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Nineteen articles present an overview of ideas dealing with many facets of school public relations. Analysis and suggestions cover topics such as (1) planning and use of press conferences; (2) proper balance between techniques and message in public relations programs; (3) potency of education in economic and social development; (4) interpretation of voting on school finance issues; (5) techniques for improving personal presentations, use of radio and television, publications, parent conferences, letters, and teacher recruitment materials; (6) making the school responsive to community needs to improve school community relations; (7) necessary skills of the school public relations specialist; (8) public relations through exhibition of student efforts and achievements; (9) public relations for innovative programs; (10) confusion concerning the administration of information programs; (11) role of the classroom teacher in public relations; and (12) potential problems with internal school communications. A 52-entry selected bibliography is included. Related documents are EA 001 920 (Volume 8) and EA 001 854 (Volume 10). (TT)

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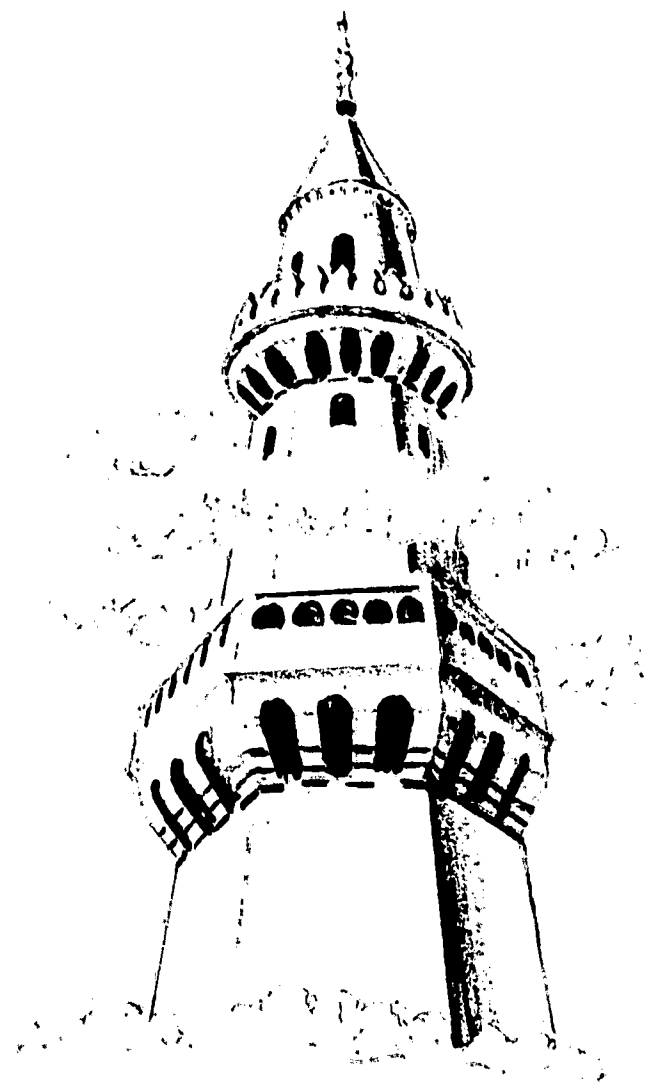
vol. 9



Are Your Public Relations Showing?

. . . and other Articles

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The articles appearing in the *Public Relations Gold Mine, Volume Nine,* present an overview of ideas expressed about the many facets of school public relations during the past year. These articles, in companion with those appearing in the first eight volumes of the *Public Relations Gold Mine* series, have been especially selected for their reference value to all members of the school staff whose responsibilities include school public relations.

We are particularly indebted to the following persons for permission to include material appearing in this volume: Scott M. Cutlip, professor of journalism, University of Wisconsin at Madison; Leroy V. Goodman, assistant commissioner for public information, U.S. Office of Education; and Mrs. Elizabeth D. Koontz, Salisbury, North Carolina, past president, Department of Classroom Teachers, National Education Association.

Several chapters appeared originally as articles in *Trends,* a school public relations newsletter published by the National School Public Relations Association and edited by Robert Olds. Dee Preusch serves as editor of the *Gold Mine* series.

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THE PRESS CONFERENCE

When you have a major news announcement, especially something which calls for explanations and background information, consider the press conference. Obviously, there must be something newsworthy to say, or the next time the press will prefer not to invest the time and effort involved in attending the conference. Further, you must be willing to make your own investment of effort if the press conference is to pay dividends.

"If press conferences are not a regular part of your press relations," advises *The Schools and The Press* (National School Public Relations Association, Washington, D.C.), "then they should be reserved for special announcements—annual report, bond issues, big change in the curriculum."

The press conference is something more than it may seem to be—newsmen with pads, pencils, and mikes competently asking sharp questions and receiving responses competently given by those being interviewed. It is the advance planning which makes a good press conference; lack of it can bring about a fiasco. Yet there is no magic involved. Just good common sense.

Things like these make the difference:

- Notify news media at least a day in advance. Give more lead time, if possible, and some brief idea about the purpose of the press conference.
- Prepare a statement on the subject of the conference for distribution at that time. Don't waste time reading the manuscript to reporters. They know how to read and will be much more interested in using the time to ask questions.
- Have one principal spokesman who knows the subject and can talk about it. He can have auxiliaries who are well-versed on technical details, and the No. 1 man should call on them rather than fumble around.

(One PR man had a boss who had the conviction he had all the answers at his fingertips. But he didn't. Result was that Mr. Big's poor performance before the press made the PR man wish press conferences had never been invented. He solved the problem by persuading the boss to hold a "dry run" the

day before the press conference. The PR director and some helpers played the part of reporters and fired every question they could anticipate might be asked. This "briefing," as it was called, made a tremendous improvement in the press conferences.)

- Don't overlook the little things —plenty of electrical outlets, paper, pencils, phones. If you have a photographer, get him on the scene; make him available. Sometimes a city desk will be unable to send a photographer because the situation may not warrant it. But the reporter may decide he would like to have a picture.
- Make every effort to start on time. The interviewee may break the ice by citing the question he believes will be asked most frequently about the issue and supply the answer.
- Guard against the overly-long response. This may be interpreted as a device to consume time and to block questions which may be distasteful.
- Guard against the response which amounts to unnecessary criticism of the press, labor, tax groups, etc. A press conference is not a private discussion.

Adapted from an address by Leroy V. Goodman, assistant commissioner for public information, U.S. Office of Education. The address was presented at a luncheon meeting sponsored by the Southern California Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association, which was held during the annual conference of the California Association of School Administrators.

ARE YOUR PUBLIC RELATIONS SHOWING?

Our public schools are today called upon not merely to expose young people to the accumulated wisdom of civilization, a complex enough job in itself. They are also asked to compensate for the inadequate home life of the children of the poor, to educate youngsters with physical and mental handicaps whom schools have traditionally regarded as beyond their ability to cope with, to retrain adults so that they can survive in a world in which strong backs command good wages only in pro football or the prizefight ring. And, going much farther, education is being looked to as the chief means of keeping our economy vigorous and our nation safe, of wiping out poverty, and of eradicating the fears and hates and prejudices that threaten to fragment our society.

On the face of it, the things education is being called upon to achieve add up to a deep and sincere compliment—a clear signal that educators have been given room at the top of the nation's leadership.

Nevertheless, I can imagine that many people in education feel they may be getting too much of a good thing. I can imagine many of them harboring the suspicion that they are being asked to perform an endless series of miracles.

They are, in fact, being called upon to do a great deal. However, it would be unfair and in any case ridiculous for the American citizenry to imagine that it can simply wash its hands of the crucial problems facing the nation and dump them into the laps of educators.

But I do not really believe that this is what the great majority of people have in mind. The magnificent new programs enacted by Congress during the past few years suggest to me that the people of the United States are so dedicated to education, so impressed by education's accomplishments, and so determined to help the schools meet the new challenges that they want to make greater resources available to them. Money talks, the old aphorism goes, and in this case it seems to be saying that the American people want to give educators a stronger hand.

Whatever the motivations, however, the course is set. Education's name is up in lights. America is determined that the schools and colleges be given a dominant role in shaping the nation's future.

And so education is in for some exciting times. Support of the schools will continue to expand. Teachers and administrators will receive greater honor and greater power. So strong is the ferment, in fact, that in time they may even receive appropriate salaries.

But such is the way of life that these emoluments will be accompanied by an overgenerous helping of vexations. The public is a demanding and sometimes irritatingly forgetful taskmaster. People will want to see results. And some will not be content with last year's successes. There will always be the cry of, "What have you done for me lately?"

In short, education is going to find its public relations showing. More and more, the public is going to exercise its right to know what's going on, and why.

This prospect may very well raise the hackles of many educators. Somehow it goes against the grain—when you conceive of yourself as a sincere, dedicated professional—to have to justify your work, to defend it against the skeptics, to explain it to the half-informed.

I think we must sympathize with that position. But the realities of the situation will not go away. The school district is going to have *some* kind of public relations whether the superintendent wants it that way or not. People will inevitably form opinions about the conduct of the schools—favorable or unfavorable, justified or unjustified. The only real choice, as I see it, is whether these opinions rest on fact or on fancy.

I should imagine that a staff to deal with public relations or public information or public affairs—whatever the term—would be a normal and important part of the administrative leadership of every big-city school district, state department of education, and college. In fact, however, public relations professionals are seldom found among education's top management. And even where there *are* public information people, they are too often thought of as being a kind of sideshow—useful for diverting the rubes, but not worth featuring in the main tent.

This kind of polite disdain is not suffered alone, of course, by the public relations man in education. Suspicion is a fairly common reaction to the public relations craft in general. And no wonder. Some pretty peculiar characters weave the old black magic of PR, or claim to. I am sure that many persons, including some educators, think of the public relations game as being one with amazingly flexible rules that just about anybody at all can play.

In any case, public relations people—including those of us who serve the cause of education—have a hurdle to clear. As our higher paid counterparts on Madison Avenue would say, we have an "image" problem.

Perhaps there are a number of ways to recover from this frayed reputation, but the only one that makes sense to me is good works. That should be an easy enough proposition for people of our craft to accept, for this is really what public relations is all about.

The most simple and cogent definition of public relations remains, in my opinion, that of "doing the right thing and getting credit for it." Or, as some one has cleverly improved this line, "Doing the right thing and getting *caught* at it."

If the school public relations man is to win respect and honor among educators, he must perform, not devise a personal sales pitch. The same principle holds true, of course, for educators. A school system will be judged by how good it is, not just by how good it says it is.

And so the job of the school public relations man, it seems to me, is basically one of helping education speak for itself. The responsibility of the school administrator—in the public's interest and in his own as well—is to give his public relations man sufficient stature and support and trust to enable him to do that job effectively.

