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professional or unprofessional you present yourself. This presentation establishes the level of respect you expect from those children.

Education is the most important of all professions. People who have found success in our world have successfully passed through school. That is how important your appearance and presentation is to an individual as well as to your whole school. You are part of the catalyst for education successes.

Leon Lessinger, dean of the College of Education at USC and educational author said the first two ingredients to a healthy and successful self-concept are a person's ability to say: First, "I feel successful," and, second, "Other people feel I'm successful." As educational office professionals, you know you are successful, and you need others to believe that you are successful, too. This is attained by "dressing for success" and maintaining the level of professionalism needed in your job.

As important as it is for administrators and teachers to set a good example, it is equally important for the educational office professional to do the same. Remember, the public will also be testing you in your appearance and your attitude. Let your appearance and attitude reflect a good image for your school district, your community, your parents and

Plan Ahead for WSPRA Luncheon at the WASB·WASDA·WASBO State Education Convention.

Are you planning to attend the State Education Conference in January at the Midwest Express Center in Milwaukee? Be sure to include the WSPRA Luncheon at Historic Turner Hall on January 23, 2001. Come relax, socialize and learn more about WSPRA. A new exciting luncheon menu will be provided.



Change the Way You Think and Work!
Register Now for WSPRA's 'Meeting the Challenge of Change'

■ Amanda Brooker, Green Bay Area & Ashwaubenon School Districts/CESA #7

Save your calendars for Nov. 7-9, 2001 for WSPRA's annual fall conference. This is a don't miss event for anyone who communicates with the public, the media, and district staff!



change with optimism and enthusiasm.

On Thursday, mingle with WSPRA members during breakfast — what a great place to find out how other school districts conduct public relations.

Our second general session will be with NSPRA North Central Region Vice President **Bob Noyed**, who will present "Selling the Invisible." How do taxpayers know if they are receiving

what they paid for? Our challenge in marketing education is that we don't offer a product, but a service. Learn how to overcome this challenge and apply "invisible" marketing ideas to your school district.

Then tap into the expertise of your WSPRA associates at two roundtable sessions. Learn new and innovative public relations strategies dealing with the ever changing world of education. After lunch, join us for breakout sessions dealing with Alternative School Funding, Communicating with Early



Childhood Parents, and Explaining Revenue Caps. We'll end the day with dinner in the fine restaurants around Green Lake.

Friday morning will bring us back together for breakfast and the Annual Meeting. We'll close out the conference with the exciting and much talked about "Fish!" **Pam Gardner, APR**, will show you how to motivate your employees with a positive change of attitude. This program has been featured on *60 Minutes* and *People* magazine. This is a great opportunity to bring other staff members (\$50/

Sharpen Your Communication Skills at the Pre-Conference Session



Don't let your communication skills get you voted off the island! **Communication: Be a Survivor, Not the Weakest Link** will give you the tools, skills, strategies and techniques to become an effective communicator. **Robin Schell, APR**, and a WSPRA panel will show you how effective communication can alter people's behavior and get the results you want, build your reputation through

effective relationships, and communicate clearly and effectively. If you work with parents, the community, the media and staff, this is a "don't miss" session for you!

How are You Going to 'Meet the Challenge of Change'?



Join us Wednesday night as we kick off the conference with dinner and **Patty Hendrickson**, who will bring us "The Challenge of Change — The Challenge for You." Patty is a dynamic, high energy speaker who will jump start the conference and teach us how to deal with

All conference attendees will receive a copy of the hot publication, *Ten Trends: Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future*. Author Gary Marx will be our pre-conference speaker next year and will address this subject.

From the President . . .



Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D.

This column is being written after the events of September 11, 2001. Needless to say, my heart is heavy over the senseless loss of life that our nation has experienced. I don't imagine that we will ever be able to understand the *why* of such a terrorist act. As I listened to the national and local coverage of the day, my mind focused on two themes:

(1) the pain and grief suffered by us all and (2) the selfless response of our nation as a whole. People standing for hours to give blood ... donations of food and clothing ... volunteers working tirelessly to find possible survivors ... corporations donating huge equipment for the search ... and the list goes on. The meaning I took away from this was that as a nation we need each other AND it is critical that we support each other.

This column was supposed to be an upbeat invitation for you to join WSPRA members at our Pre-Conference and Annual Fall Conference sessions at the Heidel House Resort and Conference Center in Green Lake on November 7-9. I was going to tell you about excellent speakers, the great ideas you would take away, and the wonderful chance to network. Well, all of that is still true, but the main message is that we who are in schools DO need each other. I have learned from personal experience how very knowledgeable and supportive the WSPRA organization is. I was only a phone call away from all the help I needed to survive my own district's day of crisis.

What I'll say to you is come — learn with us, network with us, have fun with us — but most important associate yourself with the most caring

Conference Silent Auction Needs Your Items

■ Diane Aschmann, East Troy School District

The silent auction will again be a part of the WSPRA Annual Fall Conference. Each year WSPRA members can be seen running from item to item placing last minute bids. Fellow members cheer and jeer as individuals up the bid in last-minute moves to be top bidder.

Members are encouraged to bring an item to this fun event and join in the bidding. Contribute an item that reflects your town or region of the state, or any item that will add fun and laughter to the bidding process. Past items have included everything from gift certificates for resorts, to stuffed Teddy bears, with Packer and Badger items always in high demand. Board member, Diane Aschmann, is organizing this effort and will collect items on Wednesday evening. Items will be displayed Wednesday night and will be auctioned off during the gatherings at the hospitality room each night. All proceeds go to the WSPRA scholarship to support a member's attendance at the National Conference. To contribute an item, please contact Diane Aschmann by Nov. 3 at (262) 642-6710 ext. 227 or e-mail her at aschmann@easttroy.k12.wi.us

Learning Days in Minneapolis

■ Ken Syke, Madison Metropolitan School District

"It's a sign of how committed you are that you walk across the room and forget why you're there."

