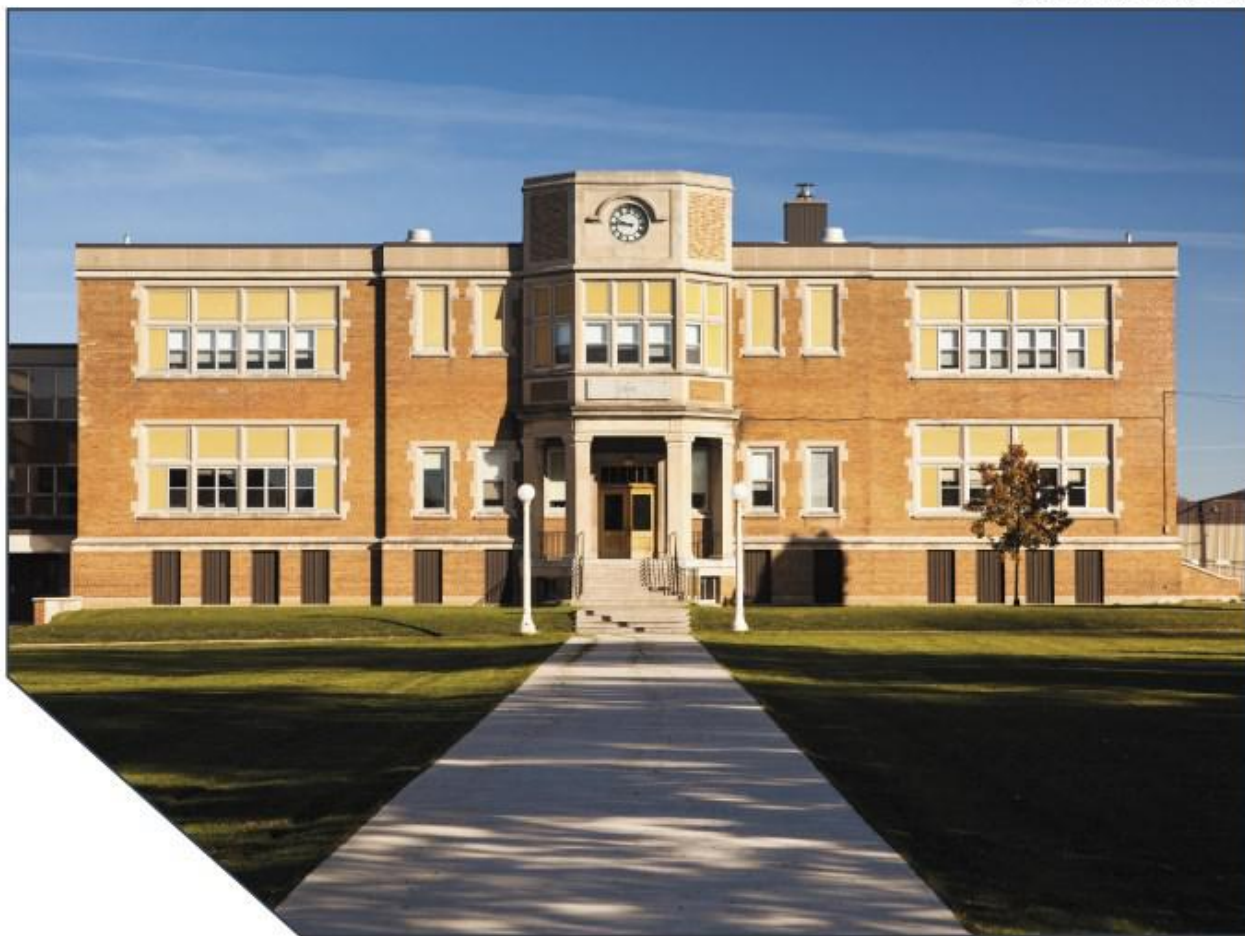


The Pearson Educational Leadership Series

# THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

TWELFTH EDITION



Edward H. Moore  
Donald R. Gallagher  
Don Bagin

*Twelfth Edition*

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**Edward H. Moore**

*Rowan University*

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# PREFACE

Rapidly evolving communication technology, tremendous shifts in the way educational services are funded and delivered, and increasing demands in what the public expects from schools continue to challenge school communication professionals and school leaders.