For his part, it is the responsibility of the school public relations man to equip himself with a great deal more than simply the normal assortment of PR skills. He also must know and understand education. He must comprehend the mission of the schools, and how that mission is evolving. He must have a firm grasp of education's critical issues. And if he is really going to do his job, he must somehow manage to convey these matters to people in ways that bring the facts of education to life and make them real.

The reputation of the schools, and the support given to them, will depend far more than ever before on how much public understanding there is of education's efforts to cope with the tremendous new challenges that have now been thrust upon it.

Of all those challenges, none will be more demanding than that of giving children an equal educational break, without regard to race or color or language or social or economic status. In this and in the other areas in which education is called upon to shape the future of our society, those of us who deal in public relations for education can make a major contribution.

We are not going to get the job done, however, if we slip into the habit of letting abstract concepts take the place of personal reporting, hard thought, intelligent analysis, and plenty of leg work. The tendency is to talk vaguely of justice, democracy, equality, and the whole catalog of noble but detached words which—while they mean much to the philosopher—say nothing to frightened and thus hostile white parents. Instead, we must explain the whys and wherefores of school desegregation in those painful and sorrowful human terms which might bring understanding.

Neither laws nor appeals to justice are likely to touch human hearts unless the owners of those hearts understand the specific forms of

human wrong we are talking about. It is our job to reveal those wrongs in concrete terms that release emotion without distorting truth.

We read and heard a great deal in Washington about the riots in Watts and San Francisco and Chicago and other places, and one of the most arresting and revealing things I came across about these situations was a simple statement that in one area some school cafeterias had been closed because not enough children had twenty cents to buy lunch.

In educational jargon, such youngsters are called *disadvantaged*. What that antiseptic word means, if we take the trouble to spell out its implications, is that in a nation abounding in color television sets, electric toothbrushes, and dog cemeteries—in such a nation there are boys and girls who come from homes where books and pencils and crayons are unknown; who live in houses that are taken over at night by rats; and who are members of families in which unemployment, ignorance, frustration, and hopelessness form the characteristic legacy that the parent passes on to the child, and who are unable to scrape up two thin dimes for a kid's lunch.

It is not comfortable to poke around in the rubble of such people's problems. Each of us seeks to make things as pleasant as possible for himself, and it is tempting to avoid complicating our split-level vision by digging into the ugly realities of other men's lives.

Yet I suspect that only by doing so—only by candid talk about some of these unnerving matters—will we convert our fine slogans about justice and democracy into action.

Furthermore, it is such confrontations with the lumpy shape of reality that give any line of work its dignity, its meaning, its weight, and its worth.

Finally, I would say this: Public relations today seems to me excessively preoccupied with techniques, with media, with ways of getting the message across. We do not spend nearly as much time considering what that message ought to be.

The message is that education, if it is to measure up to the challenge, must immerse itself in human existence in all its sad, slaphappy, and wondrous profusion. Education must deal, as it has not in the past, with all our young, in all their beautiful, irritating, and puzzling variety.

EDUCATION IS GOOD BUSINESS

Even though increasing numbers of voters indicate at school elections they could not care less, most educators continue to bid for support using the exclusive theme that education is a personal service benefit for children. Almost completely ignored is the force exerted by the schools for economic development and social betterment.

The idea that good schools build better communities is not a new one. For many years this has been advanced by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Mounting evidence, however, indicates that education is a more powerful developmental agent than had been imagined.

Locaters of sites for new industrial plants and laboratories give high priority consideration to the

quality of nearby schools and universities. They have found that high quality firms must have good elementary and secondary schools available in order to attract executive and technical personnel; they also want university-based research help in the neighborhood.

For example, an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* by the big utility firm, The Southern Company, headlined the fact that "Good Schools Helped Attract World's Largest Substation Transformer Plant" to Rome, Georgia, where it is operated by the General Electric Company. GE has long given heavy weight to educational facilities in its studies of potential plant sites. The Pennsylvania State Education Association reprinted this advertisement and sent it to business and opinion leaders.

Education Is Good Business, published jointly by the American Association of School Administrators, Association of School Business Officials of the United States and Canada, and the National School Boards Association, makes an excellent source book for new information on ways in which schools benefit the economy. Charles S. Benson, University of California professor who prepared the report, points out that gained worker efficiency achieved through education accounts for 22 percent of the growth of the gross national product and that the advance in knowledge via research has boosted prosperity an added 20 percent.

The book terms education "a great machine of social progress." It points out how education increases markets, reduces production costs, expands national income, and hikes individual earning power.

"The outlook for American education is one of well-tempered optimism," declares the book. "Great opportunities lie ahead. There is a need to acquire greater strength to meet these opportunities. This need is matched by a feeling of confidence in the ability of our schools to serve our society in ever more challenging ways." It points out that improved communication and professionalization of education have greatly speeded up the ability of education to meet the challenges of change. "It now appears that substantial change can occur in American education in 10 years, not 50, even though our system is highly decentralized," the book says.

Industrial Expansion and the Public Schools, a booklet by the Washington State Department of Education, reports on a study of the impact of aerospace industry growth in that state, including ability of the schools to train personnel, funds needed for expanded facilities and population, etc.

A study publicized by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges reported on the immense contributions to the economy of local communities made by universities. Examples: University of Arizona, $77 million to Tucson; Ohio State University, $152 million to Columbus; Southern Illinois University has replaced the Illinois Central Railroad as the economic backbone of Carbondale, Ill.

TRIPLE VIEW OF VOTERS AND CAMPAIGNS

Don't be misled into thinking that the vote on the school issue affords a clear picture about citizen attitudes. It's not that easy. Dale P. Parnell, who studied voters and nonvoters in three Oregon communities, reveals a complex and somewhat baffling situation. In *Voter Participation Patterns in Three Oregon School Districts* (Oregon School Study Council, School of Education, University of Oregon), Parnell expresses deep concern about shortcomings of school PR programs in view of his findings. About all that a favorable vote on a school finance issue often means, he reports, is that more supportive than nonsupportive voters actually got to the polls. It fails to reveal serious PR problems and opportunities which lie beneath the surface.

The Parnell study indicated that about one half of the supportive citizens in the communities were voters. About one third of the nonsupportive were voters. Only one fourth of the neutrals went to the polls.

He found the nonvoters to be a strange group. Strangely, many in this group felt that matters of public school policy should be settled by voting, in contrast with the voters who felt that the school board and staff should settle most policy matters. Parnell said he believes "a possible combination of mistrust, misunderstanding, and highly diversified personal and social class values direct many nonvoters in their views toward the schools."

Those who vote, Parnell found, tend to be those who are somewhat satisfied with their influence in school affairs. They discuss school matters most often and become active on school issues. "There appears to be a high correlation between personal values and voter participation in school district elections," Parnell observes. "This opens an entirely new field for research on a psychological basis on this subject."

More attention must be given the nonvoter who "seems to have certain walls built up in his culture and

within his own mind," and a new type of program for breaking down barriers is required to make communication possible, he believes.

The neutrals are a most significant group, according to Parnell, even though they only infrequently give any evidence of being supportive or nonsupportive. They are relatively content, moderate on most issues, and generally oppose "rocking the boat," he says. "Since only about one fourth of them are voters in school elections, it seems absolutely vital for school political leaders to lower a bridge across the gap that separates the schools from the neutral citizen," says Parnell. "What is suggested here is a bridge-the-gap program that will break down barriers and provide a bridge over which the nonsupportive and neutral citizens can communicate with the schools."

Schools may well shoulder a good bit of the blame for lack of understanding about the role citizens should play in school district elections because educators have failed generally to teach in the curriculum about the nature of the public school system, he believes.

He terms to be a "vital necessity," a continuing information program which "informs all segments of the school district about the problems, needs, and triumphs of the schools." This is going to require new approaches. He suggests that more emphasis be given to "small group" efforts at communications, because development of attitudes and changes are more likely under such circumstances.

The information program must be sophisticated, well-conceived and directed. Parnell concludes: "The school district decision makers must provide information in different forms and through different sources of reference if they wish their information programs to reach more citizens. Other methods for participation must also be devised if the decision makers truly wish the participation of all strata of the social classes."

ADVANCE PLANNING THE KEY

A powerful support-building device for school finance campaigns which too many school administrators and boards neglect is the whole process of determining needs, Superintendent Max Snyder, Pullman, Washington, told a public relations conference sponsored by the Washington Education Association and the State Department of Education. He spoke on the practicalities of special levy campaigns.

"This is what the levy is all about, and if your program can't be explained, interpreted, or defended, you have no basis for a levy campaign," Snyder said. The key responsibility of the administrator, he said, is to manage a procedure which serves as a sound basis for developing the levy proposal and at the same time builds a broad base of understanding and support. All of this precedes what is typically known as a "campaign."

"Start with the staff in determining the educational needs of the district," he said, urging that teaching, classified, and administrative personnel help to identify needs. Then PTA, citizen committees, and other groups are involved in the act.

When needs have been developed, the stage is set for a citizen committee study. This would involve follow-up interviews with staff members and, eventually, recommendations to the board. When recommendations are made to the board following a staff study, Snyder said, needs should be listed in priority fashion to help the board select the total amount of the levy.

A "butcher paper" technique is employed at Pullman to aid groups studying needs. Snyder said it is used this way: "Take a large piece of butcher paper and tack it on the wall. As needs are given, write them down on the paper. Put down every need. The chairman of the group should not be the recorder. This takes too much time. Let someone else do the writing so that spontaneity will not be destroyed. Once the needs are listed, start to write down the amounts of money which each item will cost. This will give the group some idea of the amount of levy needed."

The school board should be given ample work session time with needs and priorities before taking legal action, and the action had better be a unanimous decision, Snyder said. "Any levy that is proposed but does not have total school board support is in trouble," he said. Following the board decision on date and amount of the levy, a well-planned conference should be held for the press. "The butcher paper should be up," he said. "The press should be able to see that there has been an attempt to plan in an efficient and economical manner and that there have been items eliminated in this effort."

He recommended that the campaign itself be organized around a campaign committee which would develop the overall timetable and strategy. Basic subcommittees would include those for information (all aspects of information, publicity, advertising), finance (budget preparation and solicitation of funds), get-out-the-vote (registration campaign, block workers, telephone committee, election day procedures, etc.).

Don't be afraid to think in terms of long-range finance planning for operation and for buildings even though a levy may be limited to a short term, Snyder said. "The long-range plan brings continuity to a campaign and gives the favorable impression of spreading taxes more equally over a longer period of time and of intelligent planning.