"In tough situations, you've got to go to the BAR — that's Breathe And Refocus."

"Your job is to be the cocklebur under the saddle blanket."

"If it ain't broke, crack it."

These are some of the pearls of wisdom picked up while attending the 49th annual seminar of the National School Public Relations Association. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship from WSPRA because I am a member who had not yet attended this event.

While I'm a veteran of public relations and communications, I'm new to public education, so the opportunity to learn was welcome. And welcome was what I felt arriving at the conference center in Minneapolis — welcome by the hosts and by the many experienced school public relations professionals who make this seminar a perennial destination. This event is an opportunity to learn about our profession and to be energized!

Patrick Jackson

The national association lost a leader with the death earlier in the year of Patrick Jackson. At a session aimed at keeping his legacy alive, Jackson was described as a cultural hero, especially for espousing what he called "behavioral public relations." He advocated for bypassing the news media and developing relationships with and involving the stakeholders. Communications must be at the grass roots level, where relationships between schools and communities are built face-to-face, on solid trust and for the long term. Relationships, Jackson said, are the currency of school public relations. Jackson struck a chord for me, and his collection on school PR is available through NSPRA, www.nspr.org.

Management by Communications

One of the more entertaining break-out sessions was by Larry Ascough, a school communication manager in Elgin, IL. We should be practicing "Management by Communications" or MBC, and the best way to find out if you are on target is through a personal assessment.

- ◆ What's your definition of public relations? Our objectives should not be about good PR, but about helping the district achieve its goals.
- ◆ Know the business we're in. We are not in PR; we are in education. To be effective in our role, we have to become an expert in the issues.
- ◆ Do you nurture the CEO relationship? An organization is the shadow of its leader, and our primary job is to help our superintendent lead.
- ◆ Do you think of yourself as a manager? The PR pro must be a big picture thinker, and use knowledge and skills to help make sure the organization works.
- ◆ Polish our counseling skills. We must insist that leadership consider PR implications, and then serve as an advisor and counselor to our organization's leaders.
- ◆ Are you a devil's advocate? We are the conscience of the organization, and as long as the CEO understands and approves, being a devil's advocate is an important contribution.
- ◆ Change your planning process. We don't need a PR plan, but a plan for using PR. That makes PR a key element of the district's improvement plan ... not an isolated activity.
- ◆ Do you communicate through others? Most of the time, the person who speaks for the matter at hand should be the authority on the subject. Our job is to manage the responses and to prepare people to do this.
- ◆ Be a positive force. While we should continuously identify potential pitfalls, it's the PR manager's job to provide optimism.
- ◆ Never be satisfied. Savor your successes. Don't celebrate for long.

If you don't assess yourself with a perfect score, don't worry. The last item says that we can always do better!

Key Communicators List

One of the little things I discovered during the seminar that stuck in my head as a good idea is a key communicators list of 100 to 250 of the key opinion leaders in your community: business, legislators, clergy, non-profits, government, and other educators, anyone in the community who influences many others. The list is used to e-mail critical messages about your school district that the news media is not getting out, or not getting out in enough depth. This is not used to announce meetings or your latest news release, but rather education topics and issues that are current or "hot" at the moment. The frequency is no more than twice a month and you determine who gets on and off the list. You don't ask permission to put someone on the list, but a person can ask to

Don't Wait for a Crisis to Plan

■ Joseph Quick, Madison Metropolitan School District

The horrific tragedy of September 11 reminds us of the important role educators play in helping others come to grips with the

unthinkable. Many of us had to respond immediately to the crisis — answering calls from concerned parents, allaying fears of students, providing support for teachers and staff, making the media aware of the schools' response, and using the moment to teach.

It solidifies WSPRA's belief that we must be prepared to deal with a crisis *prior* to the event, rather than after the fact. The following is a thumbnail sketch of some suggested elements to a crisis plan. For more information, and samples of information provided by Wisconsin schools for students, staff and parents following last month's disaster go to WSPRA's Web site, www.wspra.org.

Students and Staff:

- ◆ Crisis intervention teams (psychologist, mental health professionals) to provide counseling to those in need;
- ◆ Establish media center in middle/high schools for students to discuss events with adult staff;
- ◆ Make every effort to stay calm and assure safety;
- ◆ Provide information to staff to help them explain to students what has happened.

Parents:

- ◆ Letter sent home with student explaining how the school district responded to the crisis and plans for the days ahead;
- ◆ Information for parents to help them explain to their children what has happened.

Media:

- ◆ Attempt to link media with administrative/instructional personnel to provide school's response to the community (social studies teacher, counselor, principal).

Rarely is anything of consequence accomplished by a single individual. Successful crisis plans must be coordinated, efficient



The Clerical Key Your Public Image

■ Darlene R. Hovorka, GEOE,
Adams-Friendship Area School District

Have you as an educational office professional thought about the way you look or present yourself to the public? As you have heard before, sometimes, you are the first person that the general public sees when they enter our office, whether you are the receptionist, the school secretary or a member of the administration office.

Proper dress and good grooming are easy professional accomplishments. These are so easily attained that many people overlook the value and importance of proper dress and good grooming to their professional image. How you look and present yourself has a lot to do with people's acceptance of you and many times reflects their thoughts of the district. Clothes may not make the person, but they may help others accept the person and thus, that person's position, viewpoints, etc.

Think about the children in your school. Appearance is very important. One look from a child will "size you up" and it's better to pass that test than to fail it. Your appearance reflects just how

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