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Spectrum Awards, (continued from Page 3)

to what needs to be submitted with your entry.

The "Lighthouse Award" will again be judged by your peers from all entries submitted that receive a perfect score of 100. This award represents your efforts in "lighting the way to better school public relations".

So, be a part of it! Submit your work to this one-of-a kind competition. If you have any questions, please call Darlene Hovorka, Spectrum Chairman at 608/339-3213, Ext. 210 or e-mail at hovorka_d@af.k12.wi.us. ❖

Mark Your Calendar!

2002 WSPRA Fall Workshop "Creating Effective Newsletters"
October 2 • Educational Services Center • Janesville School District

For Registration Information, watch your mail for details or check WSPRA's website, www.wspra.org, under Upcoming Events.

2002 WSPRA Annual Fall Conference - 35th Year Celebration!
November 6-8 • Heidel House Resort & Conference Center • Green Lake

For Registration Information, watch your mail for details or check WSPRA's website (coming in Sept.), www.wspra.org under Fall Conference.

To request a brochure on either event contact the WSPRA office, 608-257-2622, pwelch@wasb.org. ❖



WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

Burmester Says End QEO, Revenue Limits Cities Need to Reduce Achievement Gap as Key Issues

■ Joseph Quick, Madison Metropolitan School District

In her first State of the State of Education address, State Superintendent Elizabeth "Libby" Burmester said it is time to return the control of schools to local communities and school boards by eliminating the Qualified Economic Offer and revenue limits.

"Working against local control are the QEO and revenue caps. Both must be eliminated," she said to loud applause from the several hundred listeners gathered in the Capitol rotunda. "Only when we eliminate these huge obstacles can we return to the basics: local people running local schools."

Burmester's speech touched on a wide range of issues from student achievement to small class size, but clearly, funding was at the root of her message. "As I traveled throughout the state, there was no question that school finance issues loom large in the minds of Wisconsin educators and citizens.

"The challenge for us now is to reform our school finance system so it reflects these values and lives up to the Supreme Court standard that defines a sound, basic education, equalizes opportunity regardless of property wealth, honors local control and permits communities to provide a quality education to all of their children. Now, more than ever, an investment in quality education today ensures our long-term economic security tomorrow."

Achievement Gap

Burmester targeted reducing the achievement gap as the most critical issue facing education. She noted that in the recently released Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE), 80 percent of economically advantaged students were proficient readers, while only 51 percent of low-income 8th grade students were proficient readers.

"This achievement gap is unacceptable. Closing the achievement gap must become our number-one priority, the economic engine for ensuring long-term security for our state and for our citizens."

Burmester both praised and chided the federal government.

She said the No Child Left Behind Act is right to focus effort and energy on the neediest children. "But, the act comes with a windfall of requirements and not a windfall of new money, so we must ensure it does not become an unfunded federal mandate for Wisconsin public schools."

Special Education

Special education programs and funding also received attention in the address. "The New Wisconsin Promise ensures a finance system that provides access and equity to all students. In special education, we will pursue a number of initiatives at the federal and state level," Burmester said. The initiatives include:

- ◆ Support the inclusion of all students in accountability systems, focusing on several factors, such as graduation/dropout rates and suspensions;
- ◆ Call on Congress to keep its commitment to fund 40 percent of special education costs;
- ◆ Ensure that the state accept its responsibility to adequately fund the education needs of students with disabilities, and;
- ◆ Persuade federal lawmakers to fund pre-emptive measures to keep struggling students out of special education.

"We must persuade federal lawmakers to examine how we can provide services earlier, so all children can succeed, and we are appropriately identifying students for special education. We must ensure access to excellence for children with disabilities and not pit the funding of regular education against special education," Burmester implored.

SAGE

Burmester tied reading success by Wisconsin students to the success of the SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) program. She noted that between 1997 and 2001, the reading proficiency scores of students in the original 30

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122 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703
WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION



From the President . . .



Amanda
Brooker

Dear WSPRA Members:

I write this letter still functioning on the San Diego clock after attending my fourth National School Public Relations Association conference. Each year, I take home pages of great ideas only to find myself focusing on a few of the best, because there are only so many hours in the day. If I could only keep those extra two hours of west coast time I had this past week.

Big themes of the conference this year included image building, diversity, and customer and community relations. People. When it comes down to it, our job is all about people. The students in our schools, the parents of those students, the neighbors living around the schools, business people, government people, the list is endless. How do we relate to each group and what do they think about us?

As WSPRA enters its 35th year, it's the people in this organization who make good things happen. I've found that 99.9 percent of those in education do so because they love kids. I've also found that success is based on the relationships we build. Without relationships, we are doomed to lose support, lose the students who have no support, lose the parents that need support.

Knowing that only a few of us were able to make it to San Diego, please mark your calendar for the WSPRA Conference in Green Lake, WI, Nov. 6-8. Take the time out of your ever busy schedule to build relationships, learn from others who are dealing with the same issues you

Burmasters Says End the QEO, (continued from page 2)

SAGE schools increased 17 percent, compared to a 10 point increase for the state as a whole.

"We must retain funding for SAGE. I commend the governor and the legislature for their support of SAGE and call upon them to again commit their support in the next biennial budget," Burmaster said. She added that the UW-Wisconsin Center for Education Research continues to study the long-term effects of class-size reduction, and other issues. Since the program's inception, education advocates have had to fight during every biennial budget to maintain SAGE funding.