"We planned a four-year program in which we told the voters first what was needed over the entire period of time," he said. "Then we divided it into four separate years for fulfillment. This has the advantage of reminding voters that they have successfully passed the first, second, or third year of a program and now are in the second, third, or fourth stage, whichever the case may be."

A MISCELLANY OF CAMPAIGN TIPS

If you could pick the time when you would like to hold your next bond issue campaign, when would it be? Thomas P. Bennett, a Boston University School of Public Communication graduate student, asked this question in a survey of 188 superintendents in 24 states who had carried out bond campaigns. Not only was fall the heavy seasonal favorite, but also October headed the list of specific months winning highest favor.

Many psychological and strategic factors were cited to support choice of an autumn date. Vacations are over. Residents have returned from trips, and school is in session. People start the new school year with a fresh outlook, said one New York administrator. A Texas superintendent noted that schools are more appreciated after the summer vacation. Fall campaigns generally avoid periods when budgets are submitted, tax payment periods, and competition with other major interests such as holidays. In agricultural areas the crops are in and money is in the bank.

Other tips offered to Bennett by the superintendent-campaigners:

Make a study which covers present and future educational needs, including the economic condition of the community and citizen attitudes toward the school system. Do this at least six months prior to the election date.

Get unanimous support from the school board before initiating the campaign.

Be early about seeking citizen participation in planning and conducting the campaign, starting with the PTA.

Put campaign leadership into the hands of a group of responsible lay citizens, backed up by continuing counsel by the superintendent.

Welcome faculty support but refrain from having teachers participate as an entire group in campaign activities.

Try early to win over or neutralize any potential opposition, endeavoring to work such individuals into planning discussions and the campaign.

Beam the campaign at groups which are or should be favorable to the proposal.

Aim for a large vote to offset the ever-present negative voters.

Stress benefits rather than costs during the campaign. Do it continuously. Remain positive. Avoid making threats.

Develop campaign activities which involve personal contact with the voters. These include door-to-door surveys, public meetings, speakers bureaus, and telephone campaigns.

Seek group endorsements by sending speakers to civic clubs and organizations to explain the issue and bid for support.

Do not encourage pupils to become actively involved.

Treat opponents fairly. Answer all reasonable questions.

Precede all of the above with a public relations program which has functioned continuously throughout the year and has not popped up just ahead of the campaign.

TIPS ON PRESENTATIONS

When it comes to effective presentations, there is not much difference between the space business and the school business. This is made clear by three executives of the Martin Company, Orlando, Florida, who demonstrate "How Not To Communicate" in hilarious scenes involving the preparation and execution of presentations. Arnold (Nick) Carter, chief of sales and requirements support, also offers down-to-earth tips about how to do the job right. Some of them:

- Keep charts simple; use little writing. The speaker should do the explaining. The audience should not be required to read all kinds of writing, straining their necks and eyes as they read.

- Don't use charts as notes or prompt cards. The audience will feel right away you don't really know your subject.

- Memorize the ideas you want to convey. The words will come to express your ideas.

- Every time you move from one point to the next, ring a bell. Let your audience know when point one is over and when you're moving on to point two. Be merciful to your audience; three, four, or five key points are about as much as you can expect an audience to take away.

- Learn to enjoy hearing nothing as you gather your thoughts or prepare to speak the next word. Those silent gaps will be imperceptible; the audience will stop counting the "uh's."

- Look at the people to whom you are speaking, just as in conversation.

- We shun test runs of our presentations like the plague, declaring that they are bad, don't accomplish anything, or make us nervous. Stop kidding ourselves!

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SCHOOL?

The portrait of a "good school" in most government and organization literature is made of statistical stuff dealing with class size, average salaries, books in the library, faculty degrees, and course offerings. This makes a publication like *The Forward Looking School—Some Guiding Principles for Effective School Action* (The University of the State of New York) a real shocker. It concerns itself eloquently with just three components of the school program—instruction, teachers, and school-community relations.

Designed as a leadership publication, the booklet is described by Lorne H. Woollatt, associate commissioner for research and evaluation, as intended "to give a vision of how our schools may be effective in providing the best quality of education to all who study—children, youth, adults." Its basic premise is that schools must be responsive to the needs of the community and society they serve and, therefore, must be geared to meet change. "In this study, excellence is seen as the rate at which the school adjusts to changes," says the publication. "Adaptable schools respond more

quickly and in more ways. The discussion identifies the action principles that guide productive schools in program development."

The Forward Looking School offers this school PR thesis:

"A school needs the understanding and cooperation of the community to carry out its educational functions successfully. More than is the case with any other public institution, the confidence and support given by the community determine the effectiveness of the school. It cannot move forward toward new goals, nor can it modify its practices radically in an unreceptive or antagonistic community environment. If new types of programs are adopted in the face of active resistance, the chances are high that counterpressures from the community will in time produce a return to popularly accepted educational practices. Only to the extent that school and community keep in step with each other can the school adjust adequately to the needs of changing times."

Behind some of the community attitudes of indifference and apathy, says the publication, lies an inability to grasp the significance of what schools are trying to accomplish in the light of modified objectives and the introduction of new programs and techniques. "In a period of change and transition, increasing the community's comprehension of educational issues is undeniably a necessary condition for school improvement," declares *The Forward Looking School.*

There is "a compelling need" for "a more meaningful pattern of relations between the effective school and the public," says the book. "The traditional posture of trying to 'sell the school to the public' by presenting school accomplishments in the best possible light is simply inadequate. The situation demands a continuous and wide-ranging dialogue between the school and community aimed at bringing about a harmony of understanding and genuine cooperation in planning and sharing in the decisions affecting the school. . . . A school, instead of merely publicizing its successes, should involve the public in a continuous discussion of educational objectives. It should invite public evaluation of school performance to pinpoint what the school failed to accomplish and suggest what it should do. The role of the public should not be that of giving the stamp of approval to decisions already made."

The PR program of an effective school, according to the book, works consistently for better two-way communication with the community. It takes the initiative in coordinating community effort in behalf of underprivileged children. It involves all segments of the community in a cooperative study of problems related to the educational program and its support. Similarly, the effective school aggressively tackles curriculum improvement and is not afraid of experimental work. It also follows an action program and comprehensive approach in teacher recruitment, orientation, and inservice training.

Adapted from the annual W. Harold Kingsley Memorial Lecture by Scott M. Cutlip, professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The Lecture was presented at the 1966 National School Public Relations Association Seminar.

NEEDED: MORE INTERPRETERS, FEWER PUBLICISTS

In school public relations, we all share two common convictions: (1) the progress of the public school as an institution of democracy depends upon the support of the public it serves; (2) a school system responsive to, and supported by, an informed public stands like a rock when the storms of bond issues and bookburners beat upon it.

We in public relations have taken unto ourselves a difficult, complex assignment. We need to understand this task more fully and to prepare ourselves for it more adequately.

One of Edward L. Bernays' lasting contributions to the practice of public relations was his thoughtful book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion,* published in 1923. In this first book on public relations, Bernays set down the theory of the public relations function. This theory spelled out the two-way street concept which holds that it is the public relations function to interpret the publics of an organization to its policymakers and, in turn, to interpret the organization to the publics upon which it depends for support and cooperation. Bernays provided this sound rationale for the public relations position in the early 1920's when most of the then young band of practitioners were beating hard the drums of publicity.

That far back, Bernays perceptively saw the need for the public relations official who would serve as an *interpreter, mediator,* and *liaison agent* between an organization and its publics, which were steadily being pushed apart by rapid industrialization and urbanization. The need for the skilled communicator and interpreter to bridge the ever-widening gulfs in our highly segmented, stratified society is much

more acute today than it was when Bernays wrote his book. Yet the hard, lamentable fact is that today—more than 40 years later—we have too few professional practitioners qualified to serve this urgently-needed function in our complex society. Today, we still have too many publicists and too few interpreters skilled in the arts of communication and opinion analysis. To be precise, there is a critical shortage of school practitioners who qualify for their assignments.

It is trite but true to say that we are caught up in a rapidly changing world characterized by changes coming at breakneck speed; changes coming at a rate far faster than our institutions can cope with them; changes in science, travel, government—and, yes, in public education.

With this basic fact of our whirling, strife-torn world before us, we must ask ourselves: Is public relations changing fast enough to meet the assignment that is duly charged to it? I don't think most practitioners have caught up to Bernays' basic concept voiced 43 years ago, let alone come abreast of today's fantastically complex relations problems.

Many thoughtful observers of our field share this dim view of the capability of many of today's practitioners. W. Howard Chase, chairman, Howard Chase Associates, Inc., New York, observed sometime ago: "Public relations is inefficient and out of date—respectable but static." Louis Lundborg, who rose from the ranks of public relations to head the Bank of America, has asked this question: "Is public relations changing to keep pace with the times?" Then he emphatically answered, *"No,"* saying the practice has changed little since he was photographing the General Sherman Sequoia to publicize California's natural scenery years ago.

If public relations is not keeping pace with the present, how can it possibly cope with the future? By merely asking this question, I am suggesting that most PR practitioners need to step up their professional preparation if they are to qualify for their job today. We have enough PR mechanics.

I have long contended that if practitioners knew the evolution of their vocation and understood its ecology, they would be more effective practitioners and more persuasive defenders of its functions and place in modern administration. Practitioners need to know the story of public relations' evolution from political agitation of the eighteenth century; political and circus press agentry of the nineteenth century; whitewashing publicity and product promotion in the early 1900's to, finally, the mature concept of acceptable performance adequately reported in the twentieth century. Armed with this knowledge, they would better understand the practice's strengths and weaknesses. Armed with this knowledge, the practitioner can maximize the function's strength and avoid its pitfalls. Even more important, in my opinion, is the necessity for the practitioner to study the ecology of public relations.

PR: A MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

There are those who suggest that public relations lacks an underlying theory. Those of you who know my writing know that I suggest public relations' theory is found in a study of the political, social, and economic environment which has compelled the development of public relations as a *management concept* and as a *specialized staff function* to assist today's harrassed administrator whose knowledge and span of attention cannot extend over today's large-scale enterprises in an effective way. As I have written:[1] Any public enterprise, to prosper and endure today, must:

1. Accept the obligations of public responsibility imposed by an increasingly interdependent society;

2. Find ways and means of communicating with unseen, remote publics over lines lengthened by physical distance, by psychological difference, and blocked by intervening levels of administration;

3. Find ways of achieving integration into the community that organization was created to serve.

In the first point, we find the source of public relations thinking, which I label the *management concept*. In point number 2, we find the necessity for public relations as a *specialized staff function* serving management. In point number 3, we find the end *objective* of both the public relations thinking in management and the public relations skills serving management—the objective of a school system achieving adjustment and rapport with the community it was created to serve. Such adjustment and rapport is requisite to effective education.

