The Roles And Responsibilities Of The Public School Public Relations Practitioner

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THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER

BY

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PUBLIC
RELATIONS PRACTITIONER

The purpose of this study was to investigate how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools. This study was primarily exploratory and descriptive in nature. The role of the superintendent as a public relations ambassador or the roles and responsibilities that s/he believe to be most important for the public school public relations practitioner is an under-researched area in educational administration and supervision.

The instrument utilized was constructed by the researcher and was used to identify specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as essential attributes and skills necessary for success. The instrument was mailed to 213 New Jersey public school superintendents practicing in K-12 school districts. A total of 149 surveys were returned resulting in a 70% rate of return. The instrument used a combination of multiple choice and Likert-scale options. The survey contained a total of 35 indicators. Twenty-nine of the 35 items were Likert-scale items. The remaining 6 items addressed information about district enrollment, years of experience as a superintendent, and designation of public relations responsibilities.

This study sought answers to research questions pertaining to who typically performs public relations duties in a public school, whether a relationship exists between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations, the frequency of
public relations issues with key stakeholders, and the roles, responsibilities, and skills a superintendent believes the public relations practitioner should possess.
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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love, support, and patience throughout this seemingly never-ending process. I am ready to jump back into the world and am grateful that you are all still there.
DEDICATION

“Go confidently into the direction of your dreams! Live the life you always imagined.” Thoreau

To my parents, Armando and Joann, who continue to encourage me to go for my dreams. Please know that your quiet reassurance and encouragement during the most difficult times are priceless.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Until recently, public schools for the most part, have been regarded with trust, respect, and able to provide a valuable education. Today the public school system no longer enjoys the public’s trust and confidence as it did just twenty-five years ago. Many Americans are frustrated and angry at public schools. They are uncomfortable with what they perceive to be going on in feel schools and are often disappointed with the results schools are achieving. Americans feel that they have no voice and little or no control over their childs’ education (Cutler, 2000).

Within the past thirty years, only some educational leaders have responded to this educational crisis by focusing on the community’s role in improving public schools (Cutler, 2000; Willis, 1995). A Stateline public opinion poll regarding the improvement of public schools cites the need for educational partnerships between schools and parents. The poll also suggests that schools must be better connected to the community. Several researchers agree that schools will not be able to meet the challenges facing them without first connecting with parents and the community, and in so doing, recognize the effort as a top priority (Brandt, 1998; Willis, 1995). The American public school system has seeded in its foundation both the community and the family. The community provides a broad base of support, and the family provides the day-to-day support for and interaction with the school (Kowalski, 2000). The quality of this support and how it comes to play
hold the secret of successful students and schools. Therefore, the question that may need to be asked is, how do public schools connect with the variety of publics it services?

Public relations is a very touchy subject. Some people consider it a science, while others believe it to be a scam. However, public relations actually lies somewhere along the continuum between a profession and a skill or craft. According to Sitrick (1998), public relations dates as far back as to the beginning of the twentieth century as a coherent discipline. The development of public relations parallels the development of society.

Concern surrounding public opinion and public image did not exist prior to the turn of the century when "increasing prosperity, spreading literacy, and evolving democratic values began to create the first glimmerings of an American mass media culture" (Sitrick, 1998, p. 9). Politics began to reinvent itself as the new communications systems of the twentieth century developed. Large companies felt the need to understand and influence the desires and necessities of the public. Finally, following the crash of the stock market, public relations in education became very important. School boards and superintendents had to polish the image of public schools due to the straining budgets at all governmental levels as a result of the Depression. Administrators had to take every opportunity to see their schools through the eyes of the community. Educational professionals were looking for a relationship with the public. Educators believed that knowledge was essential to good public relations therefore parents and taxpayers had to learn more about what was occurring in public schools (Cutler, 2000).

Today there seems to be a myriad of questions regarding public schooling from all publics within the community. The further away people are from direct involvement
or contact with schools, the more skeptical their attitudes become (Jennings, 1996).