Importantly, most of these evolving issues are adding to and not subtracting from the complexity of school communication programs. New technologies are supplementing communication tactics in the school communicator's arsenal while not supplanting conventional tactics. Traditional school systems now face a constant struggle for students and resources in a tough, new competitive environment. And increasingly segmented publics are making more nuanced and specific demands on school leaders.

But there is a precedent for such shifts in communication demands. Rapid changes in traditional media, public demands, and government involvement in education gave birth to the formal practice of modern school public relations in the 1930s. Education leaders today must seek ways to successfully confront similar struggles in different environments.

School leaders must effectively deal with the ways in which traditional news media now cover and comment on schools in the converged world of print, broadcast, and online reporting; the realities of non-stop, two-way communication and engagement that digital and social media have spawned; the vastly expanded expectations of parents in particular and taxpayers in general for transparency and instant, on-demand access to information and data; and the new realities of ties between effective communication and community involvement and the resulting impact on student and school success.

This revised edition has been updated to reflect the new ways in which school communicators can organize and operate to meet the new demands this changing environment presents. It seeks to offer practical insights and guidance on how schools can build trusting working relationships with their communities to create sound foundations supporting student success.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Interviews with school communication experts and professionals offer practical insights for current issues in all chapters.
- Key issues identified for all school employees—central administrators, building and program administrators, and teachers, counselors, and staff—in all chapters.
- Links to videos offering examples of how schools are addressing many key communication challenges.
- Updated chapters in the "Essential Considerations" section reflecting the expanding roles for school communication programming in a time of rising demands for accountability and unprecedented competition for resources and students; the rising importance of community engagement in an era of constant change; and the evolving skill sets demanded of communication practitioners.
- The "Relations with Special Publics" section has been updated to address emerging communication challenges, such as the complexities of identifying internal and external audiences in a new-media environment, the growing need for objective-driven planning to inform and influence key audiences, and the growing importance of effective interpersonal communication among school employees to support student success.
- A revised section on "Communication Tools" addressing the new need to fully address the integrated nature of communication through online and traditional media tactics and emerging trends in planning for special communication campaigns and school-finance communication.
- An expanded look at accountability metrics for the evaluation of institutional and personal assessment of communication performance.

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For this edition, special thanks and recognition are extended to the National School Public Relations Association Executive Director Rich Bagin and NSPRA's members devoted to school-communication excellence and student and school success. NSPRA's commitment to documenting best practices in school-community relations serves school leaders throughout North America in their work to engage communities, build understanding and support, and promote student achievement and school success. Special thanks also are extended to Kathryn Moore for her tireless efforts at analysis and commentary, which contributed greatly to this work.

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—Edward H. Moore

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# The Importance of Public Relations

## **This chapter reviews issues ...**

- For central administrators: The role public relations plays to offer a two-way link between the organization and its key constituencies. How research and planning aid decision-making by documenting community priorities and how public relations helps school leaders better understand key audiences while helping key audiences better understand and support the school system.
- For building and program administrators: The role public relations plays to offer a two-way link between school programs and services and the direct audiences they serve. How comprehensive communication planning helps schools and programs devise and disseminate key messages in line with the system's overarching communication objectives.
- For teachers, counselors and staff: How public relations can offer planning, materials, and support for the vital roles front-line educators play in communication with key constituents. The ways in which communication planning and development efforts can help professionals refine messages and tactics for communication that support student accomplishment and support school initiatives.

## **After completing this chapter you should be able to ...**

- Define the purpose and roles of public relations and communication in the educational organization.
- Demonstrate the benefits of planned and measured school communication to students, schools and the community.
- Outline the roles of communication in building parental and community partnerships.
- Establish the links between communication and the public understanding and support it fosters.



As new challenges continue to confront schools and educators, the importance of school–community relations and overall school public relations has grown rapidly. Consider some trends affecting school leaders daily:

Many states and local school systems today offer a broad array of choices for parents in determining where to send students to school, creating new demands for ongoing communication on program and quality issues between schools and parents, schools and prospective parents, and schools and communities overall. It was only in the 1980s that Minnesota started a school choice program. Today, the majority of states offer some form of charter school alternatives to traditional public-school systems. Many states now give parents options for choosing specific schools either within or outside of their home school systems, and home-schooling options exist in all 50 states.