In summary, the public relations specialist has been produced by the urgent, compelling needs of his time. His function will grow in scope and importance as our environment accelerates in interdependence and complexity making communication even more difficult. The PR specialist can make an important contribution to public education.

It is my firm conviction that today's school practitioners, in common with practitioners in other fields, have their greatest opportunity in doing a more effective job of sensitively and accurately *interpreting the public's opinions, demands, and blind spots to administrators.* This is the really important part of your task; this is the hard part of your task; and this is the part of your task for which you are least equipped.

Too many of you, along with practitioners in other fields, are seemingly content to go on doing routinely what you know how best to do—putting out publicity releases about "flexible scheduling" that the public little understands; by arranging a feature on Miss Jones's second-grade class which wrote letters to Dad on Father's Day; by helping the superintendent write his annual report and arranging for its printing; and by putting on broadcasts that no one listens to.

Most of today's practitioners,

[1] Cutlip and Center, *Effective Public Relations,* Third edition. p. 53.

trained in newsrooms and journalism classes, are publicists more than they are interpreters of the public's views to the school administrator; promoters more than they are interpreters of changes in educational philosophy and practice. We urgently need in public education today more interpreters, fewer publicists. For instance, coping with the frightfully difficult task of integrating a school system takes far more than publicity.

Psychologist Edward J. Robinson, in a newly-published book, *Communication and Public Relations,* sees the public relations practitioner as an applied social and behavioral scientist. His delineation of the common tasks found in all public relations problems provides us with a convenient framework to suggest the requirements for practitioners, who would measure up to the two-way interpretation task. Robinson, examining some typical PR case problems, found these requirements:

1. Because of his constant need to be an effective communicator, the public relations practitioner of the future must understand the process of communication from a theoretical as well as a practical point of view.

2. Because of his preoccupation with changing attitudes and behavior, the public relations practitioner must understand human behavior as does an applied social and behavioral scientist. That is, he must have enough knowledge of such disciplines as psychology and sociology to have a solid, working understanding of the factors that affect human behavior.

3. Because of the administrative and planning skills called for in implementing a public relations program, the public relations practitioner must have some management training, particularly in organizational structure and the elements of coordination and supervision of other people.

4. Because every action taken by a public relations practitioner on behalf of his organization reflects management's policies and decisions, the public relations practitioner must be a member of top management, regardless of the type of organization.

5. Because every action taken by a public relations practitioner on behalf of the organization with which he is associated has ethical implications, the public relations practitioner must have a strong, active ethical and moral code to guide him in his everyday work.

6. Because of his need for feedback of information to guide him in subsequent public relations action and to make him capable of demonstrating the effectiveness of his actions, the public relations practitioner of the future will need a thorough grounding in social science research methods.

Robinson takes a different approach to the public relations process from mine with my four-step process of fact-finding research, planning and programing, communication-action, and fourthly and finally, evaluation.

However, either way you analyze the public relations function you find the competent, sophisticated practi-

tioner must meet these requirements:

1. He must be skilled in the ways of social science research, in the process of opinion formation, and in public opinion analysis. Public opinion is the *raison d'être* of public relations, and tomorrow's practitioner will be expected to deal with it—not on the basis of hunch or happenstance opinion feedback, but rather on a basis of computer-calculated quantitative data that accurately measure it.

2. He must be skilled in the process and effects of communication.

3. He must know, expertly, the subject matter of the field in which he is working.

One cannot effectively interpret to others that which he himself does not comprehend. Nor can one advise administrators in education if he doesn't know education. You must be competent educators or else you will be shrugged off by your colleagues. Unless you are as well versed in education as is your superintendent and his staff, you won't be listened to.

Whether you approach the requirements for effective public relations practice from Robinson's path or mine, as he says, "It all adds up to the fact that public relations practitioners must have a wide range of skills based on knowledge derived from the social and behavioral sciences in order to function successfully." [2]

Just recently, Y. H. Yocum, public relations manager of British American Oil, told a group of fellow Canadians: "PR practitioners can best serve by helping to sort out what comes up the two-way information street. It means better observation and study of the various trends in politics, economics, education, behavioral science, communications, and social change and translation of these trends to management in a readily useful form. . . . The job of translating society to management is placing new demands upon those in public relations. Already the job requires new attitudes, new techniques, and new types of education training."

ESSENTIAL FUTURE CHARACTERISTICS

What all of us are saying is this: The public relations practitioner of the future must be aware of all pertinent developments in the social and behavioral sciences that have relevance for solving public relations problems. Tomorrow's practitioner, even more than today's, will be living in a world of computers and serving a fact-minded, scientifically trained management—a management that will have little patience for recommendations prefaced by, "I have a hunch that . . ." or "I think if we do this, that this may happen. . . ."

The day will soon pass when the public relations officer can come to the superintendent's cabinet meeting without carefully outlined proposals fully supported by data accumulated in systematic fact-finding and utiliz-

[2] Robinson, *Communication and Public Relations,* p. 39.

ing the generalizations of the social and behavioral sciences. The new generation of school administrators should and will expect no less of you.

None of us is saying, however, that many present-day public relations practitioners won't adjust and accommodate themselves to the growing requirements of the interpretation task. Robinson suggests: "Two main streams of individuals will feed into the supply of this new species of public relations practitioner"—the present-day practitioners who avail themselves of opportunities for continuing education in the social and behavioral sciences, and the growing stream of young persons graduating from the universities which have specialized programs in public relations education.

Parenthetically, I would observe that we have made much progress in public relations education in these two postwar decades. Today the number of colleges and universities offering courses in public relations has increased to nearly tenfold from the 26 institutions teaching public relations in 1946. There are a number of solid programs for professional training in public relations in respectable educational institutions across the nation. Yet many first-rate colleges still will not offer courses in this field and many second-rate institutions offer public relations courses of a dubious quality. And, it is with much chagrin that I admit that many who are teaching public relations have not enriched their teaching with research, as competent scholars in other fields do. I don't sound the alarm about the publish or perish syndrome, but I do insist that one cannot be a good teacher unless he is doing research to know his subject better. Only through more adequate research can we fashion the tools and build the skills practitioners will need.

Robinson warns present-day practitioners that if they do not change their ways, they may be forced out of the field by the more broadly educated, specially prepared practitioner of the future.

This much is certain: Today's and tomorrow's practitioner must be a broadly-educated person who is keenly aware of the fast-moving social, political, economic, and educational trends which are constantly remaking the opinion climate in which school systems either serve or stagnate, advance or fall back. Such a person must have an avid curiosity, wide-ranging interests, and be a voracious reader. Contemporary practice requires the talents of a trained specialist, not a publicist. Tomorrow's specialist must be broadly trained in the social sciences and equipped to use the tools of these sciences if he is to be a two-way *communicator,* not just a disseminator or publicist.

One thing more: The practitioner who serves effectively must be a person of character as well as competence. A "yes-man" is more dangerous than no public relations adviser at all. As Louis Lundborg has said, "No public relations man is worth his salt if he isn't willing to put his job on the line every day of his life."

Having spoken sweepingly of the

growing requirements for effective public relations work, let me hasten to make it plain that I realize that the scope, stature, and service of the public relations function is determined by management, not by the practitioner. The public relations function in any school system will be as large or as small as the superintendent wants it to be. The plain fact is that management generally has the kind of public relations it wants and deserves. As L. L. L. Golden of *Saturday Review* suggests: "There is a solution to the difficulties of getting public relations practitioners who are both competent and frank. It lies in management's hands."

Perhaps I am getting old and cynical, but the more I observe public school officials, the more persuaded I am that too many of them wish to use public relations to obtain citizen pacification rather than citizen participation. Too many school heads construe public support to mean noninterference with the way they think schools should be run. Too often today's school superintendent or principal manifests—in subtle, suave fashion, to be sure—a "papa knows best" attitude toward public interest in and criticism of curriculum content. This is a human tendency, inherent in us all.

Citizen participation, however, is the way to strong schools strongly supported at the ballot box. Citizens want to know about their schools. They want to participate in discussions of new policies before they are pronounced from on high by all-knowing school executives. Recently, the Madison, Wisconsin, League of Women Voters published the results of an intelligent, probing two-year study of the Madison public schools. High on its list of recommendations were these: (1) To establish better communication channels between the citizens and the school system in order to improve public understanding of school needs and to allow the schools to reflect better the wishes and needs of the community; (2) More citizen participation in board of education work, particularly through such groups as the school forest advisory committee and the special education advisory committee.

I only wish more school executives shared this desire to involve thoughtful, informed citizens in the shaping of school curricula and school policies. Today there is certainly insufficient public participation in school decisions. This is due to the changes in our society, not to manipulations of educators. We have long since lost the direct contact that we had in rural America with its many tiny school districts when the parents hired the teacher and took turns boarding him or her for a six-months school term. No one would return to these far from wonderful days if he could. In public education, as in other sectors of our society, we have to delegate more and more of the decisions of society to the expert, as communication becomes ever more difficult in a massive, urbanized, depersonalized society. Obviously, the recapture of face-to-face communication that characterized small-farm,

small-town, small-school America is beyond the power of any group in our society.

What I am suggesting is this: Few school executives utilize the trained two-way interpreter to energetically, imaginatively work at the job of bridging the chasms in communication caused by this continuing growth and urbanization. There is a widespread need to get more citizen feedback on whether our schools are meeting society's needs or not. Too few school leaders seek this feedback because, all too often, they fear it and find it disconcerting to their fixed ways of doing things. Too few practitioners are equipped to provide the accurate feedback the school administrator needs to effectively adjust his school policies to his community.

The need for such systematic feedback is urgently underlined if we candidly admit that citizen knowledge of schools and citizen participation in public education policy-making is shamefully weak in most communities. My University of Wisconsin colleagues, Richard F. Carter and Steven Chaffee, have found in their recently-completed study[3] that "most voters are effectively cut off from the total process of decision making" and, further, that "school financial support is voted more often when the voter turnout is low." The voice of the citizen is a feeble one in most communities; this is certainly related to the fact that an average of only one third of our citizens vote in school bond elections. Carter and Chaffee suggest in their study, soon to be published, that there is need for changes in our public school system that will improve citizen participation in policy-making procedures.

Such participation requires: (1) that the citizen be provided useful, understandable information about his schools and their needs; and (2) that channels for him to relay his ideas, suggestions, and criticisms to the school policymakers must be provided and their use stimulated.

Maintaining this requisite two-way flow of information ideas and information is largely the responsibility of the public relations specialist. In providing this exchange of information and ideas, you will be doing more than making your schools secure with the public; you will be greatly improving the quality of our public education.

