

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
COUNCIL OF URBAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION



# TELLING YOUR STORY: A TOOLKIT FOR MARKETING URBAN EDUCATION



BY NORA CARR

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
CUBE COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE

# About This Toolkit

Why don't you tell the *good* stories?

How many times have you said this, either to reporters, editorial directors, or even the television set itself? We all have, and that's one reason the CUBE Communications Task Force has worked to help you do a better job of telling your district's story, of how you are working to help all children succeed.

Since the Communications Task Force formed in 2000, our goal has been to provide you with the tools and training you need to assist you in meeting this challenge. Through sessions at various CUBE meetings, we have worked to provide you with practical tips that you can take home and use in your districts.

This toolkit is an extension of that effort. Written by Nora Carr, a school public relations professional and frequent CUBE presenter, this publication is the result of a fall 2003 survey of CUBE members and communications staff in CUBE and CUBE-eligible districts. We held a focus group with communications professionals at our 2003 annual meeting in Charlotte, and drew on their expertise in putting together this how-to manual.

In these pages, we provide some nuts-and-bolts suggestions that urban school boards — working with the superintendent and communications team — should consider throughout the school year. Perhaps you will see something that makes you think, "How can we approach this opportunity/dilemma/crisis differently?"

"Telling Your Story" is not something to pass off to your communications director, although he or she is welcome to see it. As a trained professional, your public information/communications director already knows about and probably is doing some of the exercises you will find on these next few pages. The department may not have the necessary staff or resources to do what it needs to be successful.

Remember, it is *your* story, and when you do your job better, it's the children in your districts who ultimately benefit.

**Denise Brodsky & Jimmy Fahrenholtz,**

Co-Chairs, CUBE Communications Task Force

## **Communications Task Force Executive Group: 2003-04**

### **CUBE Board Members:**

Denise Brodsky, Clark County, Nev.  
Jimmy Fahrenholtz, New Orleans, La.  
Lew Blackburn, Dallas, Texas  
Noel Hammatt, Baton Rouge, La.  
Mary Marks, Anchorage, Alaska  
Don Mayhew, Lincoln, Neb.  
Willetta Milam, Cleveland, Ohio  
Paul William Thomas, Tulsa, Okla.

Lois Wexler, Broward County, Fla.

### **CUBE Staff:**

Katrina Kelley, Director  
Barbara Allen, Director, Caucus and Urban  
Development  
Jessica Bonaiuto, CUBE Senior Manager  
Judy Tucker, Coordinator  
Glenn Cook, NSBA Staff Liaison

# Telling Your Story

## *A Toolkit for Marketing Urban Education*

**E**very urban school district has a story to tell. And usually it's not the one school leaders see teased during sweeps on local TV or plastered on the daily newspaper's front page week after week.

Every day, teachers and students are beating the odds and succeeding despite a host of well-publicized risk factors associated with urban education. Most city school districts also have special programs and schools that continually churn out high achievers. All of these can be marketed more effectively.

And, if you're doing your jobs exceptionally well as school leaders, you have more than just a few pockets of excellence: you're beginning to see system-wide results that are breaking poverty's traditional stranglehold on student achievement.

Wherever your district is on the achievement spectrum, you have a story to tell. It is packed with emotion and human drama. It is something you can build a memorable brand around. However, you're not going to change hearts and minds by ignoring the media every time a crisis erupts, playing partisan politics, using tired, outdated tactics, or stretching your public information staff to the breaking point.

You have a story to tell, and it's a story this country desperately needs because the very concept of public schools as we know it in a free and democratic society rests on the success or failure of urban school systems.

For too long, we've let others tell our story and define the agenda for urban education. The bottom line is this: if you don't tell your story, someone else will, and you're probably not going to like it much.

Before we get started, however, I would like to call attention to the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)), which has invaluable information on setting up and running a communications program. The Appendix section includes NSPRA information on starting a school PR program, provides sample policies and job descriptions, and answers frequently asked questions.

### About the Author

Nora Carr is senior vice president of public relations for Luquire-George Andrews, a media and communications firm in Charlotte, N.C. The former assistant superintendent for public information for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, she has been a frequent presenter at CUBE meetings on topics related to communications.

# Building Your Brand

**T**hink about the brands you use every day. Then, think about the nation's most powerful brands, those marketing legends that are part of the American lexicon. Why have they succeeded in capturing the imagination where others failed?

- Starbucks = great coffee.
- BET = black entertainment.
- Tiffany's = diamonds wrapped in a signature blue box.
- Wal-Mart = low prices.
- Mercedes Benz = precision engineering.
- The Gap = casual chic.
- Tide = the whitest whites.

Brilliant brands stand for something in the mind of the consumer. When you say the name of your school district, what's the first thing that pops into your mind? What's the first thing that pops into the minds of parents, teachers, students, Realtors, business leaders?

Typically, there are four major image drivers in school public relations, and the media is not one of them. Instead, it's student achievement, the quality of the high schools, and the reputation of the superintendent and school board.

Most urban school districts have image problems —big ones. Don't get discouraged, though. Images, even negative ones, can be changed. But it isn't easy, and it's going to take more than a new editor or slick brochures and a cable TV show.

## EXERCISE #1

## What Is Your Brand?

**Preparation & Materials:** Appoint a facilitator, preferably a community member with brand marketing experience or a paid marketing consultant. Even though school board members or district staff may have this expertise, it's difficult to facilitate a session like this effectively with your colleagues or employers.

Set up table and chairs — conference style, in a u-shape, or open square — so everyone can see each other and the facilitator has room to roam. Everyone participating — from board members to the executive team/cabinet — should bring in the logo of their favorite brand, and its polar opposite or less successful

rival. (Or have the facilitator prepare a set of these in advance and mount them on foam core or mat board.)

Make sure the room is comfortable and provide refreshments. Needed supplies include chart pads, masking tape, and markers or overhead projector. Appoint a note taker or have a staff member serve in this role.

Here's how the process should work:

**Step One:** The facilitator/consultant will explain that the purpose of the exercise is to help the district identify the core components of its brand and tell its story more effectively. If team members are concerned that marketing is just "smoke and mirrors" (code word for spin or lying) and a waste of taxpayer dollars, the consultant should address those issues upfront and assure team members that the district's brand will be based on facts and the highest standards of ethics, including open and truthful communications. Remind team members that public schools can't thrive without public support, and that everyone's assistance is needed if the district is going to start communicating more effectively.

**Step Two:** The facilitator will ask team members to identify what each brand stands for and why, and discuss. Can you remember the slogan or jingle that goes with each logo/brand?

**Step Three:** The facilitator will ask team members to think of your school district as a brand. What is the first thing that pops into your mind? Follow the basic rules of brainstorming (no debates, and no right or wrong answers) and keep track of the responses/basic concepts and post the charts on the wall.

If team members get stuck on concerns or negatives, remind them that the next exercise (SWOT) will capture those, and ask them to try again, this time articulating the school district's brand in aspirational terms. What should the district stand for? What's the one thing you would like to pop into everyone's mind when they hear or see the school district's logo?

**Step Four:** The facilitator will use a consensus process to narrow the list to the top five. First, combine similar ideas and/or delete duplications. Then, the facilitator will distribute five dot stickers to each member and letting them indicate their choices accordingly on the charts on the wall.

