



**NSPRA Mark of Distinction Award
N.C. School Public Relations Association**

Explanation and Overview of Overall Effort

In December of 2013, the N.C. Association of School Superintendents (NCASS) determined that their parent organization, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA), should spearhead a campaign to “Build Support and Respect for Public Schools.” The Superintendents developed the charge that “Rebuilding the image of public education, regaining respect for public educators, and responding to criticism of the public education model in North Carolina can and should be done in a variety of manners including:

1. Creating a sample district plan for every district to use for engaging educators, parents, businesses, the media and the public at large to educate them as to why traditional public schools are the best choice for educating the children of North Carolina.
2. Pooling resources for purchasing a professional public information campaign to include TV and other advertisements to possibly include newspapers, billboard, etc., across the state.

The Superintendents asked that NCSpra be approached as the professionals in the public relations field to spearhead the development of the campaign. However, the time frame was limited as the Superintendents asked that the campaign be unveiled at the Annual NCASA Conference March 13-14, 2014.

The NCSpra Board of Directors was approached in their December meeting and agreed that such a campaign was at the heart of NCSpra’s mission. NCSpra President Tim Lussier chaired the newly formed “Building Support and Respect for Public Schools” committee. Serving on the committee were NCSpra Board members Jeff Nash (Chapel Hill-Carboro City Schools) and Charlie Glazener (Asheville City Schools). Also serving on the committee were NCSpra members Jessica Swencki (Brunswick County Schools), Ellen Boyd (Kannapolis City Schools), Ashley Simmons (Nash-Rocky Mount Schools), and Chrissy Pearson (Durham Public Schools). Representing NCASA were Executive Director Katherine Joyce, Public Information Officer Anne Strickland, and Legislative Assistant Adam Pridemore. The committee met for the first time January 9 and held a series of bi-weekly meetings in Raleigh during January, February and the week prior to the NCASA conference in March. At the conference, which was attended by over 700 administrators from around the state, Lussier, Joyce and NCASS President Janet Mason unveiled the campaign for the first time with media coverage from the Associated Press and Raleigh/Greensboro/Winston-Salem area media.

Statement of Chapter Goals and Objectives for the Program/Project/Activity

The committee began their work by establishing the goals of the campaign. The stated goals are:

1. Create an understanding of how public education supports the financial health and quality of life in North Carolina.
2. Defeat the myth that “public schools are broken.”
3. Instill the conviction that traditional public schools are the best choice for North Carolina students and families.

Timeline of Calendar of Events/Activities

- The “Building Support and Respect for Public Schools” committee met Jan. 9, Jan. 23, Feb. 6, Feb. 20, and Mar. 6.
- The unveiling of the campaign took place March 13, 2014, in Raleigh at the opening session of the 2014 NCASA Annual Conference.
- The official website of the campaign – www.everychildschancenc.org – went live on April 4, 2014.
- A subcommittee to plan a special 175th anniversary of the first public school in North Carolina met May 20, 2014, attended by Lussier and Glazener.
- The “Building Support and Respect for Public Schools” Committee will meet again June 6, 2014, to continue planning for the 175th anniversary celebration.
- A 175th anniversary celebration will take place January 20, 2015, in Reidsville, NC (Rockingham County), on the exact date and location of the opening of the first public school in North Carolina.

Communication Plan Related to Program/Project/Activity

At the NCASA Annual Conference, attendees were introduced to the campaign, informed of the components of the toolkit and how those components may be used, introduced to the website (not yet live), and provided a 3’ x 8’ banner with the campaign slogan/tagline “North Carolina Public Schools – Every Child’s Chance, Every Community’s Future.” Attendees were also given a “North Carolina Public Schools – 175 Years Strong” lapel pin. Information was provided for ordering additional banners and pins.

Communications will continue throughout the upcoming school year, focusing on school PIOs and Superintendents, to utilize the toolkit developed by the committee to promote the campaign. Also partnering in the communication of the plan will be the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). NCASA, NCSPRA and NCDPI will continue to promote through regular annual communications and events.

School Boards and local government agencies will also be encouraged to adopt the Resolution of Support.

Documentation and Copies of All Related Materials

Included are copies of the components of the toolkit which is available online:
Campaign Committee

Website Image
Introduction to the Toolkit
Resolution of Support
Logo and Style Guide
Social Media Resources
Talking Points/FAQs
PowerPoint
A History of NC Schools
Billboard
Print ads
Banner
Lapel Pins
Web store for supportive materials
Town Hall Meeting Agenda
NCASA Annual Conference Presentation Text

Additional materials, such as Op-Ed pieces and Letters to the Editor, are still under development. The toolkit will be an ongoing project with resources added.