Are you equipped for this task? The late Glenn Frank, onetime president of the University of Wisconsin, was among the earliest to see the increasing importance of the interpreter in our society. As he put it:

"The future of America is in the hands of two men—the investigator and the interpreter. We shall never lack for the administrator, the third man needed to complete this trinity of social servants. And we have an ample supply of investigators. But there is a shortage of readable and responsible interpreters, men who can effectively play mediator. . . . I raise the recruiting trumpet for the interpreter."

I echo that call.

[3] Carter, Richard F., and Chaffee, Steven. *Between Citizens and Schools.* Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University, Institute for Communication Research, 1966.

EDUCATION ON EXHIBIT

If you haven't explored the potential PR impact of big league exhibition of student work, you may be passing up a good bet. At San Mateo, California, for example, the school district last year arranged a two-month-long exhibition of large murals, mosaics, and sculptures by elementary school youngsters at the H. M. DeYoung Memorial Museum, San Francisco. The exhibit, unusual for a major art museum, was featured via TV and metropolitan newspapers. Next came the district's eighth annual arts show at Stanford University, which carried out a "Children and Animals" theme. This was followed by a "Christmas with Animals" show at a leading San Francisco art gallery. Each exhibit provided a new stage for news promotion and invitations.

At the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, an exhibition of the elementary schools displayed the range of creative activity in arts and crafts work. Commented the Los Angeles *Times:* "Many of these pieces contain a sophistication of craftsmanship and design control that one doesn't expect from children."

An arts and crafts festival, featuring live demonstrations, displays, and exhibits of junior and senior high school students at Newark, Delaware, was a one-day affair, but it was well suited to several weeks of advance publicity via newspapers and radio.

Work of teachers, as well as students, qualifies for exhibition at the administration building of the Toledo, Ohio, schools. "Our product is education," said Superintendent Frank Dick. "We want the visitor to our building to get maximum exposure to the many kinds of work done in schools."

At a one-week Indianapolis, Indiana, hobby and gift show, hundreds

of students and faculty members were involved in arranging exhibits and putting on live demonstrations featuring many aspects of the educational program.

Textbooks and library books recommended for effective presentations of the role of minority groups in American history and culture were featured in a one-day exhibit at the New York City Board of Education. The exhibition was designed to show progress made in this aspect of the school program of quality integrated education.

Eight hundred winning entries in an area "best ever" scholastic art show were put on exhibit for one week at an Akron, Ohio, department store prior to submission of the blue ribbon entries in a national exhibition. Categories included general art work, jewelry and fashions, art portfolios, and photography.

A few school systems publish examples of outstanding pupil work. Most ambitious effort in this direction has been taken by the Buffalo, New York, schools, which has published a large slick-paper volume annually since 1958 to recognize unusual work from kindergarten through the senior year. The current volume includes 146 pages. "As you examine these selections," wrote Superintendent Joseph Manch in the foreword, "we feel you will agree that our corps of competent teachers has met the challenge ably. Creativity has not been stifled. It has been nourished. The fruit is good. Children and teachers are to be congratulated."

RADIO-TV ROUNDUP

If you're going to use television or radio as a PR medium, plan on investing a substantial chunk of staff time for the right kind of job. There are coordination and promotion responsibilities which must be assumed. At Salt Lake City, Utah, for example, the weekly half-hour program, *Pen Point Education*, called for much behind-the-scenes effort by Loyd C. Whitlock, PR director for the Utah Education Association. The program, aired over two TV stations and one radio station, followed a simple format. Outstanding figures were interviewed by the education editor of the *Deseret News*, and the assistant news editor of KCPX, about topics dealing with education.

As program coordinator, it was Whitlock's job to plan general discussion topics, arrange for participants, get them to the taping sessions, and provide background study material for the interviewers. Those interviewed included Utah's governor, state superintendent of schools, Chamber of Commerce head, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, and many other top Utah educators.

Although the KCPX promotion department helped to publicize the program, Whitlock gave quite a bit of effort to special promotion efforts. Shows were planned at least three weeks ahead of air time in order to get the program highlighted in the area edition of *TV Guide* magazine. Similar material was prepared for TV sections of daily newspapers. Announcement bulletins went to association presidents and faculty representatives throughout the state. A National Education Association TV film series, *Parents Ask About Schools*, also was aired. In addition the UEA produced a three-times-per-week taped radio program for eight stations. It included one NEA-supplied news feature plus two produced by UEA.

TV news exposure is easy to get, provided you have newsworthy material and offer it when it is news, according to Whitlock. "We make a deliberate effort to avoid propagandizing and to emphasize the positive," he said. When the NEA

Research Division report, *Estimates of School Statistics,* was issued, UEA immediately approached news departments of three Salt Lake City TV stations offering a summary of Utah angles. All three accepted and taped a report by John C. Evans Jr., executive secretary.

Joy H. Fisher, TV-radio coordinator for the New York City Schools Office of Information Services, who is involved in production work as well as sharing the promotion effort with colleagues in her office, declares that strong publicity support must be generated by the school system, in fairness to the programs and the stations which make a heavy contribution of personnel and time.

The one-hour monthly TV special of the New York City schools, *The Superintendent of Schools Reports,* featured operations of the school board. All members appeared on the air. Filmed segments showed the board and committees at work. Superintendent Bernard E. Donovan and A. A. Giardino, school board vice-president, answered phoned questions from the audience. Advance promotion by the school system included several news releases, school bulletin board notices, and a feature in the staff newsletter.

A similar program, *The Ten at the Top,* was produced by the Georgia Department of Education. The half-hour program, featuring members of the state board of education, was aired over the state's educational TV network. The film included shots of the board members in their homes and on the job. It was designed to explain the work of the board in educational policy development. Coupled with the telecast was publication of a booklet called *This Is Your State Board of Education*.

When the New York City schools carried out a special Puerto Rico Discovery Day commemoration, the affair was backed up by special short radio and TV shows, spots, and news stories. Promotion materials went not only to local Spanish language outlets but also to the Spanish press, radio, and TV in Puerto Rico.

Many school systems, like the one at Rockford, Illinois, have for years aired what Research and Publications Director Kenneth A. Bonnem calls the "we are telling you what we are doing" variety of radio program. Station managements have generously provided public service time despite a strong suspicion that there was a substantial drop in audience.

The Rockford show has been switched to a phone-in format which gives listeners a chance to call in questions to be answered by a different staff member each week. Show topics always deal with some aspect of the educational program. "This format has been tremendously successful," said Bonnem. "The radio station is happier, too."

A BREAKTHROUGH TO RADIO

The telephone which delivers a recorded message when the number is dialed has important PR applications although it has been little used

by school people. It has been used occasionally as a bond campaign gimmick or, even more rarely, for service announcements like school menus or bad weather closing of schools.

Experimental use by the Ohio Education Association, however, discloses immense possibilities for radio news reporting and other high-speed communications.

Provided by phone companies as an "automatic announcement service" or "answering line only unit," the device consists of a regular telephone plus a box containing a recording drum which contains a message up to three minutes in length. When the number is dialed, the message starts automatically. Recording is accomplished by speaking into the mouthpiece. This simultaneously erases any previous message.

OEA, which for several years has produced a tape-recorded daily short news feature aired by more than 60 stations, installed the tape-phone service to make available spot news to radio station newsrooms. First test was made when it was learned that a special report would be submitted at a meeting of the state board of education at Columbus. Radio station news directors over the state were notified by letter that they could obtain a preliminary story and later a coverage story by dialing the special number. Thirty-two stations phoned for the report.

A short time later the device was given a full-fledged test when OEA held its annual convention. Radio newsrooms were advised in advance that they could get convention news reports at six separate times during a four-day period by dialing the special phone number at Columbus. Stations called the number a total of 132 times.

"I was a little concerned at first with the quality of the tape," reported William E. Henry, OEA's information-publications director. "However, after experimenting with it a few times, using different voice levels and positions, we've been able to get a fairly good recording. The radio stations apparently feel that the quality is quite acceptable, judging from the reactions we have received." In the future, major OEA news releases will be timed to take full advantage of the tape-phone machine, he said.

OEA also has ideas about using the equipment for improved internal communications. Several hundred local association presidents have been unable to learn about major business at OEA executive committee meetings unless they received a special mailing or read a digest in the association magazine some time later. If interested, they now can phone the special number and get three-minute taped summary reports of meetings. Another special report on education developments in the Generaly Assembly also is being considered.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO INNOVATE

Educators who think the fancy term "dissemination of information" means nothing more than a couple of news releases and a technical article are in for a shock if they seek federal bankrolling of innovative projects under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

New guidelines for Title III contain an entire chapter on the subject of information dissemination—something completely lacking in the original guidelines. What is more, it is probably the most lucid statement about the essentiality of good school information programs ever issued by the U.S. Office of Education.

Under the criteria spelled out for internal and external communications there will be little room for the kind of sloppy, unplanned, unbudgeted efforts which have characterized much of the information effort associated with innovative projects in education.

"To assure that educational improvements are shared and pitfalls avoided, to stimulate cooperative efforts, and to gain public support for and understanding of Title III activities, the educational community should know about the existence of significant innovations, creative approaches, or exemplary programs, and the public should be informed of activities which are being planned or operated under Title III," the

guidelines declare. Information programs are described as being "vital" and "essential" to the success of Title III.

There is every indication that those who review Title III project applications will be looking for lots of evidence of sophisticated information planning which will range from such things as audience identification and analysis, appropriate media selection and techniques, to budgets and cost estimating. Project planners who fail to seek competent communications counsel may flounder. For example, guidelines set up these sharp criteria for guidance in judging information activities: clarity, validity, pervasiveness, impact, timeliness, and practicality.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ESSENTIAL

If there are hopes in your school district that program innovations can be carried out in hush-hush fashion, forget it. Claude W. Fawcett, University of California (Los Angeles) education professor, told a conference of administrators recently that it is a constant temptation for public institutions to do experimental work in closed-door fashion. Supposedly this bypasses the discomfort of public criticism, conceals mistakes, and promotes experimentation, he said. But this route is booby-trapped, Fawcett said. Dangers include widespread misunderstandings caused by garbled student accounts, faculty dissension and lack of support, and the risk of public eruption.

Not only is open communication essential for successful innovative work but a major planned effort also is required, Fawcett said. "The greatest stumbling block to innovations in organizations," he added, "is the inability of management to communicate precisely with personnel."

If staff members are to be properly motivated for innovative projects, he said, they must be convinced that what the organization is doing is worthwhile—and worth subordinating personal ideas about what should be done. Staff members must also know very precisely what is expected of them—how they fit into the operation—and they must be assured that they have some means of influencing the total plan. He emphasized that goals of the project must be clear-cut. This is not accomplished merely by drawing up a statement. Consultations are required to achieve a clear understanding of the work to be done by an individual and the skills to be required.