Pick the top three to five clusters. Each team member should indicate their choices again, this time using three dot stickers each. Continue this process until the first, second, and third ideas choices are clear and all parties can be "live with" them.

# Developing Your USP

**L**ike education, marketing uses jargon as code words for various concepts. One of these is USP, or unique selling proposition. What makes your district or school unique, special, different or better? How do you capture that in just a few words? How do you give an example or paint a picture that people can grasp instantly without further explanation? That's your USP.

Your USP is the focus of your marketing program. In today's information-saturated world, it's simply impossible to tell parents, taxpayers, or concerned citizens everything they need to know about your schools.

You will have to focus on the handful of key messages you want every single person to know. You need to be able to clearly define and articulate what sets you apart in the marketplace and why parents should care enough to send their children to you, and why taxpayers should fund public education.

Clearly, for urban schools, diversity is both a challenge and an asset. Quit hiding your diversity: celebrate it! Business leaders know that tomorrow's workforce is going to be increasingly diverse. Kids who have successfully navigated multicultural environments have a distinct advantage over those who have attended single race schools.

Most public schools also have great advantages over private and parochial schools in the depth and breadth of the academic curriculum.

Typically, only top tier nonpublic schools offer six or more years of foreign language, instrumental music, or art. Few offer more than a handful of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses, and special educa-

## Marketing Plan Components

1) **Research:** Start with public opinion polls, communication audits, competitive analysis, SWOT analysis, focus groups, issues identification, etc.

2) **Analysis and Planning:** Creative brief, strategy, identification of audiences, tactics, goals, budgets, measures/benchmarks and timing all become part of the overall action plan.

3) **Communication:** Develop schedules or calendars for public relations, paid media (print, radio, TV, online), websites, special events, collateral materials, and the execution of all action plans and the deployment of tactics on time, on budget, at or above expected quality with mid-course adjustments as needed.

4) **Evaluation:** Measures and insights feed back into planning process for continued improvement. What worked? What didn't? Why? What can you improve upon next time? Any surprises?

tion and English as a second language are virtually non-existent.

While some charter schools offer special themes, few can match the specialized curriculum and community-based experiences offered by full-fledged magnet schools, business partnerships, or a strong ROTC program.

Find what makes you different, and focus relentlessly on that key message that captures the essence of what your district stands for and why.

## **EXERCISE #2**   **Brand SWOT Analysis**

Here's a quick exercise that will help you and your team begin identifying your USP. Here's where you begin to fill in some of the detail that you'll use to market your district more effectively, while continuing to address problems and concerns through the district's strategic plan.

Remember, strengths and weaknesses tend to be internal; opportunities and threats tend to be external. Be brutally honest, and make sure you can back up your strengths and opportunities with real data and examples, as those two items will serve as the basis of your marketing program.

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Weaknesses:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Opportunities:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Threats:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Overcoming Marketing Challenges

**C**ompared to marketing detergent, toothpaste, insulated windows, and floor tile, selling public education effectively should be a snap. What could be more important, or have more emotional connection, than something that affects the lives of children every single day? So why is it so difficult?

The quality of the product is obviously an issue. An old marketing adage says that “nothing kills a bad product faster than advertising.” In today’s “no excuses” economy, accountability is at an all-time high in every industry. Right or wrong, test scores are the measure of success in education.

If most students aren’t on grade level, parents and the public don’t care if they’re poor, don’t speak English, rarely attend, or qualify for special education services. They still expect you to get your jobs done.

Yes, we can and should do a better job of explaining the complex context in which we operate, and funding is always an issue. But we can’t use these factors as excuses for failure. Defensiveness never sells anything.

People will forgive mistakes, and they’ll support change if they believe you truly have the best interests of children at heart and are willing to do whatever it takes to make things better. However, if you don’t bring them along with you, don’t communicate, or don’t deliver on your promises, they’ll eat you alive.

## Packaging Your Story

**N**ow that you’ve identified the key components of your story, you need to spend some time packaging it in a truly memorable way that will help your district cut through the information clutter that daily confronts every single person you’re trying to communicate with.

If you’ve identified student achievement as one of your key strengths, for example, illustrate your school system’s success by sharing data and factoids that support this premise.

At Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), for example, we developed a set of “wow facts,” examples that could be cited during every community meeting or speech that lift eyebrows and cause skeptics to say, “I didn’t know that.”

Here's a sampling:

■ "CMS ranks first in the state and second in the nation for the number of teachers with National Board Certification. This is the educational equivalent of passing the bar exam, earning a CPA, or becoming board-certified in a medical specialty."

■ "The top 10 percent of CMS students outperform their peers on the SAT, statewide and nationally."

■ "14 CMS high schools were ranked among the top 500 high schools in the United States for academic rigor by *Newsweek* out of more than 25,000 high schools. Two CMS high schools made the top 100. One high school, Meyers Park, was ranked seventh."

Good data isn't enough, however. Good stories are memorable, personable, simple, and powerful. Good stories tug at the emotions and inspire us to take action. Good stories help us see our role more clearly and make us want to help ourselves, or the people in the story.

Like good teachers, good storytellers use symbols and analogies to convey key concepts and bring stories to life. And they rarely rely on just one method of communication.

## Results-Driven Marketing

**E**ffective marketing doesn't happen without research and strategic planning. And, while entire books have been written on this subject (some are listed in the resource guide included in this publication), most strategic communications plans include the following four components: Research, Analysis and Planning, Communication, and Evaluation.

Each component should be tied together. For example, if research shows that parents find communications from principals more believable than district newsletters or television more accessible than newspapers, the overall marketing strategy and tactics should reflect this information.

Audiences should be clearly identified as specifically as possible. Rather than lumping all parents together in one group and taking a "one-size-fits-all" approach to communications, you will be more effective if you take various demographic factors into account, including cultural differences, education level, socioeconomic status, language barriers, PTA/PTO involvement, etc.

Some parents will read everything they can get their hands on and still want more information and details. Others would rather talk to someone they trust, a principal, neighbor, pastor, or friend. Some will surf the website, others will tune into urban or Latino radio.

When it comes to communication preferences, there aren't any right or wrong answers. Wise marketers take a multiple intelligences or learning styles approach to communication.

Like students, parents and other key audiences access information in different ways. Relying on a one-time memo sent home in backpacks to communicate with parents is like asking all children to read a chapter once and then take a test on the content, without any instruction, homework, or hands-on experience. The vast majority will fail.

The best school marketing plans use a mix of communication channels, from potluck suppers, school newsletters, and community events to full-blown campaigns that combine websites, paid advertisements, and well-placed news and feature stories.

One-on-one, face-to-face communication is still the most effective in terms of generating real understanding, followed by small-group meetings that are still highly interactive and, finally, public speaking in front of large groups.

No matter how big your district is or how complex the communication challenge, try to build some of these more personal

## Tips Worth Telling

■ **A picture tells a thousand words.** Use high-quality, tightly cropped photos of children, teachers, parents, business leaders, and community volunteers to convey what words cannot. The school building, no matter how magnificent, does not belong on the front cover of a brochure or as the lead photo on a website. It's what happens inside the school that counts. If you have a new or renovated building, show it off. Just don't confuse it with your primary marketing message or image.