Safety and security crises—such as violence issues, health concerns, environmental dangers and staff conduct—have challenged the reputations of schools and added new pressures on schools to communicate more effectively before, during, and after crisis situations.

As parents and taxpayers have become better informed and are armed with effective new ways for communicating and connecting with one another, they tend to increase their involvement in local education issues and to openly challenge many of the decisions being made by educational leaders.

For these reasons and more, many superintendents, other administrators, and teachers wish they had learned more about how to communicate effectively and about how to practice public relations when taking their administrative courses.

## WHY SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS?

In most communities, taxpayers are letting it be known that they care about the quality of education and its costs. They are demanding to be informed about and involved with key education issues. As a result, more and more of the school administrator’s time is spent dealing with people and the administrative functions essential to building strong school communication and community relationships.

An administrator may provide excellent leadership for the school’s curriculum or may be a financial wizard, but if an administrator cannot effectively communicate with the school board, parents, taxpayers, staff, and the news media—on a regular basis—his or her days in the district will be few.

News coverage frequently declares one of the following reasons for a superintendent’s dismissal: “He couldn’t communicate with the board,” “Her comments alienated parents,” or “He just didn’t have a good feel for this community.” Knowing the public and being able to keep abreast of the community’s thinking are major requirements for today’s successful administrator. Suggestions on how to accomplish these tasks are offered in Chapter 3.

Rich Bagin, executive director of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), cites the following as the commonly found reasons that school and community relations fail:

1. Too often, educators equate communication with the dissemination of information. They fail to understand that communication is a two-way process that engages parents, taxpayers and communities in meaningful relationships.
2. School communication and engagement often are reactive to events and situations rather than planned efforts targeted at meeting specific objectives.
3. Leaders and front-line employees do not understand their specific communication roles, have little or no accountability for how they communicate, and receive little support to help them fulfill their communication roles.
4. Educators often have little communication training or experience and are not comfortable when issues have the potential to place their actions and decisions in the public or media spotlights.<sup>1</sup>

If school officials aren’t convinced that they have a responsibility to communicate because communication helps people learn or because it builds confidence in the schools, they might want to consider another reason: to keep their jobs. More and more school systems now offer parents some opportunity to choose the school or programs their children will attend. This means that images and perceptions

count more than ever for schools. Fair or not, accurate or not, schools that are perceived as being “good” will attract more students than schools that people do not seem to like. The point is that people working in schools that don’t attract students will not have jobs. That sounds dramatic, but it probably will be the result because choice options continue to expand.

Why do people choose one school over another? What makes School A seem better than School B? Many people have different theories. Some feel that it is the overall image of the school projected by the school district newsletter and media coverage. Others feel that it is based on the test scores of graduates. Still others think that an aura, evolved over the years, continues, even though in reality the quality of that school has changed.

The reasons why people make school choices become important when considering the growing interest and action on school-choice options. Data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics show that, “In 2012, the parents of 37 percent of all 1st- through 12th-grade students indicated that public school choice was available to them. Also in 2012, 13 percent of the students in traditional public schools were in a school chosen by their parents rather than an assigned school.” The data also show that those in chosen public schools “had parents who were very satisfied with some elements of their children’s education.”<sup>2</sup>

## **INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

With the increasing competition for students and funding, it’s imperative that educational leaders be effective spokespersons for education. With only so many dollars available, the question facing legislators is whether those dollars should go for roads, bridges, health care, welfare, or education. Impressions are made daily by administrators—impressions that influence legislators’ decisions about public education. While state and national associations can provide lobbying leadership, much also must be accomplished on a local level by school officials as they communicate in the community. Whether it’s speaking in a classroom to explain how public education works (a neglected curriculum item in most

schools) or having breakfast with a local legislator, the school administrator constantly affects the public perception of education. Because administrators lead a fishbowl existence in the community, it’s important that they understand and support ways of building confidence in public education.