Critics of the speech said Burmaster failed to lay out a plan to fund the initiatives she outlined. However, a spokesman from her office said the details will be part of the biennial budget recommendation the state superintendent will make to the governor. Budget recommendations from state agencies must be forwarded to the governor's budget office — the Department of Administration — by the middle of September. The success of Burmaster's ambitious agenda is contingent upon her ability to convince the next governor and legislature of the value of the programs she suggests, given that the state will face an estimated \$2.8 billion budget deficit in 2003-05. ❖



The Clerical Key

Start the Year Off Right: Best Practices for Staff

■ Jackie Olson-Kold, Janesville School District

In order to build a positive image — good public relations — a school must have a positive climate, caring staff, and constantly encourage students to work to their utmost potential. The school must work hard at communicating its positive image to the general public with the ultimate goal of building support for students, staff and the school district.

Frontline staff can have a great impact on a school and district's image. They are the initial (and usually repeated) contact for parents, students and community members. This role carries a tremendous responsibility to deliver a good first impression of the school or district.

The Janesville School District has embarked on a public information-human resources effort to train our frontline staff with the NSPRA-WSPRA Image Builders or Breakers Workshop. Here are some tips from that program to help everyone in your school become better communicators:

Know important facts about your school and district. (Hint: Ask your principal or district administrator to provide staff with a "cheat sheet" of facts for easy reference.)

- ◆ Get to know the people who deal regularly with your school and its employees.
- ◆ Treat everyone who comes to or calls the school like a board member. Treat every staff member like the superintendent.
- ◆ Acknowledge people immediately. Greet the parents AND child. Learn names whenever possible.
- ◆ Don't appear to protect or cover for an administrator, but don't speak for him or her.
- ◆ Never act or appear superior to others.
- ◆ Use positive body language.
- ◆ Be empathetic. Deal with people from the heart.
- ◆ Don't give opinions. Listen to all sides of a story. Don't jump to conclusions.
- ◆ Let people know you care and have pride in your job and your school.

- ◆ Avoid gossip. Be mindful of confidentiality.
- ◆ Maintain a positive office/workplace atmosphere.
- ◆ Know the process your school or district takes when handling inquiries. Share that information when parents and others ask for assistance.

If you hear rumors about your school or district, report what you hear to your immediate supervisor. Also, seek clarification on the rumor.

For more information on providing Image Builders or Breakers to your school district, contact Patti Welch at the WSPRA Office, 608-257-3220 or e-mail pwelch@wasb.org. Please join us for our next WSPRA workshop, "Creating Effective Newsletters," and improve your image through written communication as well! The workshop will be held Wednesday, October 2, 2002 at the School District of Janesville, 527 S. Franklin Street, Janesville, Wisconsin. Watch your mail for registration materials or register through WSPRA's website at www.wspra.org. Join us! ❖

WSPRA Annual Fall Conference Update

■ Janay Wittek-Balke, Franklin Public Schools

If you have always thought of attending the WSPRA Annual Fall Conference, but just haven't had the chance, this is the year you don't want to miss!

November 6-8, 2002

Heidel House Resort & Conference Center • Green Lake

◆ Ten Trends Impacting Education

We are very fortunate to have Gary Marx, author of the *Ten Trends-Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future*. He will lead a full-day workshop on the Trends and how you can prepare to lead your schools into the new century. This is a must attend for superintendents, school board members and anyone who is a school leader!

◆ Marketing Your School

Have you started to talk about marketing your school? If you haven't you probably need to. We are in a new era of public education and the stakes are increasing each year. Matt Schlientz and other members of The Image Group from Holland, Michigan, will spend the morning providing conference attendees the tools they need to position their schools in the new age of education.

◆ Communicating During Difficult Negotiations

This year many school districts have been faced with difficult teacher negotiations and will start the school year without a contract in place. WSPRA has designed a public relations plan to help your district manage the communications aspect of this situation. How do you maintain a positive and productive school and keep parents and staff engaged. This session will arm you with a plan

and you will take home materials to put in place in your district.

◆ Board Members Sessions

This year there will be several special sessions aimed to fit Board members needs. Topics include media relations training, running productive and effective meetings and more.

As always there will be sessions that provide WSPRA members the tools needed to run a successful public relations program. Web sites, newsletters, referendums, recruitment and more will be topics you will take back to your district. Mark your calendar today for our fall conference. ❖

19th Annual Spectrum Awards Contest

■ Darlene Hovorka, Adams-Friendship Area School District

This year's Spectrum Contest will again provide a comprehensive design profile of Wisconsin School Districts' publications, electronic media and special projects. WSPRA's Spectrum Awards promote effective school communication by recognizing noteworthy efforts. Anyone, either individual or organization that holds an active membership in WSPRA is eligible to submit an entry.

Entry forms will be mailed to all members of WSPRA during the week of August 15th. If you do not receive one, go to WSPRA's web site, www.wspra.org, where you will find the entry form all ready to fill out and print. One very important fact to take note of is to follow the directions very carefully as

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VOTE FOR YOUR WSPRA OFFICERS!

Please take a few moments and go to www.wspra.org to the ballot link and vote for the 2002-03 WSPRA officers. The list of candidates are:

VICE PRESIDENT (three-year term — vice president, president-elect, president)
Jackie Olson Kold, public relations manager, Janesville School District

DIRECTOR (two-year term)
Linda Wickstrom, public relations & marketing manager
School District of Elmbrook

DIRECTOR (two-year term)
Lori Holly, community relations coordinator, Menomonee Falls School District

DIRECTOR (two-year term)
Doreen Dembski, public information director
West Bend School District

SECRETARY (two-year term)
Mabel Schumacher, Fort Atkinson