketing communications activities are aligned with such complexity. As a result, we are often found wanting when it comes to the effective marrying of research, policy and practice in our education communications efforts.

These challenges can be found in everything from organizational messaging to staffing, from strategic planning to media relationships, from new and social media adoption to community engagement. Too many good ideas in the education sector have failed to maximize their potential because of communications challenges. And too many have struggled as we seek to tailor the professional development and lessons created for communicators in other sectors to apply to the unique challenges facing the education space.

Educommunicators Institute (Institute) was created to address these specific issues, building and sharing the resources necessary to raise the level of educommunications in the field and to ensure that we are committed, as a community, to high-quality, results-based communications built on the very practices preached in other areas of public education.

The Model

The Institute will focus on a range of professional development and capacity building activities designed to strengthen the education sector, including:

Educommunicators Community – The Institute will rejuvenate the Educommunicators online community, providing a home for a robust interactive discussion for professionals currently serving in the education sector. Educommunicators was created in 2008 to give voice to the education communications professional, providing an online voice for their professions and passions. The Educommunicator platform will include a website, a blog and a LinkedIn group.

Podcasts and Videos – The Institute will regularly capture discussions of best/promising practice, key policy issues, lessons learned and hot topics and will provide these discussions via podcast and video for members of the Educommunicator community. Modeled after content made available through platforms such as Kahn Academy, these segments will ultimately serve as an online library to support ongoing training and professional development of communications professionals in the education sector.

Original Research and Products – The Institute will regularly develop and disseminate research studies, guides, case studies, infographics, white papers and commentaries highlighting best practice, lessons learned through the Educommunicator community and the major issues facing the field.

Educommunicator Seminar Series – Every quarter, the Institute will host a practical seminar focused on the most pressing issues currently faced by educommunicators. These panel discussions will include experts in the field to provide a deep dive on the given topic and the best/promising communications practices being used to successfully navigate the issue. The discussion will then continue on the Educommunicators listserv for all interested members.

Educommunicator Bootcamp – Twice a year, the Institute will host a one-day intensive workshop to provide emerging educommunicator stars with the critical tools, strategies and insights needed to succeed and ensure their organizations are gaining the attention they deserve. Throughout the day, educommunicators will be trained in an array of key communications and public affairs skills that can be put to use right now and in the years ahead – from strategic planning to messaging to social media to policy understanding. The attendees of this boot camp will walk away with a clear picture of the education sector and the role of effective communications in it. This is a focused training that includes meaningful interaction with trainers, experts in the field and peers.

Custom Seminars and Trainings – The Institute will work with individual not-for-profit organizations, advocacy groups, philanthropies, corporations and government agencies to develop and lead custom seminars and trainings related to the communications challenges and opportunities specifically facing the education sector. These seminars will be designed to build organizational communications capacity. These sessions can be built for individuals, small teams or entire organizations.

Conference Presentations – The Institute will regularly present at education and communications conferences and events, promoting the Institute’s mission and the action steps that can be taken to ensure effective communications in the education space.

Educommunicator Leaders Program – The Educommunicator Leaders Program (ELP) is a leadership development program for communications professionals working in the public education field. Participants work for not-for-profits, companies, government agencies and foundations and are focused on improving the external communications and public affairs efforts for their organizations. The curriculum will focus on three core areas: strategic communications, education policy and education research. Participation in this program ensures a deep understanding of both the technical aspects of the communications profession with a background in education policy and research. Classes will meet in various locations across the metro DC area, once a month for 10 months.

The Mission

The Institute is conceived to raise the quality and impact of marketing communications efforts in the education sector through collaboration, partnerships and the development and dissemination of resources. This is a goal that Collaborative is committed to and it is a mission that is shared across the space.

Ultimately, the Institute will focus on raising the level of educommunications in the field. It does that by helping ensure that the field is committed, as a community, to high-quality, results based communications built on the very practices we advocate in other areas of public education and learning.

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