According to a recent Public Agenda poll reported by Educational Research Service
(New Jersey Department of Education, 2001, p. 1) “most of the general public, and even
parents of school-age children, seem relatively detached from the schools” and only 14
percent of nonparents consider themselves to be “very involved” with the public schools
(New Jersey Department of Education, 2001). It is a reality that few want to face, but
the reality is that the community and its public schools are inextricably intertwined
(Kowalski, 2000). Kowalski (2000, p. 6) points out that, according to Haywood,
“effective public relations is much more than communications: it should be more
fundamental to the organization.”

Relating to the public is an essential ingredient in any successful enterprise, be it
business-related or educationally-related (Sitrick, 1998). Public relations need to be
continuously evolving through constant monitoring and careful cultivation.

So it comes as no surprise, according to Saffir (2000), that as public relations
emerges as a dominant force in the fundamentals to success in business and politics,
American education is just beginning to understand the benefits of positive public
relations. Saffir (2000) explains:

PR’s importance is undeniable. When the topic of public relations comes up, the
reaction is no longer, “So what?” The reaction is more likely to be, “Now what?”
Recognizing the power of new-millennium public relations is one thing;
harnessing it is another. (p. 2)

Community perception may not always coincide with positive results occurring in
schools. If this is the case, Weidlich (1999) believes that administrators may need to take
a look at the district’s image. However, he points out that if a conscious effort is not being made to positively influence the image, chances are that somewhere in the district, other actions are having a negative effect.

The question about who will provide the community and the family with the information necessary to contribute to the success of the American public school system remains. Most often in small districts, the superintendent is able to meet the demands for information and public relations. Every now and then s/he may require additional assistance from central office staff (Meek, 1999). Occasionally, a central office administrator will have public relations duties assigned on a partial basis.

Larger districts often have central office staff for public relations and communications although the staff will most likely be very small. Even the largest school districts do not employ sufficient public relations staff due to today’s widespread budget constraints (Meek, 1999).

However, as public school issues become more controversial and challenging, many school boards and superintendents are opting to develop a public relations program by hiring an in-house employee as a full-time public relations practitioner, or assigning the public relations responsibility to an existing administrator. Occasionally, a board of education may hire an outside consultant to fill the role.

Most school districts retain a centralized approach to public relations. Centralization simply means that a public relations director functions as a member of the superintendent’s administrative team orchestrating the function from the central office (Kowalski, 2000). This person will be useful in setting policy, making and executing plans, and handling many of the most fundamental challenges facing the district (Saffir,
In light of what a public relations practitioner may accomplish overall, it is important for the superintendent to carefully choose or even handpick that person who will be ultimately held accountable for communication with a district’s various publics. Researchers, including Meek (1999), Hughes and Hooper (2000), Saffir (2000), and Kowalski (2000) agree on the qualities or selection criteria that a public relations practitioner should maintain. Overall, the priority for the public relations professional is to improve the channels of communication at all levels within the educational organization and the community at-large. The superintendent and the public relations practitioner should be able to establish and maintain a good working relationship. Maintaining a good working relationship helps to build trust and confidence between the superintendent and the public relations practitioner. Trust is closely related to effective communication, therefore, in situations where the public relations practitioner acts as the spokesperson for the superintendent and the school district, trust and confidence is essential. The willingness to accept spontaneous additional assignments, excellent written and oral communication skills, a well-developed technological background, and the ability to work quickly are only some of the important attributes a public relations practitioner should encompass. Probably the most important public relations function, which evolves over time, is the practitioners’ ability to earn the respect and trust of colleagues, the superintendent, the board, the parents, the media, and the many publics with whom s/he will have contact. The ability to gain a rapport with people quickly, make them feel comfortable, and listen to their comments, criticisms, or concerns is a great asset to the school district. When members of a community decide to put their confidence in a school system, they are thinking about the human element; the person
representing the vision and mission of the district (Meek, 1999; Hughes & Hooper, 2000; Saffir, 2000; Kowalski, 2000). Personal presence and visibility, coupled with a reputation of making and adhering to commitments, helps establish the trust and cooperation toward which the public relations practitioner works.