■ **Less is more.** 200-page curriculum guides may be helpful to teachers but are of little use to parents. Wordy memos, letters, brochures, newsletters, fliers, posters, and advertisements just add to the clutter. Writing too long and trying to convey too much are probably the greatest weaknesses of most school marketing materials. Powerful marketing is profoundly simple. 30 seconds of "wow" are better than 30 minutes of boring footage or pages of copy.

■ **Bypass gatekeepers and go direct.** If you can't reach everyone you need to reach in 30 minutes or less, you don't have the right communications infrastructure in place. Thanks to the Internet and related technologies, communication today is instantaneous. When good news occurs or a crisis hits, you don't have time to write letters or put out a newsletter, but you probably can find five minutes to write and send a quick e-mail. If you want to tell your story your way, you need to reach people fast, before they hear about it on

the news or from the politician who continually makes headlines by bashing the schools. Every superintendent should have access to an up-to-date database that includes school board members, employees, PTO presidents, elected officials, business, and faith and community leaders.

■ **Leverage existing channels of communication.** Most school leaders have more communications firepower at their fingertips than they realize. Meetings, memos, letterhead, fax cover sheets, folders, notebooks, bulletin boards, marquees, signage, maintenance trucks, security cars, websites, and district-run radio stations and cable television channels all provide untapped marketing opportunities. If the media won't share your good news, share it yourself, beginning with an e-mail blast and the district's homepage. If it's important, deploy every channel of communication you have while providing message points and guidelines to ensure accuracy.

■ **Consistency is king.** Spread an array of these materials on the board room table. Is there a consistent look, feel, and color? Do the fonts match? Is the same logo used? Do the materials look professional? Are the sizes of the brochures, fliers, and posters consistent? Is your messaging positive, consistent, compelling, and powerful? Does the theme or slogan change with every piece? What image is conveyed? Does it match the key messages you identified previously? If you answered "no" to any of these questions, you have a brand image problem that's not caused by educational or school-related concerns.

activities into your plan. The communications staff should make it easier for school board members and other staff to present a consistent message and image by preparing several presentation toolkits in advance.

Each toolkit should include a PowerPoint presentation about the district on CD or a short (three to five minutes tops) video, plus a script, overheads, handout masters, a stack of fact cards (wallet size reminders of key districts stats and "wow" facts), and "request for more information" sheets. The kits should be stored in a self-service closet to minimize staff time.

Also, it's not fair or realistic to expect parents to always come to you. Often, rather than plan another event you have to market, it's easier and more effective to simply go where the parents already are, whether it's the neighborhood church, temple or synagogue, a soccer match or the local Wal-Mart store.

The communications staff should translate all materials into the major languages spoken by parents and students and host all meetings in wheelchair-accessible locations on public transportation routes. Provide translators when needed, and provide access for people with disabilities via Braille, sound amplifiers, etc.

Schedule your program and time it appropriately. Busy, time-pressed consumers, including parents, have limited attention spans and will need multiple reminders about important deadlines, dates, and procedures.

Timing is also important. If you're marketing an event, for example, the first invitation should go out at least six weeks in advance, with additional communications following almost daily. If you launch the event too soon, people will lose interest. If you launch it too late, they won't have time to make arrangements to attend.

Marketing a district or an individual school requires an ongoing, year-round program that is bolstered periodically by individual campaigns aimed at specific needs or goals such as teacher recruitment, magnet school applications, budget adoptions, finance elections, or school choice deadlines.

There's a classic military anecdote that says, "Officers tend to get what they expect." The same is true for marketing. Set benchmarks that help you gauge the effectiveness of your plan as it is being executed, and set measures that will help you determine whether your program was successful in garnering the desired results.

## Proactive Media Relations

If you want better news coverage, you need to pitch more stories and work on building better relationships with reporters. It really is that simple — and that difficult.

Glenn Cook, managing editor of *American School Board Journal* and staff liaison to the CUBE Communications Task Force, surveyed education reporters, communications staff, and board members across the country to find out how school communicators could do a better job of media relations.

What the vast majority of media suggested really boils down to professional courtesy: return phone calls promptly, find the answers to questions (or at least try to do so), and understand the deadlines and time pressures reporters face.

In urban school systems, however, providing timely, accurate information is often easier said than done. Many times, competent public information officers are hamstrung by overly restrictive policies regarding media access and a "circle the wagons" mentality.

While the first and primary job of any school is education, providing reasonable access to classroom activities, teachers, principals, and students makes for better media relations and more positive news coverage.

Competition is fierce in the news business, and the explosion of 24-7 news

channels and websites has greatly expanded the traditional news hole. Education is on everyone's radar because it's one of the few issues that appeals to and affects nearly all demographic groups.

The new news media are ruled by "what's entertaining, not by what's newsworthy," according to Stephen Knagg, director of communications for the Garland, Texas, Independent School District.

Knagg and other school public relations experts say that developing personal relationships with reporters is the key to effective media relations.

"Reporters, despite what you may think, are human, too," says Cook. "They make mistakes, sometimes more than their share. They can allow personal experience or feelings to cloud their questioning. They also can be the best and most reliable compatriots you have ever had."

Reporters distinguish themselves by being first and/or providing more or different information than their competitors, according to Cook. "That is their job," says Cook. "If you are contacted, your job is to make sure the reporter is able to do his job without hurting you."

Cook recommends responding quickly to reporters and giving them what they need to get the job done — not necessarily everything they want, unless public records are involved. Cook also urges school leaders to respect reporters' deadlines and to make themselves accessible when the news is bad, as well as when it's good.

"Realize that the media need production and writing time," says Cook. "Remember, silly mistakes usually occur for one of two reasons: 1) The reporter is not knowledgeable about the topic that is being written about; or 2) the reporter doesn't have enough time to appropriately check for facts."

Pitching story ideas to reporters takes time and research. Stretched thin by internal deadlines and demands, the communications/public information staff can find it challenging to visit schools and classrooms to dig out the human interest angles and data that make compelling stories for print, radio and TV.

Look for how national trends are playing out locally, and share that information with reporters. When a national study regarding important education issues is released, prepare a district response and send it to the reporters covering your school system.

Celebrate district successes by hosting press conferences and special events tied to the release of student achievement data, scholarship announcements, and

other major news.

Make sure to provide “sound” for radio and “visuals” for television. Colorful banners, balloons, signs, and charts along with an articulate person to interview and a backgrounder or fact sheet provide a complete media package.

It may be frustrating, but the reality is that much of what we do in schools — while vitally important — simply isn’t news. Adding news value and securing coverage for teachers and students who are performing well takes perseverance and determination.

When it comes to getting positive coverage, volume and frequency matter. You don’t want to overwhelm reporters and editors with fluff, but you do want to provide them with news and story angles they don’t get anywhere else.

## Dealing With Negative News

**C**onflict sells. By its very nature, news focuses on the unusual, new, negative, or different.

The news value of any particular story is often judged by the number of people it affects and its human interest appeal. If you want to capture the interest of reporters and editors, you need to package your story in ways that address their concerns.

A story that normally wouldn’t see the light of day can become page one news or the lead newscasts on every local television station on a slow news day. This is a good news/bad news scenario for urban school leaders.