Communication strategies should be well-planned and comprehensive, said Fawcett. "Joint rejoicing between administrators and other staff members over the accomplishment of preset goals is terribly important," he said.

SCHOOL PR'S NEW RELATIONS

Once upon a time the term "school community relations" had a fairly clear meaning in a school district. The director of this operation was responsible for internal and external information programs, the development of special projects designed to improve school and community understanding, and providing PR counsel to the administration and board. Although no two jobs were alike, the school community relations man was expected to be skilled in communications and to be quite knowledgeable about community groups and influences.

Now things are getting blurred. Mostly with Title I funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a host of new staff positions are being created. They bear a variety of labels, including "school community relations." Others in vogue are "human relations" and "intergroup relations."

To further complicate matters, the new positions frequently have varied and generalized job descriptions. They may be filled on a full-time basis by professional educators or social workers. Or they may be persons with a high school educa-

tion who work on a full- or part-time basis.

Some of the Title I setups in school districts include PR staff persons who may operate independently of the general school system PR office. One city system public relations director, who for years has single-handedly tried to coordinate a program involving more than 100 buildings, now finds that he has been "relieved" of a dozen buildings which have been placed under a special Title I-financed PR program with its own full-time PR man. The program is operated separately from the general school administration.

A good bit of time and attention of the new professional staff members dealing in relationships appears to be aimed at inservice guidance for teachers and administrators who work in disadvantaged and minority group neighborhoods. Some deal with parents and neighborhood groups.

What has concerned some school system PR directors is that, via broadened job descriptions or newly-assumed responsibilities, the new staffers are moving into mass media contacts, writing and publication of materials for the public, special events, and other PR areas which have called for highly specialized communication skills. There have been boo-boos in press relations and publications issued which have suffered pitifully from amateur editing.

Central administrative coordination of new programs with existing PR programs has been spotty. It will become more difficult as field forces of professionals and semi-pros mushroom. In big city systems, with area superintendents, there is a trend to use "school community relations coordinators" in the field offices. Chicago, for instance, has 35.

Massive numbers of neighborhood "school community coordinators" are being added. Philadelphia has 240 such positions, one for each school in the federally-designated poverty areas. Coordinators must live in the neighborhoods and be high school graduates. Their job is to "disseminate information about school programs and policies to members of the community," work with parents, community groups, and school staff members. The Philadelphia plan is reported to be the outgrowth of a "Great Cities Improvement Program" experiment.

Some smaller systems have similar programs. At Berkeley, California, eight "school-community aides" have been employed on a part-time basis. Assigned to neighborhoods in which they reside, they were selected "for their ability to communicate effectively" and to "relate well with the people they are to serve."

PUBLICATIONS—JUST PLAIN HARD WORK

One almost inescapable aspect of the public relations job is involvement in getting out publications. It may be a one-man show or handling an editorial team. In either situation, according to Robert Willmot, National School Boards Association information and PR specialist, it's hard work. "No part of the school PR job requires quite so much as does the preparation of printed material," he said at a conference of the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association, meeting at Kent, Ohio. "It's a tedious task and for most of us it's a long, drawn out chore."

The task often is much more difficult for veterans than for beginners simply because of a greater appreciation of and understanding about all the elements which make up an effective publication. Willmot, one-time school system PR director, offered seven editorial guidelines to help assure that the labor is justified:

1. *Audience awareness.* Know the public toward which the content of the publication is directed. Be aware that each public requires a different kind of information.

2. *Production quality.* Whatever the type of publication, insist on quality production. The amount of money spent is not the true measure. Any method of printing can be well done.

3. *Concentrate on content.* Place the emphasis upon content. Don't settle for less than the best that's available. Stress information that readers will want to know and appreciate once they have it.

4. *Expert help.* Call on experts when the need arises. Remember, not everyone is an authority on all phases of preparation or production. Don't be afraid to acknowledge that someone else knows a little bit more

than you know—it's not only possible, it's probable.

5. *Value white space.* Don't be a "space filler." There's no need nor sense in using copy or illustrations to fill every square inch of space in your publication, unless, of course, you want to put out a telephone book or a *Congressional Record.* Use white space and use your imagination. You might be surprised.

6. *Know your printer.* Visit his place of business and get acquainted with his method of operation. Understanding his way of doing things can often benefit you in getting the job done with the least amount of trouble.

7. *Keep your eyes open.* Examine other publications. Don't hesitate to use an idea you see used elsewhere. If it's good, you can be certain that someone else is using it anyhow. However, you will seldom use another's idea as is—rather, you will adapt it to fit your unique situation and requirements.

One of the vital characteristics of an employee publication is its written *believability,* according to PR counsel Archer Hancock, New York City, in an article written for a techniques supplement of an issue of *PR Reporter.* The steady flow of information from management to employees via a variety of media in an effective program, said Hancock, must be undergirded by a basic ground rule: "Any company effort to gain support on any matter must be bolstered by an overt sense of candor and fairness. Half-truths and obvious bias build no confidence." He said the employee publication editor should strive to "develop a reputation for the paper of objectivity, so that employees gradually accept the fact that it is the company's policy to keep them informed of all aspects of the business—that it respects their 'right to know.' " This quality of believability in the publication will prove its value time and again.

Adapted from an address by Mrs. Elizabeth D. Koontz presented at the 1966 National School Public Relations Association Seminar. Mrs. Koontz, Salisbury, North Carolina, is immediate past president of the Department of Classroom Teachers, National Education Association.

YOU'RE TALKING— I'M LISTENING

For the past year, as president of the NEA Department of Classroom Teachers, I have been a traveling agent—a public relations agent. As I traveled, I talked. And as I talked, I often wondered who was listening. Thousands of words, but how many resultant thoughts and ideas? Numerous pages, but how many resultant actions? Many television tapes and recordings, but how much influence?

As I pondered these questions, another question arose in my mind: Who was talking about education? To whom? About what?

Much of the talk came from school people, from professionally trained public relations experts, and community leaders . . . and they were telling the school story. The topics ranged from the defense of education from criticisms emanating from the far right or the far left, to the autonomy of the profession. In between was a long list of topics varying in scope and interest. Some of the talk made front-page news stories; some never made the paper. Some created television interest; some never got a mention. Some became topics for discussion at every meeting of certain organizations; some never got on the agenda.

Significantly, however, the greatest public relations agent of them all sometimes negated much of what was said through papers, television, radio, and pictures. Who was this agent? Not 007, but his admirer, the pupil in the classroom. Sometimes he was listened to, and he gave the facts as interpreted by his own senses. Often he gave an impression, and his family formed an attitude from his impression. Sometimes he really knew what his school was all about, but often he knew only that "it was," that he had to go, and couldn't care less. Sometimes he reported that his teachers were the greatest, but often he was resigned to the fact that his teachers were really enemies dressed up in friends' clothing.

No matter what he said, he was a public relations expert, an agent in the public relations field, influencing a part of that great body we call the public. But so were his teacher, his principal, his special teachers, and the superintendent.

He had some other allies and cohorts, colleagues in the unofficial family of school personnel. There were the skilled and unskilled craftsmen, the laborers—a host of plumbers, electricians, curtain salesmen, custodians, cafeteria workers, window-washers. There were the parents, relatives, friends, cadet teachers, college personnel—all of them. Each had his own impressions to relate, and each made a difference. What did they say? They said a lot of things.

What they said was not always the whole story, but they related what they heard, what they saw, and what they felt to the whole as if it were the whole. In effect what they said was: So you're talking—well, I'm listening!

And this is part of what they said:

You say the first-grade children return to school in September and are all bright-eyed with interest because their teachers are ready to whet the appetities of six-year-old curiosity, with the room ready to receive them? Then why are there so many other teachers who act as though the kids have no right to be there and have nothing ready to excite their curiosity?

You say most of the schools are overcrowded? Then why are there schools with vacant rooms not being used?

You say the program of the school will be cut because the community defeated the bond issue? Then why does Miss X allow the children to waste all that paper doing that useless art work, and why don't they just teach the basic subjects as they used to?

You say that the curriculum is outmoded and that we need to include some courses that students need to cope with the problems of work? Then how did my father and I grow to be successful and influential landowners and respected leaders in the community with the education we got in the old school?

You say the dropouts are not being challenged by the school program? Then why not do away with the compulsory attendance laws and kick them out when they don't behave or send them to some place where they'll have to go to work?

You say the teachers leave our community because of the conditions and salary? Then why worry about them? Let them go, we can get teachers . . . and get some of our own folks to teach. These young teachers aren't interested in anything but the money anyway.

You say parents ought to take more interest in schools and their children's work so they won't be such problems to the schools? Then why don't the teachers assign them more drill and homework like we used to have; then they wouldn't have time to be thinking about all that stuff.

You say the children have more to learn than before? Then why don't the teachers want to work

12 months, and why do they keep on talking about duty-free lunch periods, free planning time, released time for meetings? Why don't they take more time to teach?

You say the schools are doing a good job? Then why can't the children read or spell any better than they do and why do so many get turned down by the armed forces?

You say the schools need to have money for physical education and fitness programs? Then why don't they let the kids play at recess time and they would get the exercise they need?

You say the children need to come into contact with children from other cultures and races? Then why don't they stop trying to tell folks which ones they will have, and let them pick the ones people want their children to associate with?

You say they had some good programs on United Nations Day—children all dressed up in costumes and singing songs about all those countries? They why don't they stop teaching our children about all those foreigners who just want us to support them and start teaching these kids about states' rights and our Constitution and the evils of taxes and this "creeping socialism" that's overtaking us?

You say the children need to go on with their education, like higher education? Then why don't they give some sympathy to children whose families can't afford it and stop giving them low grades just because they can't make A's and B's? The kids could do better if the teachers knew how to teach them.

Are these sayings familiar to you? How many times have you heard them or similar ones? Surely, these remarks are familiar to most of us. Irritating as they are, they help to keep us reminded that some people cannot draw inferences from what we say and print, that others do not understand what we write, and that some don't want to know about anything that will cost them more money!

More significantly, these things people say keep us on our toes. They evoke thinking and encourage us to creativeness. They keep us alert to what the anti-forces think of education—to the practices that we understand but the public does not. This is necessary, because the people who are saying these things influence public thinking and do a good job of campaigning for their point of view. They often negate the urgent appeal and justification of positions on behalf of the educational system. They cause frustration and lowered morale among school personnel. They militate against attempts to improve conditions and effect change. Our problem is how to counteract the influence and produce results that we desire.