Still, despite the increasing communication challenges facing schools and their leaders, many school systems continue to display a reluctance to commit dedicated staff and funds to the public relations function. The U.S. Census Bureau reports there are more than 14,000 public school systems in the U.S., but by comparison the National School Public Relations Association has just over 2,000 members in North America.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps many school leaders feel that “public relations” carries a negative image inappropriate for tax-funded organizations—that it will be perceived as “spin” or “propaganda” to be used to cover up or obscure problems and not as an essential function to build the relationships and understanding vital to public support and student success.

Whether a school system chooses to call the function public relations, public information, community relations, or communications is relatively unimportant. The commitment to better planned, regular, two-way communications with all the audiences served by the schools is, however, important. One of the reasons more of a commitment has not been made may be the fact that so few school officials have been prepared to handle public relations responsibilities. In addition, education has in many cases continued its administrative organization with few changes in titles or responsibilities over the years.

The importance of communication in the overall school operation is being recognized by an increasing number of states, as more are requiring that candidates for administrative certification complete a course in the field of community relations. National organizations, such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), have recognized the growing importance of school–community relations by devoting resources and conference sessions to the topic. The 2017 AASA conference, for example, included a “Social Media Lounge” offering programs such as “Benefits of Utilizing Twitter as a Superintendent,” “Using Social Media and Online

Tools for Collegial Cooperation and Personal Professional Development, and “Using Social Media to Effectively Engage Your Community” (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170628075551/http://nce.aasa.org/wp-content/uploads/AASA-2017-NCE-Onsite-Guide.pdf>). Other regional and state education associations are committing more and more sessions to the topic on a regular basis.

Clearly the commitment to school public relations function is essential. For communication success, however, schools need to commit to some of the basic tenets of public relations practice and its practitioners, including understanding that public relations.

### **Offers a Leadership Function**

The practice of public relations is built on a foundation of two-way communication. Effective communication demands more than simply disseminating news and information. It is not just a mouthpiece communicating only school messages that school systems consider important to share. Effective communication also serves as the school system’s eyes and ears—watching and listening to the many communities of the system. Of course, the communication function helps communities better understand the school system and its programs by disseminating information and messages in all manner of media. But the two-way aspect of true public relations also interprets the communities and their interests back to the school system and its leaders. In essence, to be effective the communication function needs to enable efforts by educational leaders to listen to and understand their constituencies in order to facilitate both decision-making and communication that will lead to understanding and support.

Acquiring feedback allows school officials to know how the community or staff will react to a decision. To effectively lead a school district, it is essential that leaders know and appreciate the thoughts, aspirations, and commitments of the community and that the community know and appreciate the thoughts, aspirations, and commitments of school leaders. There is a danger in seeing communication

as only a one-way function with school officials telling others what they think they need to know about schools.

When people are asked their opinion, they feel better about the person who asks for it, especially if it’s made clear that the opinion will be considered. Whether it’s using the key communicators, conducting surveys, or some other method recommended in Chapter 3, the need for feedback is vital to the leadership function of communication.

### **Builds Relationships and Seeks Consensus**

For schools to serve students well, decisions about how schools function and operate need to enjoy support by those in the communities they serve. However, support is not possible without an understanding of the reasons behind the many decisions and actions school leaders are responsible for.

Communication supports this process by helping schools better understand the wants and needs of their many constituencies, and it also supports the process by helping outsiders better understand the facts and rationales behind decisions and actions.

This is a delicate balance that school leaders need to maintain. Some situations may call for bold leadership with efforts designed to inform the community and seek to change prevailing opinions. But other situations may call for the school system itself to change course—to adapt itself to the community’s desires or demands.

Making the right decision on potential communication strategies depends upon careful and ongoing communication research. (For more on communication and community research, see Chapter 3.) Such research first helps school leaders to better understand the community and its prevailing attitudes. Such research also provides the foundation for creating a communication plan for the school system. But before a communication plan can be created the research first needs to be used to counsel school leaders on any changes the school system itself may need to make before attempting to successfully forge a consensus with its community.

## **Fosters Honesty, Transparency, and Ethical Behaviors**

If two-way communication seeks to foster and support relationships between the school and its communities then it also must support the elements essential to establishing the trust relationships need to thrive: honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior.