The good news is you may be able to get soft news like a feature on a new arts program or student performance covered on a slow news day. The bad news is that even small incidents will receive major air time.

### Crisis Tips: The Basics

- Make your friends before you need them, including reporters.
- Have a plan and use it.
- Take care of students and staff first.
- Provide on-site assistance.
- Confirm all information three times before sharing with employees, reporters and the public.
- Designate one spokesperson.
- Leverage your own communication channels.
- Feed the media regularly and keep them contained in one location.
- Try to get the bad news over in one news cycle (typically 24 hours).
- Expect all skeletons to come out of the closet and prepare accordingly.
- Anticipate the hard questions and draft solid answers.
- You have more power than you think you do: use it!

Stories involving victims, crime, controversy, or conflict are especially compelling in today's "news as entertainment" formats.

Bad news travels quickly, so make sure you have a solid crisis management plan in place, one that enables you to respond quickly and proactively to media queries.

Sweeps — the ratings period that determines a newscast's advertising value — occur every February, May, and November. As public entities, school systems make attractive targets for exposés. School systems have reams of data, thousands of documents and frequent meetings — all of which are a matter of public record.

If an investigative team is looking into your finances, special education services, bus safety records, or health inspections, you can expect a negative news story or series.

In these situations, sometimes your best strategy is to minimize staff time by making the records available and issuing a prepared statement.

Reporters may want on-camera interviews and "b-roll" (background footage), but you're not obligated to provide it. And giving reporters what they want may just make the story longer.

Many times, cooperating fully with reporters is the best way to go. However, if a reporter or news outlet consistently shows bias, disregards facts that don't fit a preconceived agenda or story, and generally ignores core journalism precepts like balance, fairness, and accuracy, it has lost the right to expect any professional courtesy.

All news outlets are not created equal. Invest your time in legitimate news sources where you have a better chance of getting a fair shake. Resist the urge to get in the mud with sensational or tabloid-style journalists and political foes. Fight back by proactively telling your story, not by responding to every allegation.

## Getting ready to do an interview?

- Prepare and practice 2-3 message points in advance. Bridge from the reporters' questions to your message points whenever possible.

- Relax and keep your expression open. Stand or sit in a comfortable position, and use gestures if you normally do so. Don't sit behind your desk during an interview unless you want to look bureaucratic and arrogant.

- Avoid condescending remarks and don't use jargon. Practice speaking in 7-10 second sound bites, and be friendly, firm and fair.

- Do not lie. You will get caught. If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Tell the reporter you need to check the facts and will get back to him or her promptly.

- "No comment" usually means "guilty as sin" to reporters and the public. Avoid it — just like you avoid clichés — "like the plague."

## Provide Communications Training

**M**ilitary generals know that war involves a certain amount of chaos, and that even the best plans will go awry. Changing the pervasive, negative perception of urban education takes sophisticated planning, flawless execution, dogged determination, and military precision.

That's why training is so important. No plan can anticipate everything that will occur, but trained professionals will know how to respond when something unanticipated happens and will make better decisions under fire.

Educators may have advanced degrees and extensive professional experience, but very few have much, if any, training in communications, community relations, advertising, marketing, and public relations.

Even fewer go into education anticipating the life-and-death scenarios and human drama urban teachers confront on a daily basis. If your district is not doing so already, the communications staff should start providing professional development in crisis communications, intervention, and prevention, as well as school marketing and public relations.

Offer media training and provide insight into multicultural communication and guidance for more effective communication with parents and community members. This training will help school board members, administrators, and teachers master the art of the sound bite, which today averages only 7-10 seconds long.

Most importantly, as board members, you can help educators understand that they need to market their schools and their profession as if their lives and livelihoods depended upon it, for indeed they do. Public schools can't exist without public support. And if most national polls are accurate, public education in general — and urban education in particular — is in serious trouble.

### What Should I Do? A Few Suggestions

**T**ell your story and market your schools aggressively. School board members serve on the front lines of effective communication. Seize every opportunity to share your district's successes and enlist community members in making a difference for children.

School board members around the country frequently express frustration that the communications team or effort is reactive, rather than proactive. Many times, however, this is more a function of budget and limited staff resources than of attitude or expertise.

School board members, superintendents, and public information officers need to be on the same team, and on the same page, as much as humanly possible.

Public information officers should proactively support the work that you do. As school board members, you're a vital member of the school communications team.

Remember: If you don't look good, no one looks good.

So how do we do this?

We have to find those human interest stories—those compelling news hooks that showcase our students and teachers, and the challenges they face.

Tell people about the principal who checks the playground every fall when the weather gets cold to see which students need winter coats.

Invite the media and business leaders in to see the art teacher who volunteers her free period to tutor special education students, the biology teacher who inspires all of his students to pass the AP exam, or the principal who has managed to get all of her students reading on grade level despite a 98 percent free and reduced-price lunch count.

Create a magazine news show for cable television that highlights some of the amazing students you have, like the first generation immigrant from Nicaragua who came to you at age 10 without any formal schooling and no English proficiency who is now graduating as class valedictorian and will attend an Ivy League school.

Get there first, with the good news and the bad. When you succeed, let people know. Celebrate outstanding teachers and students on billboards, host booths at community fairs, and develop an advertising campaign to compete head-on for students with area private and parochial schools.

Create a series of first-class special events that highlight student and staff achievements. Invite Realtors, business leaders, and community officials. Challenge them to get involved with the schools.

If there's a problem, face it head on. Use your communications infrastructure to get the word out quickly, before it gets twisted out of recognition by the

news media or other naysayers.

If the board or district stumbles, apologize quickly and tell people what you're doing to make sure it doesn't happen again. Then follow through.

Create a brand identity. If your district logo looks like something from the 1950s or is a victim of desktop publishing disease, hire a marketing firm to design a new one that captures your brand identity.

If you're using a different theme each month or year, hire that same firm to develop a short, pithy, and memorable tagline that stands the test of time — one you'll be just as proud of five years from now as you are today.

Develop image standards, publication guidelines, and key messages and hold everyone, from the school board on down, accountable for using them.

A word of caution: Compelling logos and brand identities are not designed by committee or by unproven talents with artistic tendencies.

There's an art and science to brand building. Get a business partner to fund the project and hire a professional. This is not the time to ask for volunteers.

If you pay for a new logo and don't like what the designer produces, the professional relationship dictates additional options. It's hard to say no to volunteers, and your brand image is too important to leave to someone who doesn't do this for a living.

Work in public, fight in private. Let's be honest: Much of the bad press about urban education is generated by school board members who are more interested in seeking the media spotlight than working together to solve the complex issues we face.

A photo-op, speech, or brochure can't fix infighting, partisan politics, grandstanding, failing to show respect to board members with whom you disagree, leaking confidential private and confidential information, planting half-truths, negative personal attacks, protecting pet employees, playing to the cameras during board meetings, and e-mailing the media at the same time you e-mail the superintendent.

I'm not asking you to be a rubber stamp for the superintendent or to agree all the time. Democracy thrives with the free and open exchange of ideas. And we all know that democracy is messy—sometimes, it's very messy.