The role and responsibility of the public relations practitioner varies. The public relations practitioner often acts as a speechwriter or ghostwriter for the superintendent or other high level administrators. Eventually, s/he will suggest shadings or modifications in how things are said, as opposed to the content. The public relations practitioner makes public relations a two-way function; thinking about how the various publics will react to messages and how to maximize the effect of the message. Feeding back readings on public perception as well as executing plans to affect that perception makes public relations a useful tool in the setting and implementation of all educational policy (Saffir, 2000). Often, the public relations practitioner may act as a personal image consultant. The practitioner should become familiar with the district and begin to develop a network of people within varying positions in the organization to continually obtain the “inside track.” As the trust level of the public relations practitioner increases, s/he may be invited to sit in on top level, highly confidential meetings. S/he may also coordinate building level public relations personnel if they exist, as well as prepare newsletters and press releases, coordinate special events, take and retain photographs, handle the media, and act as the superintendent’s designee when appropriate (Meek, 1999; Saffir, 2000; Hughes & Hooper, 2000).
Communication is important. It is the link between society and the success of the American public school system. The public relations practitioner is integral to establishing the two-way communication necessary to move forward with confidence.

Statement of the Problem

This study will investigate how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools, the specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as essential attributes and skills necessary for success. On behalf of their boards of education, superintendents must take it upon themselves, assign tasks and delegate responsibilities to in-house administrators, or recommend outsourcing of qualified professional services.

Research Questions

This study will examine the following questions pertaining to the status of the school public relations practitioner as viewed by the superintendent of schools.

1. Who typically performs public relations duties in the public school setting?

2. Is there a relationship between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations?

3. How frequently is public relations used to address educational issues with key stakeholders?

4. What are the most important roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the school public relations practitioner?

5. What are essential attributes and skills that the superintendent believes a school public relations practitioner should possess?
Significance of the Study

The image public schools portray to the community at large has become more important over the last several years for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to school choice, the shift in the perception of public schooling, reporting of standardized test scores, and increased property taxes. For these reasons and many others, the need for improved school public relations is demanding increased attention from many school districts throughout our nation.

Previous research by Brandt (1998), Cutler (2000) and Willis (1995) seemed to focus on school-community relations and parent-school communication. This literature also encompasses many studies and excessive information on communication, especially between teachers and principals and the parents within their schools. However, the role of the superintendent as a public relations ambassador or the roles and responsibilities that s/he, as the chief educational officer, believe to be most important for the public school public relations practitioner, whether employed in or out of district, is an under-researched area in educational administration and supervision.

The literature review indicated an informational deficit in specifically identifying the roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the public relations practitioner. While a general model of school public relations emerged, the results of this study may contribute to the literature and understanding of the topic for present and future administrators.

Limitations of the Study

This study looks at how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools, the specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent believes are
important, as well as attributes and skills necessary for public relations practitioners to be successful in public school districts. This study focuses on public relations as a more formal type of communication. Forgoing informal types of communication such as discussions at the water cooler and over dinner and impromptu meetings therefore becomes a limitation of this study. Superintendents serving K-12 school districts in New Jersey with student enrollments of less than 1,800, 1,800-3,500, and over 3,500 have been selected for participation. Only those people with the title of superintendent will be contacted.

The population of superintendents serving K-12 districts is 213. Districts servicing students in K-6 or K-8 are currently not being studied due to time and budgetary constraints. The number of participants may not be representative of the population of all New Jersey school districts. However, because of the diversity within New Jersey, the researcher believes a fair representation may be achieved. Solicitation and data collection procedures are taking place through a survey via United States mail. Therefore, the cooperation necessary to complete the research is not within the control of the researcher.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are included to aid in the comprehension and interpretation of the study and to clarify terms if the study is duplicated.

