

NSPRA This Week – Tip of the Week

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Value Defined: 10 Game-Changing Findings of a Comprehensive School PR Study

In a data-driven era of school accountability, hard numbers about the benefits of school PR are difficult to come by. The researcher's dissertation answered 15 research questions and tested nine hypotheses about school PR. It was a statewide (New York) two-part quantitative study of the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of school PR personnel and the implications of their employment on 2009–2010 through 2011–2012 budget vote outcomes.

What data sources did it use?

Part 1 utilized data from NYSED, the researcher's database of New York State superintendents' responses, and results of the researcher's online School Public Relations Employment Survey (SPRES) administered to 92% of New York State school PR employees.

Part 2 utilized the online SPRES results to run descriptive, comparative, correlative, and regression analyses of factors leading to school PR employees' feelings of satisfaction, efficacy and longevity.

Who were the participants?

The survey included 692 public school districts, 37 BOCES and five private school PR vendors.

Game-Changers: A Checklist for State/Local Comparison

- 1. 3-Year Budget Vote Impact of School PR Employment:** NSPRA/NYSPRA members enjoyed nearly a 4% budget passage advantage (98.1% v. 94.2%).
- 2. Who Employed:** Statewide, 50% employed high-need (poor) urban/suburban & low need (wealthy) were twice as likely to employ; High need rural were three times less likely.
- 3. Influence on Leadership:** 75% worked directly for the superintendent; 76% collaborated with the superintendent three to four times per week; 33% met at least once per day; nearly 90% reported having a close professional relationship with superintendent or their immediate supervisor.
- 4. Autonomy:** Less than 10% needed approval all of the time when releasing information; NYS PR employees were more than twice as likely to be one-person shops than national counterparts.
- 5. Trust/Value:** 52% were principal spokesperson or advisor to the principal spokesperson for the district, depending on the issue.
- 6. Salary:** Highest number of women occupied the lowest pay level (<\$50K); Highest number of men occupied the highest salary level (>\$100K) by nearly tenfold.
- 7. PTA/Community Groups/BOE:** Nearly 67% had a close professional relationship with the PTA/community groups; 41% "hardly ever" interacted with BOE.
- 8. Backgrounds:** Diverse paths to school PR: Only 16% had teaching certifications; 60% had communications background. Degrees: 62% had Bachelor's; 25% had Master's.

9. **Impact of E–communications:** 81% agreed that the Internet has increased the amount of time needed to do school PR; 90% indicated that e-communications were used most frequently followed by telephone and face-to-face in a typical week.
10. **Outcome Variables:** *Satisfaction, Efficacy, Longevity:* 86% felt satisfied; 94% felt effective; 67% intended to remain; Men were more satisfied than women; *Statistically significant:* Strong correlation between time spent w/superintendent and satisfaction, efficacy, and longevity; *Regressions (predictive):* 21% of satisfaction and 6% of longevity were dependent on positive relationship w/superintendent; 8% of longevity was predictable based on time spent w/superintendent and belief that role had a positive budget impact (Total: 35%).

Access to a free copy of the study: <http://fordham.bepress.com/dissertations/>

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