

# YES! YOU CAN HAVE SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS



Presented by:

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# 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 a Company

- 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.”

# 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
- 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
- Human resource functions



*“As an educator and board member, I experience daily all that is outstanding about public education. The expertise and talents of a public relations professional helps us take a proactive approach to communications and tell the amazing, inspiring stories about our schools and students, which encourages community involvement and support for our schools.”*

Joseph M. De Julius, Vice President  
Evesham Township Board of Education

## Case Study - Media Relations

- 2010 Alumni of Pinelands Regional High School received a National Equestrian Award. Laura Bishop Communications worked with Pinelands to maximize media coverage.
  - Researched award, obtained quotes for press release, pictures and video. Organized interviews with student, family and Pinelands Principal.
  - Articles published in *The Times Beacon*, *Asbury Park Press*, *The Sandpaper*, *Press of Atlantic City*, and *Hunterdon County Democrat's Horse News*.
  - Fox 29 News visited student at the stables for interview.

# Case Study - Role as Public Information Officer

## ● Planning

- Update emergency management plan; changeover to Standard Response Protocol
- Share and receive information with district and school security teams
- Work with school liaison from county prosecutor's office
- Coordinate tabletop drills
- Attend security workshops
- Develop solid working relationship with local law enforcement

## ● Incident

- Receive update on situation
- Coordinate statement with Superintendent and police
- Inform parents (ongoing through crisis)
- Post updates on website and Facebook (ongoing)
- Answer media inquiries (ongoing)
- Post-crisis communication to staff, parents & community

## Shared Services

- Small school district? Think you don't have the budget for a school communications professional? Try shared services.
- One member of NJSPRA worked for two different school districts, with one district billing the other  $\frac{1}{3}$  of her salary and benefits. She had set weekdays for each district.
- Mobile technology makes it possible for school communications professionals to be available 24/7 even if not in district.

# Why Hire Professional Services for PR?

*“The utilization of a public relations firm has been a very valuable piece to vastly improving the visibility of our district. Through proactive discussion about marketing/communications and the development of an overall plan, many more people are now becoming aware of the positive impact our students and schools are making within the community. Through this collaboration, we have the opportunity to celebrate many more of the district’s successes through e-newsletters, press releases, articles, and social media venues. The opportunity to work with professionals in this field who have the knowledge and time to focus efforts toward improved communications is a tremendous asset to me and the district as a whole.”*

Dr. Robert L. Blake  
Superintendent  
Pinelands Regional School District

# Professional Services

- Experience and expertise to develop and implement public relations program.
- 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

# **Importance of School Communications**

*And the skill set needed to help your district achieve effective communications*

# Importance of School Communications

*“School Public Relations promotes student achievement. Wow!...this statement might seem bold and some might even say it’s a stretch; however, the connection is clear and compelling. A good program of public relations develops the public’s awareness and understanding of the many positive activities, events, achievements and successes that occur in a school and district. Such awareness and understanding results in pride in the community’s schools. Pride in schools is necessary to garner the community’s support for its schools. Community support equates to the community’s willingness to provide the schools with the resources necessary to do the work of education - curricular improvements, professional development for teachers, technology and facilities upgrades, special programs for students, and more. These are the ingredients that lead to improved outcomes and achievement. So there it is...**Public Relations leads to improved student outcomes and achievement!**”*

Dr. Christopher Manno, Superintendent of Schools

Burlington County Special Services School District

Burlington County Institute of Technology

2013 New Jersey State Superintendent of the Year

## Superintendents Can't Do It All

- With all that is on a superintendent's plate, public relations is typically at the bottom.
- Effective school communications requires expertise and well-honed skills and talent, bolstered by planning, action and follow-up. And it takes time, of which superintendents are in short supply.

# Ideal Skill Set for Effective Communicator

- Successful school communications professionals should have the following skills and attributes:
  - Professional and confident, adept at networking and engaging all school constituents
  - Willingness to ask questions, gather information
  - Organized, multi-tasker
  - Excellent and talented writer; strong speaking skills
  - Level-headed, can handle a crisis situation
  - Understands news media, i.e. deadlines, press releases, types of media; respected by media contacts



New Jersey School  
**NJSPRA**  
Public Relations Association

- **Upcoming Workshops:**
  - November 18 - Media Training Bootcamp with Tom Slater, Risk Communications Expert, NJ Department of Health
  - January 28 - A Paradigm Shift in School Communications: Making Social Media Work for You
  - March 17 - Passing a Referendum: Communications Plan and Best Practices

*Join NJSPRA or Register for a Workshop*

[www.njspra.com](http://www.njspra.com)

# *Thank you!*

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

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