Emotions often drive action. Getting people to care about school issues often involves helping them to develop an emotional connection to those issues and the schools they affect. But the connection people make and the actions they take as a result can be positive or negative for schools—depending upon the emotional connection they make. Those who trust school leadership and believe they have been dealt with honestly and ethically may be more open to school initiatives and to considering various points of view and recommendations. Those who do not trust the leadership and feel that leadership has been misleading or dishonest and is operating in ways that are less than ethical may not be as open-minded to messages from their schools.

Ironically, new media that have emerged in recent years have made it both easier and more difficult for schools to deal with transparency. New media now offer efficient and effective ways to quickly make tremendous amounts of information readily available to audiences. But at the same time these new media have created expectations among audiences that all information will be readily available, thus making schools who fail to effectively use new media appear to be hiding information.

These same new media have created highly connected communities. In such connected environments, transparency in communication is an essential ingredient in supporting accountability and building the sense of ownership and trust communities must hold before they will trust schools and their leadership.

## **Supports and Counsels the Total Organization**

Along with being honest, transparent, and ethical when dealing with constituents, schools also must employ the same behaviors when dealing

internally. Communication, and the research that drives and supports it, needs to counsel the organization when potential plans or programs may not be in the best interests of the communities that the schools seek to serve. Reaching consensus, then, may mean helping the school adapt to its communities as well as helping communities adapt to their schools.

This process is reflected in the evaluation the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) makes when it considers school communication programs for its Gold Medallion Award annually. The organization evaluates programs based on their research, planning/action, communication/implementation, and evaluation.<sup>4</sup> The planning/action phase, which follows research, gives the communication planner the ability to counsel the organization on any changes it may need to make before engaging in communication and seeking consensus with its community.

## **Seeks Community Partnerships Supporting School and Student Success**

There is a significant amount of evidence demonstrating the tremendous positive effect that engaged families and communities have on student success. School communication is responsible for creating the atmosphere in which engagement becomes possible, and NSPRA's Communication Accountability Program (<https://www.nspra.org/cap>) has been collecting and disseminating this evidence for more than a decade.

Through two-way communication schools can build the kind of environment important to creating collaboration with the community overall and parents in particular—collaboration that will support student and school success.

Engagement between schools and their communities, however, depends on a foundation of understanding and trust, and planned school communication assures that such a foundation is created. Clearly, student and school well-being can be placed at risk when schools fail to effectively communicate and engage in ways that build working partnerships with the community.

## **Includes a Fiscally Responsible use of Taxpayer Resources and the Public Accountability Function for the School System Overall**

As with any school function, school communication and the many activities needed to support it must be funded with public money. Communication investments, as a result, must be planned and evaluated in ways that document an appropriate return. Research helps to document key issues and audiences, and messages and tactics that can effectively be used to address those issues and audiences. Research and planning can establish the benchmarks and metrics by which communication investments ultimately will be judged.

Some metrics may involve communication-based outcomes—the amount of publicity generated, the level of awareness created, the number of subscribers to a social media feed and so on. But other outcomes might be tied to more bottom-line issues for the school system—the number of new student registrations generated, the increase in attendance at public meetings, the value of donations to a school foundation and so on.

Both types of measurements are critical to creating communication programming that is both fiscally responsible and accountable for the school system overall.

## **A PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN IS ESSENTIAL**

A plan must be developed for public relations or little will happen. Board members and administrators can commiserate for a long time about the need for a public relations program, but it won't happen unless someone develops a plan and makes a commitment to on-going communication.

NSPRA recommends that school communication activities be planned and guided by a written communication plan. The organization recommends the following:

- The public relations/communication efforts are planned on a systematic (often annual) basis to support the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives.
- The plan has the approval of the superintendent/chief executive officer.

- The plan focuses on meeting the goals of the organization and ultimately improving education, and, to the extent possible, enhancing student achievement.
- The plan identifies the needs of target publics and uses research data to identify key messages and strategies for delivering those messages.
- Communication plans for specific program changes or initiatives are developed in conjunction with the staff responsible for them.
- Communication plans identify the various publics who will be affected and the strategies for reaching them.
- To the extent possible, communication plans include measurable goals for behavior change or accomplishment, deadlines, responsibilities, resources, and strategies.
- Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that communication efforts remain relevant and are on schedule, and are adjusted whenever necessary to reach planned goals or to deal with emerging needs and opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

## **Public Relations Addresses Many Needs**

Some public relations activities may focus on addressing specific needs—celebrating a key anniversary, opening a new building, or launching a new fund-raising initiative, for example. But school communications overall should be driven by a comprehensive public relations plan that accommodates the need for over-arching and ongoing communication of a variety of messages in a range of situations to a wide array of audiences.