1. Community: a locality; people grouped by geographic location with a common interest (Grunig & Hunt, 1984)

2. Publics: media, member, employee, community, government, consumer, special interest groups
3. Media Publics: local print media

4. Member Publics: includes all special organizations within the institution, from honoraries to professional groups

5. Employee Publics: includes the management and non-management staff

6. Community Publics: includes community media, leaders, and organizations

7. Consumer Publics: includes students and parents

8. Public Relations: the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984)

9. Educational Public Relations: "a planned, systematic management function, designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with the goal of stimulating better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support" (School Public Relations, p. 7)

10. Public Relations Professional: the person(s) accountable for public relations responsibilities in a school district. The title "public relations professional" was applied to those respondents who indicated the titles of "public relations coordinator" or "public relations director" on their survey. The term public relations practitioner is used interchangeable throughout this study.
11. Perception: when used in relation to superintendents, how they view the role of the public relations practitioner in a school district.
CHAPTER II

Review of Related Research

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to provide a context for the dissertation related to how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools and the question of the role of the public relations practitioner in public schools. It explores the history and politics of schooling and considers schools as organizations as well as communication systems within organizations.

It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that public relations became established as indispensable to America’s educational development (Kowalski, 2000). It is a reality that many refuse to believe, yet nevertheless has proven itself to be true; society and public schools are inextricably intertwined (Kowalski, 2000). Contrary to popular belief, many of the changes that have been taking place during the last half of the twentieth century in public schooling seem to correlate with the demographic profile of the typical public school student (Kowalski, 2000). It seems that no one can argue about the increase in the diversity of students who are attending our schools as well as the increased number of children living in poverty, coming from one parent families, and even those that attend school with emotional and psychological problems. However, many continue to blame the public schools for the educational problems facing our nation (Kowalski, 2000). Glass posits in Kowalski (2000) "the
foundation of the American school system is both in the community and the family" (p. 33). The community provides a broad base of support, and the family provides the day-to-day interaction with its schools (Kowalski, 2000).

Kowalski (2000) points out that the most noticeable changes occurring recently in schools relate to people and programs. Not only are students far more diverse but their educational needs have also been revised by America’s transition to an information age. The public system of education currently holds a unique position insofar as the local school district is one of the few institutions open to direct citizen influence. Taxpayers often voice their discontent directly to board members hopeful that their grievances will generate attention and action (Kowalski, 2000).

According to a recent publication by the Center on Educational Policy and the American Youth Policy Forum (2000), many people believe American public schools are failing. Such views are not surprising, since critics of public education emphasize only what is wrong with public schools, and negative stories about education appear frequently in the media. Seldom do people hear the good news about public education. Glass contends, “public education should be based on both the needs of society and the potentialities of schools” (Kowalski, 2000, p. 39). School public relations remain an essential tool for rebuilding bridges to the community. DePree (1998) points out “just as any relationship requires honest and open communication to stay healthy, so the relationship within corporations when information is shared accurately and freely” (p. 101). Communication is the way we can bridge the gaps formed by a growing community, build trust, monitor performance, and share the educational vision.
Communication in Schools as Organizations

Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 7) believe that “the proliferation of complex organizations has made almost every human activity a collective one. Every one of us is raised and educated in organizations of some sort. “We build organizations because of what they can do for us” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 7).

Talcott Parsons, (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980) believe the school as an organization contains layers of distinct responsibility or subsystems that help the organization perform effectively and efficiently. The professional subsystem or technical level includes curriculum, teacher and student roles, and classroom organization. The managerial level is concerned with facilitating the administration of the technical level including emphasis on formalization, integration, and efficiency as reflected in the distribution of power and communication patterns. Finally, the institutional level legitimizes the school as a piece of a broader social system providing it with support. This support allows the broader societal members to make demands upon the school as an organization. It becomes apparent that a public relations practitioner may transcend all levels of the organization to obtain information necessary to carry out the organization’s vision to all the publics it serves.

