



YES! YOU CAN HAVE SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Maren Smagala

District Communications Coordinator
North Hunterdon-Voorhees
Regional High School District
Vice President of Programming, NJSPRA

Lori Perlow

Communications Manager
Camden County Educational Services Commission
President, NJSPRA

Importance of School Communications

- Benefits of proactive school communications
 - the public to become aware and understand what is happening in your school district
 - which can lead to a prideful feeling
 - community support for your initiatives (i.e. bond referendum, new schedule or programs, etc.)
 - and those initiatives can lead to student achievement
- Every school district should be communicating!

Superintendents Can't Do It All

- With all that is on a superintendent's plate, school communications/PR is typically at the bottom.
- Effective school communications requires expertise and well-honed skills and talent, bolstered by planning, action and follow-up.
- Who has time?



“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw

Accountability Regulations

- The Fiscal Accountability, Efficiency and Budgeting Procedures, passed in 2007, created misunderstanding about school public relations.
- **Fact** - The regulations DO allow school districts to have public relations. Districts can hire professional services or have a staff position that performs public relations activities.

Let us review what's allowed...

Accountability Regulations - Hiring Professional Services

- The regulations allow school districts to hire professional services for public relations.
6A:23A-5.2 “Each school district and county vocational school district board shall establish by policy or policies a strategy or strategies in order to minimize the cost of public relations and professional services. The policy or policies shall include, to the extent practicable and cost effective, but need not be limited to, the following provisions:

A maximum dollar limit, established annually prior to the budget preparation, for public relations as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A23A:9.3(c)14, and each type of professional service, with appropriate notification to the board of education if it becomes necessary to exceed the maximum.”

Hiring Professional Services

- Works closely with administrators and staff as part of team.
- Wide array of marketing communications activities
 - Media Relations
 - Social Media - design and manage
 - Website design and copywriting
 - Community/Business Partnerships
 - Awards & Honors
 - E-newsletters, newsletters, annual reports, brochures
 - Issues management/crisis communications
 - Grant writing, management

Accountability Regulations - Staff Position

- 6A:23A-9.3 “Efficient administrative and non-instructional costs include...14) Public relations services that are incorporated into the duties of the superintendent, business administrator and/or other staff position or positions and not provided by a dedicated public relations staff position or contracted service provider. Public relations functions as defined below should not compromise more than 50% of the duties of one staff position.
 - Public relations services include activities directly relating to promotional efforts that advance a particular position and/or communicate information to the news media and district community at large through such means as press releases, press conferences, newsletters, flyers, mass community mailings and emails, television and radio broadcasting, and school-related community events.

Accountability Regulations - Staff Position, cont...

- The following does not count as public relations activities according to the NJ Department of Education:
 - Crisis communications, website maintenance, data collection and dissemination, school operations, and development of the district calendar or handbook.
- The regulations are antiquated by today's communications standards. Members of NJSPRA do much more beyond basic PR duties as defined by the NJDOE.

School Communications Professionals

Sample list of responsibilities beyond press releases and mass mailings:

- Develop district's communications plan
- Draft annual budget for communications
- Crisis Communication, serve as Public Information Officer
- Maintain district's emergency management plan
- Website updates
- Social Media - policy, implementation, management
- Develop and conduct surveys
- Develop district calendar
- Employee communications / Human Resources functions
- District liaison for parent and community organizations
- Speech writer
- Coordinate district orientation and recognition programs, or other special events
- Input vendors for business office
- Track and update policies and regulations
- Process requests for public records (OPRA)
- Maintain ListServ
- Assist with development of Board Meeting Agendas
- Conduct research for various district departments
- Strategic Planning
- Manage Key Communicator network
- Recruitment (vocational schools)
- Host school tours
- Foster and maintain business and community partnerships
- Grant writing
- Student registration

Shared Services

- Consider shared services with
 - another district or
 - your town/city
- Save money and get what you need.
- Mobile technology makes it possible for school communications professionals to be available 24/7 even if not in district.

Thank you!

Please feel free to contact us if you have any future questions.

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