But personal, mean-spirited, divisive behavior has no place in the board room. Like Pogo, we have met the enemy, and it is us. If behavior gets us into trouble, words aren't going to get us out of it.

The board's job is to set policy and hire — or fire — the superintendent. It's the superintendent's job to run the schools. We've all heard that a million times, but if it's so simple, why do so many of us have a hard time doing it?

View communications as an investment, not an expense. If you spend \$30,000 to \$50,000 on a direct mail piece that targets nonpublic-school students and their parents, for example, you only need to recruit six new students to recoup those costs.

Using a conservative, \$5,000 per-student figure, those six students would generate \$30,000 the first year and approximately \$300,000 in tax revenue (not accounting for inflation or increases in per-pupil expenditures) for your schools during their K-12 school careers.

Your competition recognizes the value of marketing. That's why many of the more prestigious private schools have a larger public relations staff for one school than many urban school systems have for an entire district. (Of course they call them something different — development officers, student recruiters, community relations directors, alumnae specialists — but the roles are similar.)

Support strategic communications through board goals, policies, and budgets. Most urban school boards already have communication — in some form — as a top goal.

Now, you need to back it up, with policies and procedures governing everything from who speaks for the board — and when — to how the district will handle communications with employees, the community and the media.

Budgets may be stretched to the breaking point, but cutting communications or simply starving it to death is like cutting off your toes, and then trying to run a marathon. Not only will you fail, you'll fall flat on your face, even if the rest of your body is in prime physical condition.

Even the nation's best PR people will fail if not given adequate staff, budget, and equipment. Next to high school principals, school board members, superintendents, and public information officers have the toughest jobs in America. Work together, support each other, and trust each other.

Hire strategic public relations counselors for your top communications positions and place those individuals high enough in the organization so they have access to the information and people they need to do their jobs effectively.

Get trained professionals who know what they're doing and who are strong enough to push through the bureaucracy that often gets in the way of open

communications. You need someone who is willing to stick his or her neck out on a regular basis, someone who steps up when every human instinct says, “Run for your lives!”

Many times school board members serve as the public face of the organization, along with the superintendent. You need communications guidance and support from the public information office, including message points, speeches, presentations, handout materials and media training.

Any request for assistance, however, needs to come through the superintendent and needs to be focused on district — not personal or political — business. It’s simply not fair, nor is it ethical professional practice, to put PR people and other administrative staff in the middle of competing priorities and agendas.

Boards and superintendents also need to recognize the unrealistic and often overwhelming demands placed on the typical urban school communications officer or public relations director.

Staff public information appropriately. Each urban public information office should have enough staff to divide into at least two teams for media relations: the good news squad that daily seeks out and places positive news stories about the schools and the media response team that deals with incoming media queries and the daily negative issues and mini-crises that pop up in every city school system.

It is simply too hard for the same staff to perform both functions well, and given the tyranny of the urgent, it’s the proactive side that usually suffers. The proactive team can also feed good news stories to the district website team, cable television channel, education trade publications, and the community relations team.

You also need at least one person to handle internal communications and another to handle external or marketing communications, although having a team of five to 10 people for each of these functions is preferable.

If the same person or small group of people is trying to handle all of these functions, you’ve set them up for failure. It’s the school board’s job to help the community understand why these positions are needed, and it’s the superintendent’s job to make sure the communication function is well-managed and effective.



## **Appendix 1: Getting a Public Relations Program Started**

The following is reprinted with permission from the “Starting a PR Program” section of the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)).

At NSPRA we are often asked what is the best way to start a public relations program for a school district or a school. And even more frequently we are asked, "How can you get us out of this horrible public relations situation we are in?"

Getting started is often difficult because critics say you shouldn't use tax dollars for "puffery," "spin doctoring," and techniques to make individuals like board members and superintendents look good. And in these cases, NSPRA agrees with these critics.

Public relations needs to be in the public's interest. It needs to be grounded in solid two-way communication techniques and used as a vehicle to build trust, confidence and support for doing the best for all children in our schools. NSPRA firmly believes that school systems and schools have a Public Responsibility to tell parents and taxpayers how the schools are spending their money, and seeking their insight on helping the school district deliver high quality and an efficient educational program. The public has a right to know and be engaged in their schools. And they need someone in the schools trained in communication so they can get clear answers and guidance on how to work with their schools.

The following are ways some school systems have started PR programs:

- The school board forms a public relations or communications committee of the board. This committee, composed of board members and staff (central office and building representatives) begins looking at ways communication needs to be improved or enhanced in the school district. Such committees often seek input from NSPRA to demonstrate how other similar school systems are practicing public relations. A report is eventually made on why more needs to be done and it recommends ways of gradually implementing a school PR program.
- The Superintendent recommends that a study be completed, such as a communication audit, to assess what the communication needs of the system are. Normally, a professional communication consultant or firm conducts such an audit to give the system an outside and objective view of what needs to be done to start an effective program. NSPRA also offers this service to school systems and other education agencies.
- An upcoming bond issue referendum has increased the need for the school district to tell "its side of the story." Sometimes consultants are hired to assist a community committee to begin a communications effort. Soon it becomes apparent to all involved that such a communication effort can't just be for a referendum as impressions are made every day in a school system. Often, the effort begins with a consultant or a part-time person doing the public relations work. (Note: Be sure to hire the right consultant or part-time person; public relations calls for a professional trained in all aspects of communication. Make sure you hire someone with this appropriate background and or experience.)

- An issue, decision, or crisis have incensed and split your community, and you need help in putting the schools and community back together. Once again, consultants are often called in to assist with this situation and the eventual realization is that "if we had a proactive approach to public relations, we wouldn't have had this monster of a problem to begin with." This realization often leads to hiring or contracting with someone to plan and implement an ongoing and proactive communication for the school system.

Sometimes these new positions are split with other duties for the school system such as foundation coordinator, grants or policy writer, community education specialist and partnership coordinator.

Eventually, the position evolves into a full-time position because the need for more public relations grows when key leaders see the worth and value the public relations function brings to the school system or agency.

**NOTE:**

NSPRA also has produced its own publication, "Raising the Bar for School PR: New Standards for the School Public Relations Profession," that provides a defined set of expectations for your communications staff. The publication is available as available as a free download at the NSPRA website ([www.nspira.org/entry.htm](http://www.nspira.org/entry.htm)).

## **Appendix 2: FAQs about School PR**

The following is reprinted with permission from the “Starting a PR Program” section of the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)).

### **What is School Public Relations?**

The NSPRA (National School Public Relations Association) professional definition is:

"Educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive two-way communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support."

### **Why School Public Relations?**

If you ever need to explain to a school district why they need a school PR professional now more than ever, here's some information that may help:

This is the media age: School communication needs have increased dramatically and become more complex. A school district needs a professional PR person to develop and execute its communication plans through both print/electronic media and face-to-face communication, and to handle relations with the multitude of media that call school districts weekly.

Education is under attack: Public education is attacked from taxpayers, business groups and others. A school district needs a professional school PR person to publicize the positive news about student/staff achievement and programs, and to develop a coordinated proactive, rather than reactive, approach that anticipates problems before they develop. If there is no positive communication from the school district, the critics' voices are the only ones that will be heard.