Lawler in Bennis, Spreitzer, and Cummings (2001) posits that:

Jobs are the basic molecule of the organization upon which the other elements are built. Individuals are assigned certain tasks and
responsibilities, and are held accountable for performing them.

They are also selected based on the nature of a job that needs to be filled, and of course, compensated based on how important or large the job is and on how adequately they perform it. (p. 18)

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) point out that although schools are “similar to other organizations in many ways, its special mission in society gives it a certain uniqueness” (p. 163). Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) continue to explain that:

A number of characteristics differentiate the school from organizations in general. First, the school is a professionally orientated organization. That is, school members are manifestly concerned with the education of children and youth and are, by and large, professionals as opposed to skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled workers. Second, the school’s clients, the pupils, typically do not have a choice in determining the services they receive from the school nor which school they will attend. Third, the amount of financial support a school receives is generally related to local wealth and the number of students.

A fourth unique characteristic presents an interesting paradox. Schools suffer from goal ambiguity. Although the stated goal of the school is “to provide learning experiences for children and youth” and no citizen or administrator would challenge this general goal - yet the means by which it is to be accomplished are not universally agreed upon.
Finally, the unique dual status of pupils places the school in an unusual situation. Pupils are consumers of the services provided by schools, but, as already noted, they have little value in the nature of the educational services provided. (pp. 163-164)

Organizations exist to accomplish a purpose. Determination of the organizational structure is dependent upon ways in which role relationships are arranged. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) point to Weber's formulations outlining distinctive characteristics of a bureaucracy. The first characteristic is:

A well-defined hierarchy of offices. Organizational authority is allocated to and through these offices, which also have specified functions. The organizational chart outlines the hierarchical authority. Position titles, although not specific job descriptions, usually furnish an important clue as to what "competence" is associated with that office. (p.165)

The school organization is essentially bureaucratic, with a chief characteristic being a hierarchy of authority which flows from the top of the school to the bottom. The amount of organizational authority members have is dependent upon their place in the hierarchy. This authority, furthermore, is conferred independent of the individual. Thus, superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, principals, assistant principals, and other school executives are able to direct subordinates in their activities, in part, due to their position and attendant status... (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980, pp. 185-186)
Bolman and Deal (1997) assert that responsibilities within organizations are allocated and coordinated based upon rules, policies, procedures, and the division of labor through hierarchies. The structure of an organization is the blueprint for patterns internally among administrators, supervisors, and employees, and externally among pupils, taxpayers, parents, non-parents, and the community at large (Bolman & Deal, 1997). They assert that coordination and decision-making between internal and external structures may be achieved vertically or laterally through formal and informal meetings and network organizations. Optimally, a blending of both vertical and lateral coordination is the preferred methodology for organizations dependant upon the challenges in any particular situation. Often, as the size of an organization increases, typically so does the more formal vertical structure. “All organizations are dependent on their environment, but some are more dependent than others. Public schools, for example, have low power with respect to external constituencies and struggle to get resources they need” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 52). Larger private institutions are often insulated from dependence and a more formalized structure (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Organizations are challenging, ambiguous and complex in their own right. Inter-organizational communication systems are often subject to perception and ambiguity because the same information provided to the same group of people by the same person may be interpreted in a variety of ways. According to Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 28), “when an event is clear and unambiguous, it is not hard for people to agree on what is happening.”
According to Drucker (2001), we have more attempts at communications today than ever before. Sitrick (1988) seems to agree with Drucker when he points out that:

In this era of mass global telecommunications, when just about anyone with access to a telephone line and a computer can transmit just about any message he wants to just about the whole world, getting the word out no longer presents much of a challenge. Being understood, on the other hand, having your message elicit the response you want, can be a bit more problematic. (p.4)

Expanding Bolman and Deal’s (1997) assertion that public schools must struggle with external constituencies and communicate effectively to obtain necessary resources, it becomes very clear that communication is the important link between society and the success of the American school system. The public relations practitioner has the responsibility and the skills necessary to maintain that link and strengthen it over time.

