

## *SOME CONTENT TIPS*

- \* No personal evaluations of staff members, please -- either positive or negative. Yes, even with one principal, we'll use "administration".
- \* Keep your focus on problems and strengths, not on identifying the culprits whose derelictions caused whatever regrettable situations may exist.
- \* The quality, not necessarily the quantity, of final report matters. Let's concentrate on substance.
- \* Seek to verify facts. Don't jump to conclusions. Keep an open mind. KNOW THY SCHOOL!
- \* Be specific, so the school knows what we've seen.
- \* Be alert to problem areas that are subject to negotiation.
- \* Listen more, talk less.
- \* Strive to identify the most important problems and issues.
- \* Use the school's language whenever and wherever possible.
- \* No single individual (by name of title) is recognized.

## *SOME STYLE TIPS*

- \* Use the present tense and third person. "The courses offered by this department are..."  
"The committee/team identified the following..."
- \* The school will be identified on the title page of the report and the introduction. All subsequent references to it can be phrased "The school..." However, this ("the school") is VERY generic and unspecific). Think about "school leadership," "administration and faculty." You might think of "the school" as just the buildings.
- \* Use the full name of a course or program before referring to it by use of an acronym or initials. Not all readers may know what GATE, SIP, or LEP mean in this school.
- \* Use complete sentences, unless using a list. Numbered lists imply order. Thus, we must make decisions between bulleted and numbered lists.
- \* The custom is that numbers one through nine are spelled out in sentences, and numbers 10 and beyond are presented as numerals. However, a number used as the first word of a sentence must be spelled out.
- \* Capitalize a word or phrase only if it refers to a specific individual or course. Thus: Algebra, the mathematics curriculum, World History, deans.
- \* Do not use abbreviations.
- \* A comma follows all items in a series. (That's the Harvard or Oxford rule.)
- \* Write in the active voice whenever possible. Use the passive voice when
  - You can't identify the subject
  - When identifying the subject would be unpolitic

- \* Check your tone -- be positive. Let's avoid
  - Negative prefixes (*mis-, un-, in-, dis-, im-*)
  - *No, not, never, won't, can't*
  - Judgmental words such as *failure, waste, regret, problem, neglect, useless, only, change, negligence, wrong, pointless...*the list goes on!
  - Polarizing words such as *should, must, ought*. Try *invite, recommend, suggest, advocate*.

## *HOUSEKEEPING*

- \* Datum is...; data are...
- \* Criterion is...; criteria are...
- \* A variety of (whatever) is...
- \* Media are...
- \* The staff is... Staff members are...
- \* The faculty is... Faculty members are...
- \* The team is... Team members are...
- \* Between (these two)...
- \* Among (several, more than two)...
- \* The effect (result, consequences) will be greater...
- \* The change will affect (influence) (always a verb) the students...
- \* Counseling procedures ensure (guarantee) that all students...
- \* The district staff insure (money payment for loss) all computers...
- \* Fewer than 10 members of the faculty... (a countable quantity)
- \* Less dedication was in evidence... ( a non-countable quantity)
- \* The advisory council (a group of people) provides support..
- \* The guidance facilities permit no privacy for counseling (advising) students...
- \* People are served; things are serviced.
- \* The definition of “use” is “the art or practice of employing something.” Quite simple and straightforward. Merriam-Webster defines *utilize* as, “to make use of; turn to practical use or account.” So how is this different from *use*? In a nutshell, to *utilize* something is to give it a use it may not have originally had.
  - You use a pen to write, but can utilize it as a weapon.
  - You use a dining table for eating, but can utilize it as work space.
  - You use a car for driving, but you and your hot date can utilize it for...