The scope of successful school public relations has expanded greatly: From what in the past was mostly written communication, school public relations now is a greatly increased need for face-to-face communication with the many publics in your community. A school district needs a professional school PR person to schedule community relations programming, Realtor orientations, breakfasts with Chambers of Commerce or clergy, and American Education Week open houses, to build informed support and solid community relationships.

### **What Does/Can a School Public Relations Professional Do For a District?**

A school public relations person handles these major functions:

■ **Public relations counsel:** Provides public relations counsel, taking a proactive stance. Anticipates problems and provides solutions.

■ **Communication with internal and external publics:** Handles all aspects of the school district's publications such as its external newspaper and internal newsletter, among others.

■ **Media relations:** Writes news releases for all local newspapers/TV/radio; works to get media coverage of school district news. Serves as the media's liaison with the school district.

■ **Budget/bond issue campaigns:** Stays closely attuned to the entire budget-making process and promotes community input. Develops budget/bond issue campaigns and publications.

■ **Communications planning/crisis communications planning:** Writes/ develops a communications plan for the district, detailing how to reach its internal and external publics; writes/develops a crisis communications plan of reaching publics, gathering the facts and dealing with media in a crisis.

■ **Public relations research, surveys, polls, informal research:** Conducts formal and informal research to determine public opinion and attitude as a basis for planning and action.

■ **School district imaging and marketing:** Promotes the district's strengths/ achievements, and its solutions to problems.

■ **Student/staff recognition:** Vigorously publicizes student and staff achievement; develops staff and retirement recognition programs.

■ **Information station for the district:** Answers public and new resident requests for information; maintains extensive background files; keeps district's historical and budget passage records; and plans for school district anniversary celebrations.

■ **Public relations trainer:** Provides public relations training to staff and PTA's in areas such as talking to the media, communicating in a crisis and recognizing that non-teaching staff are part of the school PR team.

■ **Community relations liaison:** Serves as the district's liaison with community groups such as civic associations and service clubs; helps plan/publicize district's parent, senior citizen and community service programs. Develops ways to bring the community into the schools.

■ **The "I's" are crucial:** True communication, we know, is a two-way process of both inflow and outflow of information. A school PR person, in essence, helps keep both "I's" of the district open, and works to keep the public, in turn, both "I"nformed and "I"nvolved in the schools.

## **Appendix 3: Sample School Public Relations Policies**

The following sample school board policies are from the Tacoma, Wash., public schools and the NSPRA resource files. They are reprinted with permission from the "Starting a PR Program" section of the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)).

### **Sample #1: Tacoma Public Schools**

The Board of Directors believes it is the responsibility of each Board member, as well as each employee of the District, to actively pursue a two-way communications program that highlights the educational experiences in the city's public schools and promotes effective school/home/community partnerships.

The Board recognizes that citizens have a right to know what is occurring in their public school system; that Board members and all school administrators have an obligation to see that all publics are kept systematically and adequately informed; and that the District will benefit from seeing that citizens get all information, good and bad, directly from the system itself.

The Board affirms the following objectives:

■ To maintain an effective two-way communication system between the District and its various publics which ensures:

- 1) Dissemination of accurate, timely information about school policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions, critical issues;
- 2) Interpretation of decisions and action;
- 3) Elimination of rumors and misinformation;
- 4) Programs and practices designed to provide an open climate which will elicit ideas, suggestions, reactions from the community and employees alike;
- 5) An effective working relationship with the news media.

■ To maintain a Public Information Office which will coordinate the District's communication efforts.

■ To develop and maintain an organizational environment where all District staff members are aware that they share the responsibility for communication of school policies, programs and activities to parents, members of the educational and other communities.

■ To maintain a written plan of communication policies and guidelines which will be available to employees and to the public upon request.

■ To support the establishment of a Communications Review Committee to review and evaluate District-wide two-way communication efforts.

"The Board of Directors of any school district shall have authority to authorize the expenditure of funds for the purpose of preparing and distributing information to the general public to explain the instructional program, operation and maintenance of the schools of the district: Provided, that nothing contained herein shall be construed to authorize preparation and distribution of information to the general public for the purpose of influencing the outcome of a school district election."

Board members believe it is essential to the development of excellence in the education of youngsters that the maximum possible knowledge about the goals, achievements, activities and operations of the school district be conveyed to the students, staff and citizens.

The Board therefore reaffirms its commitment to openness in relationships with its patrons. The Board further believes that the citizens, as well as the staff and students, should be consulted and involved in the problem-solving and decision-making processes at as early a stage as possible. This involvement should be solicited actively and honestly through a wide variety of means.

### **Sample #2: NSPRA Resource Files**

The public schools belong to and derive their strength from the people of the community. For a community to be supportive of its schools, the people must be knowledgeable of the aims and efforts of the District.

Therefore, the Board shall make every effort to:

- Keep the public informed about the policies, administrative operation, objectives, and educational programs of the schools.

- Provide the means for furnishing full and accurate information, favorable and unfavorable, together with interpretation and explanation of the school plans and programs.

- Adhere to a policy of openness and honesty in communicating with citizens, staff, the news media and other organizations.

- Make available the background material, which is sent to the Board of Education, to the public and news media through the Office of Communication Services; however, this excludes confidential material, to be defined as materials regarding negotiations, sale or purchase of properties, legal matters, and sensitive personnel matters.

- Establish and support appropriate and effective communication between the administration and other District employees.

- Have publications prepared as needed to keep citizens informed about educational services, achievements, needs, costs, revenues, and expenditures.

To ensure that citizens and staff have an opportunity to be informed about their schools, the Board establishes an Office of Communication Services which will, among other functions:

- Provide the appropriate liaison services between the District and the news media;

- Support, plan and execute appropriate direct communications between school and home;

- Assess the public's knowledge and attitudes about the schools, and use this information in planning a communications program;

- Assist in ensuring that communications plans and skills exist in each school and department;

- Assist with the publicity for all District programs as requested.

## **Appendix 4: School Public Relations Plans**

The following is reprinted with permission from the "Starting a PR Program" section of the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)).

The role of school public relations is to maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the school district and the many publics it serves. Each school district has its own unique way of carrying out this role, but there is one common element of all successful public relations programs: they are planned.

A well-thought-out public relations plan will help ensure that a school district carries out its mission and meets its goals with the support of its staff and community. But where do you start? This tip sheet, developed from the resource files of the National School Public Relations Association, provides a basic framework process for developing a district public relations plan.

### **The Four-Step Public Relations Process**

Exemplary public relations programs follow this basic four-step process:

- **Research:** up front analysis on where the district stands in regard to all publics it wishes to reach
- **Action plan:** developing public relations goals, objectives and strategies that go hand-in-hand with the district's overall mission and goals
- **Communicate:** carrying out the tactics necessary to meet the objectives and goals
- **Evaluate:** looking back at actions taken to determine their effectiveness and what changes are needed in the future

Keeping these four basic public relations tenets in mind, you can follow this step-by-step process in developing a public relations plan for your school district.

### **Public Relations Planning Process**

■ **Variety assessment.** Begin by meeting with the superintendent and school board to discuss their priorities for district public relations objectives. Know the district mission and goals and be prepared to discuss how your program can help achieve those goals.