I prefer to think that these voices are not always anti-education, but are uninformed. I'd rather think that they are not so much anti-education as they are against the system of support that does not always seem to be the fairest. I'd rather think that these forces are more unaware of the whole picture of education and the part it must

play in the solutions to other world problems.

Whatever the reason, the schools feel the effect and we must deal with the realities of the situation. When we think of the problems, we must consider areas, economy, resources, access, and topography—because the ability to pay, the contact with progressive communities, and the general conditions will influence what happens to education.

We must consider the population, its educational status, wealth, age, permanency, family attitudes toward education, and its support.

We must take into account that "rearing head" of provincialism that goes beyond pride and borders upon superiority.

We must consider the influence of pressure groups, their financial condition, membership, and ability to control office.

With these realities to consider, let's turn our attention to some important questions that are very important to me, a teacher.

- What is public relations and why do we have it? Who is it—one person, several, or all?
- What are we selling? Information? Attitudes? Respect?
- Whom are we influencing and where are they? Who are they?
- How alert and ab' are the salesmen?
- What are the records of the salesmen? How do they rate?
- Where do we need to concentrate our efforts now?
- What competition do we have?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition?
- What are the available resources for assistance to us?

First, what is public relations—to me, the teacher? Is it the job done by the assistant superintendent in charge of public relations? Is it meeting visitors and showing them the city and schools? Is it making contacts with news media for publicity on meetings? It it taking pictures of school plays and events? Is it writing school news for the Sunday newspaper column?

Is public relations the job of putting up posters which urge people to support a program? Is it speaking before large groups? Is it asking a teacher to write the news of the week from the sheet passed around to each teacher for his own program write-ups? Is it asking the choral and dramatics groups to perform for civic and church groups? Is this all it is?

What *is* public relations? And *is* it the responsibility of one staff person? Or am I, the teacher, expected to assist? If so, how can I help most?

Secondly, what are we selling? Is it my personal performance in a given field? My school system? Public education? Our school on the right side of the tracks? What am I to sell; and what are you, the public relations specialists, giving me as merchandise, services, or hard goods that I can use with my pitch?

Third, to whom do we sell? Is there a willing market? Do we

ignore them? Is there a hard-core opposition in the market? Do I teach and hope? Or must I take on some new ideas of salesmanship? Will I need special training?

Perhaps we teachers look upon the task as an individual effort and seldom as a collective coordinated program. In our zeal to teach children, it may be that we overlook the need to know the child's home environment, his relatives, and his honest reaction to education and school. Perhaps we fail to use what we know about human nature, mass psychology, appeal, and influence. Perhaps we overlook the fact that much of our talking is done among ourselves, and that those outside the field are seldom invited in. When they are invited in, they are talked to, at and about—but seldom with. Perhaps the pedagese establishes a barrier of which we are unaware. In fact, we have problems communicating among ourselves that often are not recognized.

Do you realize that, as a teacher, I need your help?

Teachers need help in telling the school story and the profession's story. You public relations specialists have the know-how and techniques that can assist us in interpreting education's activities and needs to the community. With your help, teachers can improve communication among themselves, with other organizations, and with the society they serve.

With your talent, you can command attention, change people's minds, make pictures with words, hit home with graphics, point up facts with eye-catchers, command inferences about the new by relating it to the old, and, in general, stir up interest where even apathy once prevailed. Yes, you can work a kind of magic—when the product stands up to the advertising. You can bring support when there is a positive position and the facts about the issue are clear. You can work wonders, but you cannot do it alone!

We can tell the story, as teachers —but we cannot do it alone.

We need each other, for it takes all of us, operating in our special spheres, but cooperating for a common purpose and directed toward a common goal.

When I think of the tremendous need for outgoing, direct leadership in human relations, I believe that you, the public relations specialists, must be the forerunners, with courage to step beyond the provincial. We need your leadership, so that we—the teachers—can walk beside you, for we, too, must take a lead. Teachers can do their jobs best if you will share with us the techniques we can use in our everyday activities which will make the difference between whether what we do is effective or negated.

There's a job to be done and your help will be needed more than ever to direct the course, to mark the channels, and to guide the ship around obstacles between schools and the communities they serve. So maybe we'd better get started.

Are you talking? Well, I'm listening!

PARENT CONFERENCES— NOT SO SIMPLE

One of the unfairest things a school administration can do is to send teachers into parent-teacher conferences without preliminary briefing and training. The situation can be bad enough in middle-class suburban area neighborhoods, but the need becomes critical in a newly-integrated area.

Recently the Brevard County Schools, Titusville, Florida, tackled this problem by holding a community relations conference which covered the parent-teacher conference problem. A team of speakers from the South Florida School Desegregation Consulting Center, University of Miami, was on hand to offer pointers and review special problems.

Regardless of whether parents may be Negro or white, said consultant Ken Walker, false assumptions and misunderstandings can easily put a parent-teacher conference on the rocks. "A person who has not had much experience with desegregation thinks he has the answers to all the problems with desegregated schools, but a person soon learns he does not understand many things he thought he understood," he said.

"The teachers must learn how to deal with Negro parents, and this will not always be pleasant," said Walker. "This must be faced squarely, and teachers must learn to do it. Both the Negro teacher and the white teacher are in a diffi-

cult position. Teachers are dealing with a conference to treat the Negro as an equal, except that our larger society has not approved that yet."

It is an error to assume that all Negro parents are interested in the education of their children, he said. Actually, too much such parental interest has been frowned upon by society. "Negro parents do not ask the same questions or do not ask questions at all," he said. Teachers should be prepared to deal with this situation. It may not mean the Negro parent has less interest, but interest may be expressed in a different manner. This may require more participation of the teacher in a conference in terms of developing an atmosphere that will allow the parent to ask questions, and it will allow the teacher to understand what problems the child is having in school.

The teacher should never assume too much about whether he is communicating with the parent, he said. A parent often may not really listen to what is being said. Little by little the teacher has to communicate about things he is sure he and the parent can talk about.

This does not mean the conference is not purposeful. The teacher must have clear purpose in mind. White parents, for example, can be expected to ask teachers what is happening to the school as a result of having Negro students present. Teachers must be prepared to handle inquiries of this kind.

One of the real pitfalls for teachers, Walker said, is failure to be frank. "Any evasive tactics will surely be interpreted as being deceitful," he said. "If the child is not doing well, don't pretend he is. If there are crucial weaknesses that need or require the cooperation of the parent, discuss them. It is either that the child does need to be more careful about taking baths, or he does not; and if he does, it is something that has to be discussed and there is only one way—discuss it. If the teacher's intentions are good, he can communicate them. On the other hand, intentions can be very good but if evasive about it the teacher may interpret or communicate something he would rather not."

White parents may be a special problem, he said, being resentful of large numbers of Negro parents. Any show of genuine concern for the welfare of Negro children by teachers may be resented. "This is the difficult role that school people have to play and the task that has been given to them," Walker said.

THE MIDDLE MAN

Would your superintendent be most likely to say that principals definitely should be active communicators?

And would it be likely that your principals fancy themselves to be pretty good communicators with about three out of four stating they're always ready and willing to listen to employee problems?

But would you guess that one half or more of your school employees would like to have more information from their principals, and up to one third say principals never discuss nonjob-related subjects, and that almost one fourth feel they have no chance to ask the principal questions?

This is what the Illinois Bell Telephone Company discovered about its supervisors and employees a few years ago, making heavy use of opinion polls and checking the findings against similar polls in the utility field. Merton H. Knapp, the firm's assistant vice-president for public relations, reported that this information convinced Illinois Bell to reinforce its face-to-face internal communications program.

"It is our feeling that over the years, as companies have grown bigger, busier, and more complex, a lot of bosses either have forgotten or, in some cases, have not been urged to talk with their people," Knapp said. "As a result, a valuable employee communications link has withered. To be sure, most bosses still tell their people how to do their jobs day in and day out. This sort of communication flows like Niagara. But supervisor-employee communications should have equal responsibility for passing down general information about the company, or listening to an employee's thoughts and ideas and passing what he says that is worthwhile up the line. Unfortunately, this is a page of the management development textbook that I'm afraid in many cases has been lost amidst profit and loss statements, productivity trend charts, and figures on quality rejects."

National research studies indicated one of the problems involved was that supervisors really were not convinced the top bosses expected them to be good communicators. While they rated very high the importance of meeting production schedules and training employees on the job, only one third said they were expected to give a good deal of attention to informing employees about company plans and policies, and communicating top management's views.

Polling of Illinois Bell employees showed that they gave highest ratings to group meetings and talks with supervisors as sources of information about the company. However, they said they had to get the information from employee publications or fellow employees. "I think the reason for this is very simple—and very human," said Knapp. "You can't ask a bulletin a question and get an answer. You can't communicate with a printed page; only with people."

For the past two years, Illinois Bell has been engaged in a program to strengthen face-to-face communications up, down, and laterally. This, said Knapp, involves much more than putting together periodically two-way discussion packages of scripts, flip charts, and handout materials.

"We have found ourselves in the business of persuading supervisors that it's to their own self-interest to talk to their people. We have found ourselves having to sell at all levels of management the idea not only that the company can afford the considerable time it takes for two-way discussion, but that the company cannot really afford not to take the time," said Knapp. After the discussion concept caught on, he said, special efforts had to be taken to prevent the meetings from being used to promote many incidental special interests.

LETTER-WRITING, THE ALL-PURPOSE TOOL

Although most school people may think of a news release or speech as being the most popular tool in the school PR kit, the letter probably is the most universal communication device. This certainly is true at the school building level. Some letters play an extremely important part in improving communications; others are quite detrimental to the public relations of a school system.

Complained one school system PR man recently: "In the past few months, we've been giving concentrated attention to personal and school letters as an effective PR tool. Dressing up (and sometimes cleaning up) letters sent by administrators or others to the home, whether individually prepared or duplicated, is not easy. Our authors get sensitive. But some of the highly unreadable—and occasionally illiterate—material that goes from school to home is disastrous to good PR. Competition for effective communication is keen these days. Letters must be attractive, concise, accurate, and interesting!"

One of the big difficulties among letter-writers is that they are not sensitive to some of the formidable barriers which are unseen but which impede entrance to the reader's mind. According to Norman G. Shidle, author of the book, *The Art of Successful Communication,* the barriers are numerous and chameleon-like, differing from reader to reader and within the same reader from time to time.

The built-in opinion is one of the most common barriers to confront writers, says Shidle. "Whatever the subject, some previous knowledge or misconception is in a reader's mind," he says. "There is a way he *wants* to read what you are trying to say." This is particularly true of unsolicited communications. The reader's built-in opinions may stem from ignorance, general fears about life, or specific fears related to the subject. Doubts about reliability, accuracy, and objectivity also are involved. In other words, the communication has a credit rating; it may be low or high. Many built-in opinion barriers, says Shidle, can be licked by sticking to the point throughout the whole communication.

