Families as the Audience

BEN KING, LUPE LEDESMA AND PENÉLOPE MENA

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OSPI)
Go over Strategies to create family friendly content
Our families are busy. They want to scan, not read

The information we provide to the districts and schools should be
1. clear
2. concise and
3. well-designed

So when it is passed on to families, they understand it and take action.
Step 1– Know and Write for your Audience

- Find out **who** will be reading your material,
- **What** information they are looking for, and
- **What** the **circumstances** are.
Families in WA—Our audience

2018 WA Students October Count 1,115,445

- **American Indian/Alaska Native**: 1.40%
- **Asian**: 7.70%
- **Black/African American**: 4.40%
- **Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)**: 23.10%
- **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander**: 1.10%
- **White**: 54.40%
- **Two or More Races**: 8.00%
Plain Language Benefits All Families

2018 WA Students October Count 1,115,445

- Low Income: 42.40%
- Non-English Households: 20.00%
- English Learners: 12%
- Students w/Disabilities: 14.10%
Strategies for All

Write to everyone who is interested.

- Use a friendly and helpful tone
- Highlight calls-to-action and key takeaways

---

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

If you have any questions, please call me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING GRADE LEVEL</th>
<th>9.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| READING GRADE LEVEL | 2.2 |

Writing Plain is Everyone’s Gain

Aetna Inc. 62

Taken from Why plain language is good for Aetna
English Learners (ELs)

Be mindful of:

- **Sentence structure** — English language may create confusion when it is translated into other languages.
- **Vocabulary** — words in English may have a different meaning in other culture.
People with Disabilities

Consider the

✓ context,
✓ the importance of the information, and
✓ the length and complexity of the materials.

- **Request** that support staff take the **ADA Training**, so they can review documents before publishing.
If you write policy content

- Keep families’ needs in mind
- Inform families of approval process for policy
- Ask families for feedback
Step 2—Consider the format

☐ Plan your content based on the medium used.

Ask—Website, Smart Phone, Paper, Text, Social Media, or Video?
Technology and Families

Internet/Broadband
- 89% of Americans use the internet
- Racial minorities, older adults, rural residents, and those with lower levels of education and income are less likely to have broadband service at home.

Mobile
- The vast majority of Americans – 95% – now own a cellphone of some kind.
- Today one-in-five American adults are “smartphone-only” internet users.

Social Media
- Roughly three-quarters of Facebook users – and around six-in-ten Instagram users – visit these sites at least once a day.
- 69% of Americans use some type of social media.
Step 3—Create Content with **Plain Talk**

- Use short and simple sentences
- Use common, every day words
- Use personal nouns
- Avoid jargon/idioms
- Design clear pages with logical organization
- Test your assumptions

Taken from [Plain Talk General Guidelines](#)
# Short Simple Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your responsibilities are in the job description we gave you on your first day of work.</td>
<td>The parameters of your responsibility and duties are included in the job description and person specification you received on your initial day of work at the Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The regional managers most responsible for carrying out this policy do not seem to understand it well.</td>
<td>This policy does not appear to be well understood by service locations management in the regions, even though this group has primary responsibility for implementing the policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use common, everyday words

Your families should not have to use a dictionary to be able to understand you.

Speak your families’ language.

Use this:
- Must
- Try
- Start
- Show, prove
- Rank
- End, cancel
- Use
- In
- Ask for

Not that:
- Shall
- Attempt
- Commence
- Demonstrate
- Prioritize
- Terminate
- Utilize
- Set forth in
- Solicit
Use Personal Nouns

Let your documents speak directly to the reader by using pronouns.

The Department of Writing Really Long Documents announces the opening of the Department of Really Long Documents Chicago Field Office. For more information, visit the Department of Writing Really Long Documents Really Long Documents Website at www.Thisissoreallylongurl.gov

The Department of Writing Really Long Documents announces the opening of our Chicago Field Office.

We hope you enjoy our website: www.dwrl.gov
Avoid Jargon and/or Idioms

- Jargon is shorthand that we use to communicate with each other.
- An idiom is a phrase or an expression that has a figurative, or sometimes literal, meaning.

I have to go to a meeting on WSIF recent procedures, but I can meet you for lunch if we can get back in time for a LAP presentation at 1 o'clock.

This is the SGP for the new Math median at the WSIF. I have to drop it off at OSPI before the EL meeting today.

Pardon my French!
If you must use the term that is not...

...commonly known to most readers, or one that has more than one meaning...

...explain what you mean.

Oh, OK...It says right here that the WSIF is information on how the schools are measured.
Design Clear Pages

- Give your readers a **roadmap**
- Use **headlines** to break up material
- Use **bulleted or numbered lists** to draw attention to:
  - Choices
  - Multiple requirements
  - Steps in a process.
Good Web Content Uses:

The inverted pyramid style:
- Begin with the shortest and clearest statement.
- Put the most important information at the top.

No chunked content:
- Split topics up into logical sections separated by informative headings.

Only necessary information:
- Use only the information your users need to achieve their top tasks.

Taken from Plain Language Guidelines
Plain Writing Act of 2010

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 promotes clear government communication that the public can understand and use. The Office of Management and Budget issued final guidance to implement the law on April 13, 2011.

At [Agency Name], we are committed to writing in plain language and using the Federal Plain Language Guidelines:

- Our plain writing plan
- Our compliance report (DOC template)

We have assigned staff to oversee our plain language efforts:

- [Name], Plain Language Contact
- [Name], Plain Language Coordinator
- [Name], Plain Language Coordinator

We train our employees and have created or strengthened our oversight process. We must use plain language in any document that:

- is necessary for obtaining any federal government benefit or service or filing taxes
- provides information about any federal government benefit or service
- explains to the public how to comply with a requirement that the federal government administers or enforces

Give us feedback

We need your help to comply with this Act! Let us know if you see something on our website or in our materials that isn’t written in plain language.

- Email: example@name.gov
- Fax: [555-555-5555]
Finally, Test Your Assumptions

Use a network of colleagues, friends, and family, find three people who, meet the criteria and will give you an hour of their time.

Set aside a morning to conduct your test, and give each of the volunteers an appointment, one hour apart from each other.

Gather feedback
Make adjustments as necessary
Your Audience Should Receive...

- **Clear communication** that answers their questions
- **Concise communication** that considers their time
- **Well designed documents** that guides them to key points and required action
Plain Talk Benefits

**Saves time and money**
- Faster to read
- Less to print/translate

**Simplifies**
- Forms
- Procedures
- Paperwork

**Reduces**
- Complaints
- Support calls

**Creates**
- Positive image
- Friendlier more easily understood message

**Increases**
- Staff understanding and satisfaction

Taken from Cyber Text Consulting
Thank You
Questions & Technical Assistance

- OSPI’s Communication Office
- Governor's Plain Talk web site
- Plain Language.gov
- Why use Plain Language? U.S. Census Bureau

Questions about Families of English Learners:
- Bilingual and Migrant Education Department

Questions about Families of students with disabilities:
- Special Education Department