Communicating with external audiences is perhaps the function most commonly associated with public relations. Working with the news media to generate news coverage and positive publicity is another role that many also associate with the practice of public relations.

But along with these external communication functions, public relations also has a responsibility to communicate to and build working relationships with internal audiences such as employees. Communication efforts can be tied directly to issues of employee morale, productivity, and retention, all issues which can have important financial impacts on an organization. Employees need to be seen as ambassadors of



the school in the community. What they say can make a significant impact on external audiences, and school leaders need to keep mind that workers—teachers and bus drivers, for example—are interacting with people in the community every single day.

Beyond seeking to inform others, public relations also has a role in influencing actions, and its communication efforts therefore also can play critical roles in helping to market schools and school services. From attracting new students to recruiting new employees, public relations plays a role in marketing a school system's many opportunities and options.

Public relations also plays a critically important role when schools are challenged by any of a number of crises that can erupt. Timely, accurate and open communication with internal and external audiences can help a school system effectively manage the many difficult issues a crisis can present. And effective public relations can support school leaders in maintaining their credibility and the community's confidence during times of crisis.

Even before a crisis strikes, however, public relations fulfills a role in helping school leaders identify potential issues and manage them before

they grow into controversies or crises that can threaten working relationships between the school and communities. By conducting communication research and collecting feedback from the school system's constituencies, public relations can interpret key audiences and issues to school leaders and support decision-making that aligns the needs of the school system with the needs of the community.

Along with counseling school leaders, public relations needs to play a role in helping all employees understand and fulfill their communication roles. People in all school functions have some level of public interaction and the way in which they handle these roles plays an important role in how others will view the school system and its commitment to serving the community. Public relations programs should offer activities to help all employees better understand the importance of these roles and they should offer training and support to help employees carry out their communication roles.

All of these activities reflect the role public relations should play in helping the school system to build the working relationships that are essential if a school system is to successfully and effectively serve its students and community.

## One Expert's Point of View: Understanding the Role of Public Relations in Helping Schools and Students Achieve Their Best

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### Why is it so important that school leaders understand the role and importance of public relations?

Misunderstanding what public relations can and can't do for a school system can pose a tremendous threat. Public relations is not a function designed to whitewash problems or sweep bad news under the rug. In fact, using communication to mislead or hide facts will often make a bad situation much worse. But when properly understood and deployed, public relations offers tremendous potential in helping organizations meet their objectives and enjoy success. And

it also helps organizations avoid problems and crises by identifying them and addressing them before they become major issues. And public relations can help organizations navigate troubled waters when bad news does happen.

Communication happens in any organization all the time whether it's planned for or not. It's simply responsible management to plan activities for such an important function and to hold employees responsible for their performance in their communication roles. One might even argue that failing to properly plan and manage an organization's communication function is management malpractice.

Organizations such as the National School Public Relations Association (<http://www.nspr.org>) have many superintendents, principals and other administrators—as well as communication practitioners—among their members. The organization has developed a number of materials to help school leaders better understand, build, and manage the public relations function in school systems of all sizes and complexities.

### **Many educators have little if any formal communication training, so how can they be expected to manage public relations functions?**

Two issues are important here. First, while many educators may not have formal communication training they do in fact have a great deal of communication experience. Teaching depends on excellent communication with students and colleagues, for example. A successful administrator must be a successful communicator to inspire staff members and motivate them to work towards a shared vision. So an initial step might be to look at where we are communicating now, how these existing communication skills might be expanded, and how they might be applied to wider audiences in the public relations function.

A second step, however, is to trust in the skill and advice of the person leading the public relations function. Most chief school administrators aren't attorneys but they rely on attorneys when they need legal advice. They aren't police officers but they rely on law enforcement officials for security insights. They aren't physicians but they know how to get insights on health issues affecting their schools. The same goes for communication issues. Part of the management function of public relations should be to counsel and support school leaders on communication issues. So the school leadership team needs to have someone leading the communication function who is trusted and respected. This is one reason why we also strongly recommend that the communication function report directly to the superintendent or chief school administrator. The counseling function only works when no filters or obstacles stand between the communication counselor and chief executives.