■ **Internal and external research.** Before structuring the plan you must be aware of where the district stands in the eyes of both staff and the community. There are a variety of questions to answer: Who are our publics? What are our publics' overall perceptions of our schools? What "hot issues" are circulating among staff and community? What issues affecting other school districts may soon be coming our way?...the list goes on and on. Base your research on your district mission and goals and use several methods. Tactics to consider: national studies, census data, telephone logs, media reports, interviews with community opinion leaders, focus groups, written or telephone surveys.

■ **Develop public relations goals and objectives.** Thinking first and foremost about facilitating achievement of district goals, develop short-term and long-term pub-

lic relations goals to accomplish. It is advisable to develop these with input from a committee representing board, staff, parents and outside community members. Remember, to make the objectives timed and measurable so you will know if you achieved them. Example: By the end of the school year, 75 percent of the district's teachers will be involved in projects to improve teacher/parent relations.

■ **Identify target publics.** These "targets" are the groups of people that need to be reached in order to achieve the goals. Primary publics are those most important to achieving goals. In schools, they are often students, staff and parents. Secondary publics are those who could be reached if money or time permit, or those who are indirectly reached by public relations tactics.

■ **Identify desired behavior of publics.** This is a critical step! In order for the plan to be successful, you must decide what you want the program to do. Do you want to provide information? Or do you want reinforce or change the behavior of certain publics? These questions must be answered before tactics are created.

■ **Identify what is needed to achieve desired behavior.** Using research data, decide what actions must take place to create the behaviors you desire. For example: You could find out by taking attendance that only 50 percent of the parents at your school attend the Fall Open House. The desired behavior is to increase this number. A follow-up written survey could help you identify the reasons 50 percent do not attend. Then you can decide what actions to take to change this percentage.

■ **Create strategies and tactics for reaching publics.** Strategies are overall procedures, like developing a media kit that provides general information about the school district. Tactics are the actions that must be taken to carry out the procedures, like writing the press release or printing the folder for the district media kit.

■ **Put your plan on paper.** This is where you develop the budget, create a timeline and assign responsibility for all strategies and tactics.

■ **Implement the plan.** After management/board approval, put your plan into action. Keep your committee involved, and prepare to refine along the way.

■ **Evaluate your efforts.** Using the same methods you used in the research phase, evaluate your plan. First, evaluate the planning process itself: what worked and what didn't. Continue to evaluate your program as it is implemented to determine what revisions may need to be made. Finally, measure your goals and objectives to determine whether you have reached them.

Prepared by: Jennifer Wayman Reeve, APR, Director of Communications  
Colorado Association of School Boards, 1200 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203

## **Appendix 5: Sample School PR Job Descriptions**

The following is reprinted with permission from the “Starting a PR Program” section of the National School Public Relations Association website ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)).

### **Sample #1: Mesa Unified School District #4**

**Position Title:** Director III  
**Division:** Educational Services  
**Work Year:** 12 Months  
**Department:** Community Relations  
**Location:** Administration Center  
**Salary Schedule:** Administrative

#### **General Statement Of Responsibilities:**

The Department of Community Relations provides communication/public relations services to the district, each department and school. The director functions as a communications coordinator during emergencies on district or school levels, establishes in-service training sessions, produces components for specific programs and activities and publishes a newsletter for school district patrons periodically. The department publishes an employee publication on a regular basis.

#### **Essential Duties:**

- Serves as information liaison between the total school system and the community at large, represents the district within various community organizations.
- Sets annual objectives for and evaluates the district's community relations program, to include budget planning for meeting those objectives.
- Serves as liaison person between the district and the news media and supervises the production and distribution of news releases.
- Serves as district spokesperson in areas of sensitivity or controversy.
- Cooperates with district administrators and other staff members, as appropriate, in publicizing and promoting performances, exhibitions, displays, dedications or special programs sponsored by the schools and open to the public.
- Provides professional public relations counsel and assistance to the administration, Governing Board, schools, parent groups and student groups.
- Oversees the writing and production of the employee newsletter.
- Prior to final publication, reviews and edits all district publications which will be disseminated to the general public.
- Recommends innovative avenues of communication for external and internal audiences.
- Solicits feedback through formal and informal means on activities, products and purposes of the community relations program and the school district in general.
- Develops and maintains accurate records of the district's public relations program.

- Provides logistical support for all meetings of the Governing Board.
- Expedites responses to inquiries and complaints received by the department from citizens, news media and school personnel.
- Conducts recognition programs for employees and students
- Coordinates and manages city, state and national campaigns and programs.
- Conducts information campaigns for district elections.
- Researches and writes articles and speeches for the Superintendent and Governing Board.

### **Sample #2: Administrative**

**Job Title:** Director of Community Relations

**Marginal Duties:**

- Provides professional assistance in the development of various publications (brochures, newsletters, letters, information bulletins) for school and departments.
- Provides in-service training as required on public and community relations.
- Performs other tasks as assigned by the Superintendent.

**Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's degree in public relations, mass communications, or equivalent experience
- Professional experience in a full-time public relations position
- Working knowledge of internal and external public relations programs
- Mastery of communications skills
- Understanding of the importance of two-way communication
- Experience in planning, implementing, evaluating, budgeting and personnel management
- Good health, physical stamina, fitness and vitality
- Accreditation by the National School Public Relations Association or Public Relations Society of America preferred, but not required
- Evidence of adherence to the code of ethics of the public relations profession

**Supervision Received:** Superintendent of Schools

**Supervision Given:** Community relations specialist and secretary to the director

### **Sample #3: Non-administrative**

**Job Title:** Communications Specialist

**Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's degree in PR, communications or related field.
- Two years of related experience in public relations and/or media work.

- Previous experience working with public schools preferred.
- Knowledge of the unique district community.
- Excellent verbal written and interpersonal communication skills.
- Proficiency with current technology for performance of duties; including graphics design and publication/print software.
- Excellent analytical and critical thinking and judgment skills a must.

**Duties:**

- Disseminate information to the public and school district staff.
- Evaluate and coordinate requests for community use of facilities, as well as approval of event promotional materials.
- Serve as editor/writer for district web site, newsletters and other publications
- Generate newsletter stories
- Coordinate layout, design and production of web site, newsletters and other publications.
- Serve as communications liaison between the media and the district. Prepare and distribute news releases, arrange media interviews and conferences and respond to requests for information
- Photograph district programs and events for publications and slide shows.
- Determine appropriate communications for target audiences.