Problems with communication are the most important issues dealt with in any organization, business or educational. Most people believe they are being understood; yet words alone are meaningless. People actually attach meaning to words; therefore, communication may become a people process rather than a language process. The relationship between people becomes the crucial dimension in communication. Harmonious relationships open the lines of communication. Communicating meaning and achieving understanding occur when trust and confidence are established. However, poor interpersonal relationships make
communicating cumbersome and meaningless (Lane & Reardon, 2001; Covey, 1991).

Covey (1991), DePree (1989), and Lane and Reardon (2001) agree that effective two-way communication requires skills that demand capture of content and intent to the audience. Drucker (2001) believes that communication must be experienced-based. That is, people will not understand the message if they do not receive it in terms of their own experiences. He purports that something so obvious and clearly validated by one person is entirely different and perceived differently by someone with other experiences. The human mind tries to fit stimuli into frames of expectations thereby resisting any attempts to “change its mind.” Therefore, Drucker (2001) believes that prior to meaningful communication taking place, the public relations practitioner must know what the recipient expects to hear. Covey (1991) asserts that communication is more about trust and acceptance rather than intellect. When the community has a public relations practitioner they can believe and trust, the message has a greater chance of being understood; the audience captures the content and intent. If the message is not what the public wants to hear or believe, the trust and confidence of the source may overcome and the inherent resistance to the facts and message.

Most organizational communications are governed by social values (Drucker, 2001). This may be seen most prolifically in schools. The public owns its public schools and much attention must be dedicated to help the superintendent and his/her administrators communicate effectively with both internal and external publics. “Administrators face crisis after crisis - many of them easily traced to poor
communication somewhere along the line” (Hack, Candoli, & Ray, 1995, p. 81). According to Konnert and Augenstei (1995) ninety percent of a superintendent’s job involves communication. The way the communication takes place depends upon the needs and to whom one is communicating. Schmuck and Runkel (1994) believe that many acts of communication are necessary for educators to be clear about the issues important to the public. Hack, Candoli, and Ray (1995) agree with Schmuck and Runkel (1994) in that they believe an open, honest two-way system is necessary if the organization is to remain responsive to the opinions, needs, and desires of their various publics.

Three types of communication, as explained by Schmuck and Runkel (1994) exist in organizations and can easily apply to schools. They include unilateral communication, directive communication and transactional communication. Simply stated, unilateral communication “is initiated by a speaker and terminated at a listener” (p. 120). Examples of unilateral communications may include memos, newsletters, and electronic communication, all of which are used often in public school institutions. Face to face or directive communication occurs when the sender makes a statement and the listener complies. MacGregor, according to Schmuck and Runkel (1994) believes this communication to be coercive because no provision for exchange exists; acceptance is implied. This kind of directive communication exists in classrooms consistently. A teacher gives an assignment and students indicate their level of understanding by the level of completeness of the task.
Finally, transactional or two-way communication “is a reciprocal process in
which each participant initiates messages and attempts to understand the other”
(Schmuck & Runkel, 1994, p. 121). Information flows back and forth, each
impacting on the preceding message.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994) explain that, though much work in educational
organizations is accomplished by transactional or two-way communication, as size
increases new issues and problems with communication arise. Formal and informal
channels of communication are created.