### **As part of this counseling role public relations sometimes is called the organization's conscience. What is meant by this?**

Like people, organizations can sometimes make decisions or act in ways that are self-serving and harmful to others. It's

not always done maliciously. Perhaps a decision maker is focused more on an action's benefit to the organization than on the harm that may be done elsewhere as a result. Or maybe the press of time leads to a decision that simply is made in haste without a careful assessment of all of its implications. But images and ultimately organizations suffer when bad decisions are made.

The public relations leader for an organization has an obligation to be constantly focused on the needs and wants of key constituencies and looking for ways that decisions and actions can be made in the mutual best interests of the organization and its constituencies. Communication flows in two directions. So while the public relations function is charged with interpreting the organization to its audiences the function at the same time should be interpreting those audiences to the organization. Some see this role as being a sort of conscience—an inner voice prepared to speak to the rightness or wrongness of a decision.

This all leads back to the idea that public relations seeks decisions and actions that mutually benefit the organization and its constituencies. In the long-run, one-sided relationships ultimately will fail.<sup>6</sup> ■

## **Questions**

1. Explain what is meant by the two-way communication process and how public relations can use it to help strengthen school and community understanding and relations.
2. Why is it important to have a formal communication plan for a school district overall?
3. Explain the leadership function public relations should fulfill and why communication research is essential to that function.
4. Why is it important that the public relations plan address communication issues with employees as well as those in outside or external audiences?

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## Readings

- Bagin, Don, and Anthony Fulginiti, *Practical Public Relations Theories & Practices That Make a Difference*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 2006.
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- Broom, Glenn, and Bei-Ling Sha, *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 11th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2012.
- National School Public Relations Association, *School Public Relations: Building Confidence in Education*, 2nd ed. Rockville, MD: Author, 2007.
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## Endnotes

1. Adapted from personal correspondence in October 2013 with Rich Bagin, Executive Director, National School Public Relations Association, Rockville, MD. Used with permission.
2. National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts: Public School Choice Programs." Retrieved August 9, 2017, at <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=6>.
3. Taken from personal correspondence in August 2017 with Rich Bagin, Executive Director, National School Public Relations Association, Rockville, MD.
4. NSPRA Gold Medallion Award Program. Retrieved August 15, 2017, at <https://www.nspr.org/awards/gold-medallion>.
5. Reprinted with permission from "Raising the Bar for School PR: New Standards for the School Public Relations Profession". Rockville, MD; National School Public Relations Association, 2002. Retrieved August 15, 2017 from <https://www.nspr.org/files/docs/StandardsBooklet.pdf>.
6. Adapted from personal correspondence August 27, 2017 with Suzanne Sparks FitzGerald, Professor and Chair, Department of Public Relations and Advertising, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ. Used with permission.



# Public Character of the School

## **This chapter reviews issues ...**

- For central administrators: Why the public character of the school demands a special obligation to foster engaged leadership. How public opinion, properly informed, can drive behavior offering significant benefits to students and schools. But how improperly informed public opinion can drive behavior harmful to schools.
- For building and program administrators: How the public character of the school raises the need for understanding community attitudes and beliefs and accommodating them in everyday planning and decision-making. The ways in which opinions and resulting actions of those in the community can have a direct effect on the abilities of schools and programs to operate effectively.
- For teachers, counselors and staff: How the public character of the school underscores the significance of engaging with parents and others invested in the success of students. The degrees to which opinions and resulting actions of those served by schools can have a direct impact on the ability to successfully serve students.

## **After completing this chapter you should be able to ...**

- Identify the characteristics of schools and educational organizations and how those features affect communication practice in schools.
- Distinguish the features of attitudes, opinions, and public opinion.
- Define what is meant by school–community relations.
- Outline traditional public relations models.

From a communication perspective, the use of research, feedback, media, and messages to foster strong working relationships between the school and community would perhaps seem like little more than common-sense management and leadership mandates. After all, engaged communities grow from informed communities and engaged communities are more likely to understand the issues facing the school system and be more open to forging a consensus with others to work toward common goals supporting school and student success.