Identification of Target Audience and Explanation of Desired Outcomes

Although the committee discussed at length the need to impact Legislators (a Republican majority legislature that has cut public school funding, instituted vouchers to assist with private school funding, and instituted various other public school-damaging changes), the committee realized that the best way to build support and respect for public schools was to reach a larger audience. The audience includes:

Legislators
All Other Elected Officials
Parents
Non-Parents
The Business Community
The Community At-Large
and the voting community in general

Regarding desired outcomes, the goals stated above note the specific outcomes desired. However, a quote from the minutes of the committee's initial meeting gives insight into both the committee's intended audience and the ultimate impact for the campaign.

"The group concluded that the campaign's target audience is not limited to Legislators, voters or parents with school-aged children, but rather the entire North Carolina community in order to establish the most broad support for public schools, as all citizens are stakeholders in the future of North Carolina."

Documentation/Demonstration of Measurable Outcomes, Effectiveness and Success of the Program/Activity

The campaign kicked started immediately after its unveiling at the NCASA Annual Conference in July. Through a partnership with LifeTouch, all 115 school districts were provided a 3' x 8' banner with the slogan/tagline "North Carolina Public Schools – Every Child's Chance, Every Community's Future." Also, all 700 attendees were give a lapel pin with "NC Public Schools – 175 Years Strong" engraved on it. Subsequently, over 500 banners have been ordered by school districts and over 10,000 lapel pins. It has been noted by many school districts who have not yet ordered materials that they will request materials in order to kick off the campaign in their school districts at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year during convocations and other opening of school events.

State Superintendent of Education Dr. June Atkinson was present at the NCASA Annual Conference unveiling of the campaign and has enthusiastically pledged the support of NCDPI. Several colleges and universities have also secured banners and are supporting the campaign through their schools of education. NCASA is asking school districts to provide records of district activities that promote the campaign.

Explanation of How Program/Activity Relates to NSPRA's Goals and Objectives

The relationship to NSPRA's Goals and Objectives is obvious. The ultimate achievement for any school public relations professional is to garner support for the school system. That is exactly the goal of the "Building Support and Respect for Public Schools" campaign – and the work of NCSPPRA, in conjunction with NCASA, provide the vision and the tools to achieve that. Through the use of the toolkit, the skill set of PIOs will be enhanced; they will be recognized as critical members of the leadership team; and the use of these resources will emphasize the value and need of utilizing resources developed by fellow public relations professionals. The campaign urges the use of modern technology, as well as tried and true methods of communication such as community meetings for face-to-face dialogue. The fact that this is a statewide campaign adds to its effectiveness as PIOs adapt and implement its components. Regarding "NSPRA will have beneficial relationships with other organizations," through this collaboration, PIOs have been sought out as the "professionals" who are indispensable to Superintendents and their efforts to reach out to the community, engage them in dialogue and educate them regarding the value of public schools. As noted in the PowerPoint presentation at the NCASA Annual Conference, if one Googles "America's Schools Are Failing," the result will be 153,000 "hits." If one Googles "America's Schools Are Succeeding," the result will be 1 "hit." This campaign seeks to change that and, thereby, provide solid evidence that school public professionals are an essential component of the survival of public schools in the 21st Century.

Other Relevant Examples of the Chapter's Special Efforts

During the NCSPPRA Board of Directors' Planning Retreat in June, 2013, one of the stated goals for the year was to increase the visibility of PIOs around the state and, coincidentally, increase support and respect for PIOs. One way to do that was to align and collaborate with other education organizations throughout the state. Through NCSPPRA's participation on the NCASA Board of Directors (two NCSPPRA officers serve on this Board every year), NCSPPRA was approached in the fall to assist with a re-branding of NCASA. NCSPPRA President Tim Lussier and Vice-President Sharon Spence co-chaired the committee and developed the foundation for

NCASA's rebranding efforts. The invitation to assist in the development of a "Building Support and Respect for Public Schools" campaign followed shortly after that.

For the first time this year, NCSPPRA's has been featured as a part of the opening session of the NCASA Annual Conference with the NCSPPRA President invited to be one of the keynote speakers. Our Chapter believes the presence in this effort and the opportunity for NCSPPRA to provide the talent and expertise to ensure the realization of an idea initiated by Superintendents for a campaign to support public schools will enhance the organizations viability and respect for PIOs throughout the state.