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- resource for other state education associations.
- ◆ WSPRA celebrated its 35th Anniversary.
- ◆ *Designing Effective Newsletters* was held in Janesville with 50 people in attendance.

I can't wait to see what great things happen in WSPRA next year!
It's been a great opportunity to serve you. I wish you all well – have a great summer and I hope to see you all at next year's WSPRA conference November 6-7, 2003 in Green Lake, WI. ❖

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WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

K-12 Education Has Strong Presence at Finance Hearings

■ Joe Quick, Madison Metropolitan School District

Parents, teachers, school administrators and board members advocating for K-12 education packed the six public hearings on the 2003-05 biennial budget hearings across the state that concluded in Madison. From the Rhinelander hearing where 350 students, parents and educators representing 25 school districts explained the plight of revenue limits, to Madison, where representatives from over a dozen school districts told legislators the impact of 10 years of revenue limits, public schools were well-represented.

Early in the Madison hearing, while introducing school district representatives to testify, Joint Finance Committee (JFC) co-chairman Dean Kaufert (R-Neenah) mused, "I think we've heard from all 426 school districts." That observation is telling because there was no shortage of advocates for an array of programs affected by the state budget — from home care for the developmentally disabled to in-home services for children with autism.

Education advocates urged support for the budget's allowable increase in the revenue limits, the \$100 million transfer from the Transportation Fund to school aids and funding at the current levels for summer school, SAGE, 4-year old kindergarten and other categorical aids.

Neil Duresky, a La Crosse school board member and president of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, told the committee, "Under revenue limits, schools have been cutting programs and streamlining operations for nearly a decade. These new cuts will come out of the very core of student programs and services. Class sizes will grow, extracurricular activities will be slashed and achievement initiatives will be stifled."

Duresky also said the WASB opposes all changes related to the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) and other proposed collective bargaining revisions. "Particularly now, in this budget crisis, schools need every tool possible to contain costs in a way that preserves student programs," he said.

Members of the Janesville Joint Legislative Committee

— comprised of teachers, administrators and board members —described the difficult choices confronted by their community's schools due to revenue limits. David Parr, president of the Janesville Education Association, said, "The limited money for public education in Janesville means we will have increased class sizes and reduce the number of SAGE classes due to the loss of teachers and support staff next school year."

DeForest District Administrator Jon Bales said a freeze on school aids could be devastating. "Clearly, any move to freeze the per student allocation at last year's levels would significantly threaten our district's financial stability. DeForest would be implementing operational budget reductions totaling approximately \$800,000 for the second year in a row. This requires program elimination, not merely rollbacks in service levels."

With the conclusion of the public hearings, the JFC is scheduled to begin a several week process of votes on the budget, beginning Tuesday, April 22. Finance committee members plan to conclude their work in mid-to-late-May and forward the committee's version of the budget to the full Legislature. Rank and file legislators have indicated the strong likelihood of the Joint Finance committee version of the budget being adopted by both the Senate and Assembly. Republicans control both houses and hold a 12-4 majority on the JFC.

Some GOP legislators have proposed freezing school aids at 2002-03 levels and many oppose transferring money from the Transportation Fund to school aids. Either change would force deeper cuts in local K-12 budgets. The Speaker's Task Force on State Budget Review, which issued recommendations last month, suggested paring back the SAGE program and eliminating state funding for 4-year old kindergarten and driver's education, among several other changes.

Senate Majority Mary Panzer (R-West Bend) and

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From the President . . .



Amanda
Brooker

You have always given me more than I gave to you. . . . You were the wings on which I soared.

— Lotte Lehmann (1888 - 1976)
German opera singer

Dear WSPRA members:

It's hard to believe almost a whole year has passed and my tenure as WSPRA President is almost over.

Leaving this post is bittersweet. I will mostly miss the camaraderie and humor of the WSPRA Board meetings. The membership is fortunate to be led by such a great group of people. They were my wings that helped me soar.

I look forward to the leadership of incoming President Janay Wittek-Balke, APR, of the Franklin School District. Janay will work hard to make your WSPRA membership even more meaningful to you.

Here is only a sampling of the great things we've had happen this year.

- ◆ Email become a cost-effective means to contact the WSPRA membership as a whole to provide timely updates and reminders.
- ◆ Mary Pat Pfeil, Wauwautosa School District, became the National School Public Relations Association Regional Vice President.
- ◆ Incoming President Janay Wittek-Balke of Franklin School District, and Jackie Olson-Kold both received the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR).
- ◆ *Image Builders and Breakers* customer service seminar is now being offered to school districts. WSPRA will come and train your frontline staff in a 2-1/2 hour seminar for \$500.
- ◆ WSPRA has partnered become a

(continued on page 4)

K-12 Education Has Strong Presence (continued from page 2)

Assembly Speaker John Gard (R-Peshtigo) have been insistent that the Legislature will finish the budget by Friday, June 13. In the past several years, budgets have languished into September and even October, so many observers are skeptical the work will be concluded in a timely fashion.

If you haven't contacted your legislators about these critical issues, it is imperative do to so immediately. ❖

When Writing a Newsletter, Consider Who Needs to Know What, When

■ Linda Wickstrom, Elmbrook School District

If your district is like ours, you likely have several policies in the School Board policy manual related to communications. Language describing newsletters probably includes words like, "factual in nature, guided by a code of truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and good taste." Given the Board's intent of district's newsletters, what, then, is the purpose of each? The Elmbrook School District regularly publishes three main newsletters: one internal and two external. Purpose, scope, and frequency are different for each.