By formal channels of communication we mean interactions that are
sanctioned by the organization and that they carry information of the
officially relevant acts; examples are announcements in bulletins or
newsletters, faculty or departmental meetings, and curriculum committee
meetings. Informal channels - such as coffee break conversations among
departmental colleagues or parking-lot debriefings of faculty meetings- are
not officially required; nor do they typically carry much of the kind of
information that flows through the formal channels. Indeed, informal
channels are kept alive precisely for the reason that they carry kinds of
communication the formal channels reject. (Schmuck and Runkel, 1994, p.
142)

According to Schmuck and Runkel (1994), Likert developed a form of
organization wide communication called link-pin structure. The link-pin function is
performed by a person or group that participates in several communication
networks carrying information horizontally and vertically to groups that would not
normally communicate. In public schools, it is usual for a principal to attend a teachers' meeting yet not very likely for a teacher to sit with or attend an administrative meeting. Schmuck and Runkel (1994) go on to point out that the larger the educational organization, the more crucial it is to be clear about formal channels of communication and chain of command. Bolman and Deal (1997) and DePree (1998) seem to agree conceptually that the size of an organization affects its shape and character. As a culture or corporation grows older and more complex, the communication inevitably become more crucial, sophisticated, and formal. Growth must be aligned with roles and relationships or problems will arise. Smaller organizations typically sustain more informal structures. Nevertheless, whether small or large, “communication in an organization...is not a means of organization. It is the mode of organization” (Drucker, 2001, p. 267).

Schools and Communities

Throughout the history of public education, Hicks (2000) posits “economics has always taken precedence over children” (p. 398). At the turn of the century it was common for those children living in rural America to cease their formal schooling at an early age and render services on a farm. In cities, sweatshops were filled with young children. According to Hicks (2000), in 1900, six percent of seventeen year olds graduated from high school, by 1995 the figure was seventy-one percent. This increase, although significant, continues to fall short of community expectations. Voters continue to reject school referendums even though many schools do not have enough supplies, textbooks, or sufficient facilities. Hicks (2000) explains:
There were two periods when education in this country had some status. The first, and longest, was after World War II. The GI bill might be labeled as the single greatest educational achievement of any culture throughout history, but the impetus for it was not a belief in the importance of education. Education was a vehicle for getting the economy in gear and GI’s back to work. A second, but brief upsurge in the status of education came because of Sputnik and the Cold War. Otherwise, apathy has been the dominant attitude. Yes, children should be educated, but no big deal. Forget quality; it costs too much. (p. 399)

Arnold Fege (1992) points out that our schools have indeed produced much of what the publics have expected. The expectation that public schools admit all who come to their doors is upheld. Schools are expected to provide learning experiences for the disabled, and they do. An equal educational opportunity with no regard for family income, and children’s achievement level is also upheld by public schools. Schools have been asked to provide individualized instruction, basic educational skills, mastery education, and even open education. Public schooling has responded to these waves of change, thus producing programmatic and curricular diversification.

With all that has already been achieved, there is much yet to be accomplished. Instead of giving credit where credit is due, it seems much easier for the media to become critical of public schools, teachers, and the performance of education in general (Hicks, 2000). Negative media against schools is often rooted in “political attitudes, biases, and intentionally misleading information” (Hicks, 2000, p. 399). However, public school administrators, school board members, and teachers themselves also play a role in the nonsupport of public schooling by doing nothing to support it. They have
essentially created the worst public relations of any institution in the country (Hicks, 2000). “Most public school people have not contested negative barbs and missiles at all, much less done so effectively” (Hicks, 2000, p. 399).

Fege (1992) posits that the most critical challenge facing public schools is to ensure an excellent education while dealing with diversity, changing with diversity, changing demographics, low-test scores, and great social and academic burdens placed on public schools. Addressing these needs and concerns of public education is a public responsibility. A democratized public requires access to the rational related to responsible procurement and distribution of public wealth in support of its schools. Fege (1992) questions how to convince much of the adult population who have no children “that the old need the young as much as the young need a caring adult population.”

