

The Best of

NSPRA

National School Public Relations Association

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Read Me First

NSPRA takes pride in what we send to members and subscribers each week and month of the year. We write for busy people. We promise not to waste your time; we give you a great deal of practical information, but deliver it in a scannable fashion where you can go directly to the articles you want.

Most articles have a brief introduction followed by a link to give you more detail if you want it. More than 90% of what we offer has not appeared anywhere else within the context we offer. We understand schools and we understand the nuances of educators and the demands of your parents and community groups. We help you through nagging issues in our publications, website, and personal telephone counseling when needed.

This publication is a great example of how NSPRA works. We have taken items from an array of NSPRA offerings from the past year and a half. Check out the headlines and short blurbs and then click on the link to go directly to the article.

To make your life easier — and that is one of NSPRA's unwritten goals — we offer this publication as a PDF where all you have to do is to click on each link.

Use this link, www.nspira.org/BestOfNSPRA, to see each full article you choose. Begin receiving these materials every week and every month throughout the school year.

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Here's a Look at Some Offerings

e-Network, monthly e-newsletter delivering trends, key solutions on issues, and insights on practical programs from the field.



NSPRA This Week — weekly quick-read e-newsletter, offering a tipsheet, clips from controversial news items that may strike your district in the near future, a set of quotes to use in your publications, as well low-cost or no-cost resources.

PRincipal Communicator — print newsletter focusing on PR for school principals and their buildings. It's a quick read, chock full of tips, tactics and examples for principals to improve PR in their schools.

Communication Matters for Leading Superintendents

— e-newsletter published 6 times a year, written directly for superintendents. It has articles on issues, reputation management, media relations in good times and bad, as well as public engagement strategies for our schools.



NSPRA Counselor — occasional e-newsletter focusing on one topic and the PR ramifications related to it such as the recently released *Waiting for Superman*.



Special Bonus Items on such topics as *Savvy Superintendents*, *Communicating Your Way Through the Budget Crisis*.

Superintendent Challenges His Community to Match Student Performance

A Texas superintendent, in one fashion, challenged his community to place a bet on whether they could do better than his students by taking the state's exit exam in math. The bet was just for \$100 and, if there were any winners, they were placed in a drawing.

Many community members these days believe that schools used to be better than they are today. Author Jamie Vollmer in his new book, *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*, (available from NSPRA), coined the term *nostesia*, which he defines as 50% nostalgia and 50% amnesia. Those with this disease, estimated to be in the millions by Vollmer, simply feel that schools of yesteryear are much better than those today. He claims that this widespread delusion is killing us as a nation. *Communication Matters for Leading Superintendents* offered this superintendents solutions at this link:

www.nspira.org/bon/a

Keeping Your Cool

Making Progress During Budget Deliberations

Imagine sitting around a campfire with your friends on a summer night in a scenic canyon. A park ranger approaches and warns that a flash flood is coming. Would you stay and talk about the various ways in which a flood could endanger you or ruin your trip? Would you talk about past trips ruined by bad weather? Probably not. Most likely, you'd move your camp to higher ground and resume your adventure.

In public education today, budgets are on our minds. But we run the risk of making budgets our obsession and slowing our forward progress on student achievement. As leaders, we need to inform our community and staff without paralyzing them with fear. This article from *Communication Matters for Leading Superintendents* gives you strategies to keep a positive perspective during your budget season:

www.nspira.org/bon/b

Holy Cow, We Have An American Idol Finalist in Our District!

Each year the popular *American Idol* TV show names finalists for its award. This means that one of your high schools may be inundated with media and the frenzy surrounding such a national show. Some NSPRA members have experienced this situation and one offered advice on what to do to help you make the most of this positive experience. The *NSPRA This Week* Tipsheet follows:

www.nspira.org/bon/d

Using Budget Shortfalls to Build Relationships and Credibility

Lily Tomlin used to say, "We are all in this alone." These past few fiscal years, many school leaders probably feel the same. Some school leaders have reached out to communities in innovative and engaging ways to help build understanding and support for their schools in these difficult times. The following *e-Network* article is a roundup of school leaders who have done just that:

www.nspira.org/bon/e

All A-Twitter:

How and Why to Use Twitter to Promote Your Schools

If you don't know a tweet from a Twitpic and you're wondering why on earth a school district would choose to use Twitter as part of its communication plan, you're not alone. More districts are now using Twitter to send quick messages to "followers" as it gives districts another cost-effective tool for communication. Many use Twitter in their work with the media, others use it for crisis messages, and some have developed it into part of their creative communication. To see how schools are using Twitter, go to NSPRA's *e-Network* article at:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/f

New Approaches to Annual Reports Make You More Accountable

About 8 years ago, NSPRA saw a trend in reducing the effort given to annual reports. But today's climate calls for our schools to be more accountable in telling their stories. New approaches to annual reports — some electronic and even interactive — are now trying to engage taxpayers by explaining the accomplishments and needs of their schools. For practical examples of annual reports, read this *e-Network* story at:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/g

Ten Communication Strategies for Labor Negotiations

Negotiations with all of your district's labor groups can generate low morale and an "us versus them" culture that can knock productivity right out of your system. Celebrating small successes, and remembering that, when all is said and done, you will have to work together are just two highlights contained in this *NSPRA This Week* tipsheet at:

www.nsprapro.org/c

Email, Twitter, Texting, Facebook and More; Employee Policies Need Revisions Now

All it takes is one Facebook photo or email posting to start a prairie fire of miscommunication and rumors in your district. Often these instances may be avoided if staff become aware of policies created to protect employees and the school district. Learn how one Illinois district did just that by going to the *e-Network* article at:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/h

When It Comes to Board Meetings, To TV or not TV? That Is the Question

Some of the worst public relations situations presented to NSPRA revolve around televised board meetings and the behavior of some Board members. In a few communities, Board meetings are seen as "must-watch-TV" to see the consistent antics of a few board members who "grandstand, demean, and act in such a nature that would earn a suspension from school if they were students. The other side of the story is that televised Board meetings add to transparency of decisions made about their districts.

For help on this topic, go to NSPRA's *e-Network* article:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/i

Local Blog Says School Chief Is Incompetent

To Respond or Not to Respond Is the Question

School leaders have always had critics. But in today's world, any critics can become more of a burr in your saddle by publishing a blog. When do you respond to a blog and when do you decide that it is time to respond? And when you do respond, what is the best way to do it? Where do Board members fit into this blog equation? Receive some savvy advice from this *e-Network* article:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/j

Seven Deadly Sins of Managing a Crisis

Crises can erupt any time, quickly spiraling out of control and leaving an indelible mark on your system's reputation for years to follow. There are things you can do — and should be doing — even in times of relative calm, to avoid poorly managed crises. Rick J. Kaufman, APR, executive director, community relations, Bloomington (Minn.) Public Schools, shares his insight on crisis management in an *NSPRA This Week* (NTW) tipsheet. Kaufman is the leading author of the third edition of NSPRA's bestselling *Crisis Communication Management Manual* and he was the chief communication officer in the Jefferson County Public Schools, home of Columbine High School, when that tragedy hit all of us in education.

www.nsprapro.org/bon/k

So You Have a New Superintendent. Now What?

Making a positive transition to a new superintendent calls for numerous communication-related planning steps before the "new boss" arrives. Preparation will pay dividends as most bosses will appreciate the opportunity to learn as much as possible as quickly as they can. This *NSPRA This Week* tipsheet gives you a list of step to consider:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/L

Facebook Faceoff:

Two Superintendents Challenge Each Other on Capturing More Fans for Facebook

A good-natured rivalry created more fans for two school districts who created a Facebook Faceoff for their school communities. The challenge caught the attention of the local media and the result was a positive story and a win-win for both districts, even though the "runner-up" superintendent had to wear the opposing district's spirit colors for a day and a picture was posted on both districts' Facebook pages. Learn more from this *e-Network* story:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/m

Customer Service at Your Local School: "Do You Have Them at Hello?"

School buildings with staff who believe in customer service are always more appreciated by your parents, school neighbors, and alumni. With little work and much leadership, schools can turn themselves into sought-after schools of choice by just practicing many customer service tactics mentioned in *Principal Communicator*:

www.nsprapro.org/bon/n

But Wait. There's More!

Resources like this handout are just the tip of what NSPRA has to offer today's school leaders. Find out about our resources or membership benefits, our national Seminar, and more. Go to www.nsprapro.org or contact us at (301) 519-0496.

Thanks and do remember that we are all in this together.

Rich Bagin, APR, NSPRA Executive Director
rbagin@nsprapro.org