FORECAST, the Elmbrook School District newsletter written for parents of Elmbrook Schools students, provides notification and anticipation of relevant, upcoming Board activities and district events. *Forecast* is printed five times per school year and is distributed as an attachment to existing school parent publications. It is a one-page, double-sided, two-color newsletter. The publication purpose as printed on the newsletter states *Forecast* is "a newsletter for parents forecasting matters of the district."

CURRENTLY, the district employee newsletter, is printed twice a month and is distributed to all staff members with their paycheck/advise of deposit via inter-office mail. It is a one-page, double-sided, two-color newsletter. Almost all information highlights what has happened in the district within the past two weeks and what will occur within the next two weeks. The publication purpose as printed on the newsletter states *Currently* is "a semimonthly publication to educate, promote two-way communication, and entertain employees of the School District of Elmbrook." A once per month companion newsletter called *Current Classifieds* lists classified ads as submitted by staff only. A one dollar voluntary donation to the Elmbrook Education Foundation is requested for each ad printed.

LINK, the external newsletter mailed to every household in the district, is published four times per year to communicate broad-based issues and key results in which the district is currently involved, to demonstrate student achievement, profile candidates for the Board of Education, and highlight recent Board action. The front-page feature story consistently highlights a curricular issue. This is the only district publication that prints photos. It is either one or two 11 x 17 pieces of paper folded to a four-page or eight-page stitched 8-1/2 x 11 flat. The publication purpose as printed on the newsletter states *Link* is "a quarterly report from Elmbrook School District linking the community, schools, students, district and Board of Education."

The district has branded the two external publications to be similar in design, paper, and ink. The two internal publications look similar to each other by using the same ink colors, which change monthly, e.g. pink for February, green for

March. The external newsletters are more corporate, the internal more relaxed.

As the editor, my job to communicate could be considered relatively methodical by first writing about the future in *Forecast*, then about the present in *Currently*, then about the past in *Link*. Readership surveys consistently find that target audiences believe the district keeps them satisfactorily informed and that the newsletters are of value. If you'd like

Do You Know Your Communications Etiquette?

■ Amanda Brooker, Green Bay Area School District

Email has changed the way we communicate, as well as how organizations operate. Instead of hour-long meetings, employees can handle matters via email. Parents and teachers can email each other without interrupting class time. It's easy. It's fast. But if done without thought, it can give you and the district a bad image.

Here are some general rules for you to follow to keep your emails and your reputation professional.

DO . . .

- ◆ Check your email everyday and respond quickly. Rule of thumb (like phone calls) is to answer within 24 hours.
- ◆ Be concise and to the point. Email, like a fax, is meant as quick communication. Keep sentences and words short.
- ◆ Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.
- ◆ Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. GroupWise has a spellcheck feature; use it.
- ◆ Make it personal. Remember, you are writing to another person, not another computer.
- ◆ Ensure you have a relevant "Subject" line that describes the content of your email.
- ◆ Start your email with a greeting. A simple "Hello," "Dear," or if you know them, just their first name works fine.
- ◆ Read the email before you send it. Reading out loud is even

WSPRA membership dues invoices were mailed on April 15, and are due by July 1, 2003. Please look for them in your mailboxes. Prompt payment will ensure that you will not be deleted from future mailings.

better, since the tone of an email can easily be misconstrued.

DO NOT . . .

- ◆ Attach unnecessary files. If you can fit the copy of a memo in the message box, do it.
- ◆ Click on attachments that end with an .exe or .bat (i.e. Happy99.exe), even if it is from someone you know. They may have inadvertently been infected with a virus which was forwarded to you via email.
- ◆ WRITE IN CAPITALS. THIS MEANS YOU ARE SHOUTING!
- ◆ Reply to an email when you are angry, as you may regret it later.
- ◆ "Reply to All" unless necessary.
- ◆ Forward chainletters or hoaxes. Common hoax requests are "false" viruses, a sick child's wish to have the email forwarded, a lost child, a retailer sends you money for each email forwarded, etc. Go to (and bookmark) the U.S. Department of Energy's hoaxbusters website at <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/HBHoaxCategories.html> to verify these hoaxes.
- ◆ Use email to discuss confidential information. Emails can easily be forwarded.
- ◆ Reply to spam — email's version of telemarketing and junk mail, not the meat by-product made in Minnesota. Replying lets the company know your email exists and will result in more junk mail.
- ◆ Send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks.

Knowing your email "p's" and "q's" will save you time while avoiding embarrassing mistakes. ❖

WSPRA Boasts Scholarship Winners to 2003 NSPRA Golden Seminar

■ Amanda Brooker, Green Bay Area School District

Kudos are in order for two WSPRA members who will be going out to Denver, CO, July 13-16, for NSPRA's Golden Seminar!

Dan Dobner, director of community relations, Hartford Union High School District, is the recipient of the WSPRA Conference Scholarship. This scholarship is created from proceeds of our annual silent auction held at the WSPRA Annual Fall Conference.

Susan Angell, manager of community and school relations, Beloit School District, is the recipient of the national NSPRA Conference Scholarship. Susan was one of three national scholarship winners.