Whatever the subject, you should have a purpose—stated specifically before you start to write. That purpose should involve benefit to your reader. Sticking to that kind of point, you will run head on into a minimum of built-in prejudices. Such prejudices are born of self-centered, subjective thinking. Your objectively purposed communication will be running on a different track, between different terminals.

Other chief barriers, says Shidle, include reader impatience, which leads to hasty reading or termination, unless the communication can relate quickly to the concerns of the reader. Tangential thinking, the author says, is common to both readers and writers. Rambling on a tangent kills readership quickly. The author must keep the communication tightly knit and on the track, according to Shidle. Reader minds can easily be diverted by inclusion in the message of potentially diverting concepts or information. Watch out also, he says, that you do not include any statement which even remotely can be taken as implied criticism. Most readers are touchier than they will admit and tend to compare themselves and their performance to figures, statements, or opinions in communications directed to them.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT MATERIALS—BIGGER AND BETTER

Teacher recruitment materials have become easily the most lavish of school system publications. The trend is toward more color, more pages, and fancier paper stocks. Increased numbers of systems publish leaflets. Page sizes have increased tremendously, to afford better display of art work and typography. The full range of quality is available, of course, with the most amateurish publications suffering badly by comparison.

One of the eye-poppers is a 32-page booklet by the Lead, South Dakota, system which adds the light touch to a PR publication area which has until now been largely devoid of humor. *Your Golden Opportunity To Teach in Lead* includes a good many historic and gag photos of the Old West with tongue-in-cheek captions. Sample: Photo of old-time saloon exterior and loungers, with the line: "Our recreational facilities are most versatile, as are the local citizens and the people with whom you will work." The opposing page gives straight information about recreation facilities in the area. This publication is copyrighted. A companion booklet of 36 color pages, published by the state industrial development expansion agency, is also sent to prospects.

Another attention-getter is the recruitment booklet of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, schools. It includes 24 pages of color photos and bears the title: *Teach in the Surprise City*. Included with the leaflet is a *Time* magazine article reprint about the Pittsburgh system.

The Columbus, Ohio, booklet, with an embossed cover, also plugs the district's location in a booming city. A companion folder tells about the salary schedule.

Two pages of photos of recent teacher additions to the Osseo, Min-

nesota, district teaching staff are included in the system recruitment booklet. The cutlines are quotes describing satisfactory first-year teaching experiences there.

A cooperative recruiting effort was made by the Third Supervisory District of Suffolk County, Huntington, New York in behalf of 15 districts it serves via a special newsletter, *Professional Personnel Report*. It described the Long Island area of the district, listed types of openings, and included names and addresses of personnel officers for its districts. The state's First Supervisory District, Yorkville, New York, retained a University of Rochester professor to serve as consultant to school boards of the district in teacher recruitment matters.

Most eye-catching is a complete recruitment portfolio, *Your Portfolio to Success,* produced by Independent School District 279, Osseo, Minnesota. It includes such items as a 16-page recruitment booklet, application form, salary schedule, voting requirements, facts about nearby Minneapolis, and a Minnesota map.

Another portfolio type, produced by the Pearl River, New York, schools, has much of the information about the system and community printed on the portfolio. Into a pocket are stuffed application, salary schedule, and return envelope.

MORE THAN ONE COLOR

Traditionally, teacher recruitment literature has portrayed public education as a lily-white affair. Teachers portrayed invariably have been white; youngsters have been well-dressed middle-class white students. Change is now taking place. The fact there are children with colored skins to be educated is now being disclosed.

A frank bid for interest in teaching minority group youngsters is being used by the Indianapolis, Indiana, schools in a 20-page booklet, *Will You Be Our Teacher?* which not only has gone into the usual college recruitment channels but also has been passed along to high school counselors and Future Teachers of America clubs. Copies also have been sent to human relations and other civic groups. The booklet is a photo story which features three attractive girl students of the Indianapolis system. They appear in several scenes. "We come in assorted shapes and sizes," declares the text. "We have one thing in common. We want to learn."

Indianapolis recruitment mailings, incidentally, include a handsome four-color booklet describing the city. Copies are purchased at cost from the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber, in its mailings to prospective businessmen and residents, includes a leaflet which describes the schools and was prepared by the school system.

Another recruitment publication, which features both Negro instructors and students, has been published by the Joliet, Illinois, schools. Called *Progress in Education,* it is a 20-page booklet which serves also as an orientation handbook.

PR PROFILE—
AURORA, COLORADO

A school system which balloons from 1,000 to 17,000 students in a 15-year span can have all the explosive qualities of a bomb unless the chief school administrator and school board are sufficiently perceptive to provide for effective communications in the early stages. This was the case at the Aurora, Colorado, school district, once a little community at the end of the bus line, which has become the fourth largest city in the state. In the case of Aurora, the need for good communication was more apparent due to the fact that there is an annual population turnover of about 35 percent.

Superintendent W. C. Hinkley set up an information services office 13 years ago and has developed internal and external communication procedures which blend comprehensive publication techniques with a big face-to-face communication program.

The school principal is "Mr. Big" in communications responsibilities at Aurora. After each school board meeting, for example, there is a special briefing for principals to aid them in making reports of board actions to their faculties. They manage a program of parent-teacher conferences which has been in operation at all elementary and junior high schools for 15 years. The conferences are scheduled to take place at the time of American Education Week. High school student councils and the Aurora Education Association cooperate in setting up AEW window and lobby displays at business firms.

Another focal point of system-wide and building activity is Colorado Public Schools Week, which is held in the spring. Junior high schools stage special open house programs. There is a system-wide three-day education exhibition held at a senior high school with representation from every building. A fine arts festival features music, dance, and speech arts.

A school-community banquet, held during CPSW, is sponsored by the school board and education association. Guests are leading city officials, heads of civic organizations, representatives from military bases in the area, and representatives from the community's churches. Association scholarships are presented and outstanding teachers are honored.

The school system has large auditorium, stadium, and gymnasium seating capacities. These facilities have led to cooperative ventures with business firms to bring many state conventions and athletic tournaments to the community. According to W. A. Murray, director of information services, more statewide events are held in the Aurora schools than in any other school district facilities in Colorado. A fast-expanding adult education program adds to the utilization of buildings.

Bond issue campaigning has been frequent. The PTA plays a foremost role. Before each bond issue is voted upon, PTA groups sponsor meetings throughout the community to present the proposal. The "get out the vote" campaign also has PTA sponsorship. There have been nine campaigns in 15 years. All have been successful.

An elaborate line of publications flows from the information services office. They are attractive but are economically produced. Most of the output comes from a small offset press. Typewriters are used to compose the body type. A system newsletter, *School Report,* last year was switched in format to a newspaper tabloid.

Many of the PR publications have a strong service flavor. In addition to a leaflet boosting summer activities of the schools and city recreation department there also is a leaflet covering the winter program, *Snowtime Is Funtime in Aurora.* A special leaflet addressed to home builders, produced with aid by the University of Denver, emphasizes the value of planning subdivisions in cooperation with the school system. It points out the number of school-age children who will occupy a 100-home subdivision, gives capital and operational costs for education which will result.

PR PROFILE— AZUSA, CALIFORNIA

One reason why the development of formal, organized public relations programs has been retarded is that consent to get started never is given until the need becomes more than obvious. Many school districts are going through the same kind of evolution experienced in recent years by the Azusa, California, Unified District. Quite a number, like Azusa, will probably learn about school PR the hard way.

The Azusa District, now a unified system of 13,000 pupils and 800 employees located 20 miles east of Los Angeles, until recently was three relatively small separate districts. None had PR programs. They seemed to be unneeded. Finance issues passed easily. Unification was effected without too much distress. The first bond issue was approved by a whopping majority. With the assumption that the district had strong public backing, an operating tax increase election was scheduled. It flopped miserably and thoroughly jolted the school board and administration.

Out of the ruins came not only a second (and successful) tax campaign based solidly upon citizen involvement and participation, but also the realization that the district could never afford to take public support for granted. A public relations program was authorized and staffed. It now is in its fourth year and is directed by Charles Byers, administrative assistant to Superintendent Dayton E. Dickey. The Azusa administrative approach to

school PR today is that PR is involved in almost every aspect of the school operation. This can be recognized to the benefit of the system or neglected at the risk of adverse results.

"Every school district has cafeteria services and most have bus services—services which are common and may even cost about the same," explained Byers. "But *how* you provide these services, how you communicate about them, makes a difference. We say we look at everything we do from the PR angle."

The Azusa PR program is a fairly broad one, even though it is relatively new. "Frankly, our program is not new, different, or startling," said Byers. "Generally, we have been adding components which have been tested elsewhere and which also fit our particular situation."

Publications get heavy emphasis as part of a difficult program to reach citizens in a district which extends into four different communities. The employee group also is viewed as a major key to public relations and must be kept well informed. *Azusa Schools in Action,* a monthly newsletter for the staff, is supplemented by *Education Azusa,* a fast bulletin which covers board meeting highlights and similar news, and *Monthly Calendar,* designed to keep the entire staff up to date on events in the elementary and secondary programs. *Community Report* goes to residents three times yearly and is supplemented with special leaflets on particular school program aspects (kindergarten, counseling, etc.).

Press coverage involves a twice-weekly newspaper plus four metropolitan area dailies, which reach into parts of the district. Byers, aided by reporters in each of two high schools, gives strong emphasis to press service in the PR program. During a typical week there will be 20 to 40 news releases and photos sent to area newspapers. A 15-minute weekly radio program, produced by students, has PR values in that much of the content involves interviews about phases of the curriculum.

There is extremely close liaison with PTA leaders. Principals from all schools attend a meeting with PTA leaders monthly to informally improve communications and puncture rumors. PTA's get lots of help in producing their bulletins and planning their meetings. There is equal emphasis upon staff participation in community affairs. For example, presidents of the three major luncheon clubs currently are school employees.

Continuing administrative inservice attention is given to the PR aspects of parent-teacher conferences, B-I-E Days, open house programs, and slide presentation.

COMMUNICATION GUIDE

The books, special reports, articles, and periodicals listed below have been selected for their reference value to individuals who are regularly confronted with responsibilities for school public relations. The selection is intended to be representative of recent significant literature in the field of communication.

Selected Books and Special Reports

American Association of School Administrators, National School Boards Association, and Association of School Business Officials of the United States and Canada. *Education Is Good Business*. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1966. 48 pp.

Ashley, Paul P. *Say It Safely: Legal Limits in Publishing, Radio, and Television*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966. 169 pp.

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