Sources: Ohio School Boards Association, California School Boards Association, and North Penn (Pa.) School District

# Resources

## Education Publications

American School Board Journal  
([www.asbj.com](http://www.asbj.com))

Education Daily ([www.educationdaily.com](http://www.educationdaily.com))

[www.educationnews.org](http://www.educationnews.org)

Education Week ([www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org))

Educational Leadership  
([www.ascd.org/frameedlead](http://www.ascd.org/frameedlead))

eSchool News ([www.eschoolnews.com](http://www.eschoolnews.com))

Harvard Education Letter  
([www.edletter.org](http://www.edletter.org))

Phi Delta Kappan ([www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan))

Rethinking Schools  
([www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org))

The School Administrator  
([www.aasa.org/publications](http://www.aasa.org/publications))

[www.stateline.org/education](http://www.stateline.org/education)

[www.TCRecord.org](http://www.TCRecord.org)

## School PR Resources

National School Public Relations  
Association ([www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org))

Public Relations Society of America  
([www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org))

International Association of Business  
Communicators ([www.iabc.com](http://www.iabc.com))

## National Education Organizations

Achieve  
Cambridge, Mass./Washington, D.C.  
(617) 496-6300 or (202) 624-1460  
[www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org)

American Alliance for Health, Physical  
Education, Recreation & Dance  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 476-3400

American Association for Adult &  
Continuing Education  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 429-5131

American Association of Family and  
Consumer Scientists  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 706-4663  
[www.aafcs.org](http://www.aafcs.org)

American Association of School  
Administrators  
Arlington, Va.  
(703) 528-0700  
[www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org)

American Council on the Teaching of  
Foreign Languages, Inc.  
Yonkers, N.Y.  
(914) 963-8830

American Educational Research Association  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 223-9485  
[www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)

American Enterprise Institute  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 862-5800  
[www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org)

American Federation of School  
Administrators  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 986-4209

American Federation of Teachers  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 879-4400  
[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

American Library Association  
Chicago, Ill.  
(312) 944-6780  
www.ala.org

American School Counselor Association  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 683-2722  
www.schoolcounselor.org

American Society for Training and  
Development  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 683-8100  
www.astd.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association  
Rockville, Md.  
(301) 897-5700

American Statistical Association  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 684-1221 ext.133  
www.amstat.org

American Vocational Association  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 683-3111  
www.avaonline.org

Association for Educational  
Communications & Technology  
Bloomington, Ind.  
(812) 335-7675  
www.aect.org

Association for Supervision and Curriculum  
Development  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 578-9600  
www.ascd.org

Association of School Business Officials,  
International  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 478-0405  
www.asbointl.org

Association of Teacher Educators  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 620-3110  
www.siu.edu/departments/coe/ate

Children's Defense Fund  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 628-8787  
www.childrensdefense.org

Consortium for Policy Research in  
Education  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 573-0700  
www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre

Council for Exceptional Children  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 620-3660  
www.cec.sped.org

Council of Chief State School Officers  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 408-5505  
www.ccsso.org

Council of Education Facility Planners,  
International  
Scottsdale, Ariz.  
(480) 391-0840  
www.cefpi.com

Council of the Great City Schools  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 393-2427  
www.cgcs.org

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Berkeley, Calif.  
(510) 644-2555

Education Commission of the States  
Denver, Colo.  
(303) 299-3600  
www.ecs.org

Education Leaders Council  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 261-2600  
www.educationleaders.org

Education Trust  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 293-1217  
www.edtrust.org

Education Writers Association  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 637-9700  
www.ewa.org

Educational Research Service, Inc.  
Arlington, Va.  
(703) 243-2100

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, N.J.  
(609) 921-9000  
www.ets.org

FairTest  
Cambridge, Mass.  
(617) 864-4810  
www.fairtest.org

Institute for Educational Leadership  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 822-8405  
www.iel.org

International Reading Association  
Newark, Del.  
(302) 731-1600  
www.reading.org

International Technology Education  
Association  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 860-2100  
www.iteawww.org

Music Educators National Conference  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 860-4000  
www.menc.org

National Academies of Science  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 334-2000  
www.nas.edu

National Art Education Association  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 860-8000  
www.naea-reston.org

National Association for Bilingual  
Education  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 898-1829  
www.nabe.org

National Association for the Education of  
Young Children  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 232-8777  
www.naeyc.org

National Association for Year-Round  
Education  
San Diego, Calif.  
(619) 276-5296  
www.nayre.org

National Association of Biology Teachers  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 264-9696  
www.nabt.org

National Association of Elementary School  
Principals  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 684-3345  
www.naesp.org

National Association of Partners in Education  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 836-4880  
www.NAPEhq.org

National Association of Secondary School  
Principals  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 860-0200  
www.principals.org

National Association of State Boards of  
Education  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 684-4000  
www.nasbe.org

National Association of State Directors of  
Special Education  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 519-3800  
[www.nasdae.org](http://www.nasdae.org)

National Center for Education Information  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 362-3444  
[www.ncei.com](http://www.ncei.com)

National Center for Education Statistics  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 502-7391  
[www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)

National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive  
School Reform  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.goodschools.gwu.edu](http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu)  
(202) 822-8405 ext. 68

National Coalition of Advocates for  
Students  
Boston, Mass.  
[www.ncasboston.org](http://www.ncasboston.org)

National Community Education  
Association  
Fairfax, Va.  
(703) 359-8973  
[www.ncea.com](http://www.ncea.com)

National Conference of State Legislatures  
Denver, Colo.  
(303) 830-2200  
[www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)

National Congress of Parents & Teachers  
(PTA)  
Chicago, Ill.  
(312) 670-6782  
[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

National Council for the Social Studies  
Silver Spring, Md.  
(301) 588-1800  
[www.socialstudies.org](http://www.socialstudies.org)

National Council of Teachers of English  
Urbana, Ill.  
(217) 328-3870  
[www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)

National Council of Teachers of  
Mathematics  
Reston, Va.  
(703) 620-9840  
[www.nctm.org](http://www.nctm.org)

National Education Association  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 833-4000  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

National Education Goals Panel  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 724-0015  
[www.negp.gov](http://www.negp.gov)

National Information Center for Children  
and Youth with Disabilities  
Washington, D.C.  
(800) 695-0285  
[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

National Governors Association  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 624-5300  
[www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)

National Middle School Association  
Westerville, Ohio  
(614) 895-4730  
[www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)

National School Boards Association  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 838-6722  
[www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)

National School Public Relations  
Association  
Rockville, Md.  
(301) 519-0496  
[www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org)

National School Safety Center  
Westlake Village, Calif.  
(805) 373-9977  
www.nsscl.org

National School Supply and Equipment  
Association  
Silver Spring, Md.

National Science Foundation  
Arlington, Va.  
703-292-5111  
www.nsf.gov

National Science Teachers Association  
Arlington, Va.  
(703) 243-7100  
www.nsta.org

New American Schools  
Alexandria, Va.  
(703) 908-0625  
www.naschools.org

Phi Delta Kappa  
Bloomington, Ind.  
(812) 339-1156  
www.pdkintl.org

Public Education Network  
Washington, D.C.  
(202) 628-7460  
www.publiceducation.org

Sex Information and Education Council of  
the U.S.  
New York, NY  
(212) 819-9770  
www.siecus.org

U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, D.C.  
www.ed.gov

**Author Contact:**

Nora Carr  
Senior Vice President, Public Relations  
Luquire George Andrews, Inc.  
4201 Congress Street Suite 400  
Charlotte, NC 28209  
P: 704-552-6565 x145  
F: 704-552-1972  
carr@lgapr.com

**To Contact CUBE:**

Council of Urban Boards of Education  
National School Boards Association  
1680 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3493  
Phone: (703) 838-6704



National School Boards Association  
Council of Urban Boards of Education  
1680 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone / 703-838-6705  
Fax / 703-548-5613  
E-mail / [cube@nsba.org](mailto:cube@nsba.org)  
[www.nsba.org/cube](http://www.nsba.org/cube)

***Serving America's Urban Public School Students***