In order to manage the many state and local challenges, “a board and superintendent must give serious consideration to, and policy implementation for, the process of effective school-community relations” (Arbor, 1993, p. 45). The importance of connection between schools and communities at all school levels, inclusive of the federal and state levels of government is clearly agreed upon by a myriad of researchers (Arbor, 1993; Brunner, 1998; Brandt, 1998; Harwood, 1998; Willis, 1995). Schools play a major role in everyone’s lives. It is an undeniable fact that schools are about something deeper than providing an education. “Schools are a reflection of who we are” (Harwood, 1998, p. 312). They are a reflection of what each community values. However, Brunner (1998) points out that although there has been a grand effort to connect public schools and the community each serves, there forever remains a
disconnection. Parents, teachers, and administrators each face their own challenges in seeking to reestablish or strengthen school and community relationships (Brunner, 1998; Brandt, 1998).

People are confused about what they want and how to acquire it. It seems that people want change yet disagree over how to obtain the desired result. They are suspect that the idea for change will ever become a reality (Brandt, 1998). Leaders and educators must get to know their audiences and find out what they truly think about educational issues and what they want to know about their schools. Effecting school policies, understanding the layers of civic life, listening to how people talk about public education and try to make sense of it, capturing authenticity, and being accountable for the outcome of this list play a vital role in helping the public to support their schools, their teachers, and their school board, as well as the decisions that are made (Brandt, 1998; Harwood, 1998).

Brandt (1998) points out that “it would be grossly unfair to imply that all communication problems between parents and schools are educators’ fault. For many reasons, people have become less trusting of nearly all institutions . . .” (p. 3). He continues to argue that public schools are very often a target of negative reports in the media and groups of conservatives will certainly exploit every questionable action by educators. Harwood (1998) challenges leaders, educators, and community members to take a risk and find out what would happen if “we started to believe in people’s aspirations? To genuinely believe that we should hold more faith in people’s good and noble sensibilities than we do in their desire for division, acrimony, and hate?” (p. 315). Harwood believes that by moving in this direction, a renewed sense of possibility, a
rising belief in each other, and a willingness to work together may help us get to a
different, better place (Harwood, 1998).

According to Willis (1995), Johnson asserts that “for the public, seeing is
believing” and “the public is really in a ‘show-me’ mood.” Johnson continues to
explain that schools will be in jeopardy if educators refuse to heed the public’s
concerns and accommodate them where appropriate to do so. Johnson believes that
public education has reached a pivotal point. Engaging the public must be a priority for
every community and its schools (Rose & Rapp, 1997).

According to Puriefoy (2000) research indicates that Americans are worried
about the quality of education and want to help public schools, not abandon them. She
cites a commissioned poll of voters and focus groups completed by the Public
Education Network (PEN) that gauges the public’s commitment to public education in
our country. The results indicate that 91% of voters say that communities as a whole
benefit from good public schools. It was also proven that support for public schools are
consistent across all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as
those with and without school-age children. However, the poll also indicated that some
believe schools exclude them while others felt that they do not have the information
they need to participate. Puriefoy (2000) believes that:

... the voices and the energy of those who may think have no stake in public
schools: young professionals who have not yet had children, retirees, empty
nesters, and childless adults. These people often say there’s something wrong
with schools; it’s time to transform that concern into purposeful and directed
public action. (p. 38)
Fege (2000) agrees with Puricfoy in that educational improvement needs more than a simple parental involvement. He argues that parents have become the substitute for an entire community’s voice in support of its public schools. Fege (2000) points out that educational improvement needs to “rally the community” around a common purpose:

Fege (2000) asserts that between the restructuring of the American family and the schools resistance to change, the result has been that of 21st century families trying to align with 20th century schools. These two crucial institutions are continually crashing into each other thereby leading to conflict and instability. Although parents and non-parents say they want to know more about the schools, they are not very likely to seek out the information thereby creating an uninformed general public. As a result, they really do not know about what takes place in an educational setting or why and how decisions are made (Arbor, 1993). To this end, school superintendents and school boards of education need to recognize and understand emerging trends (Arbor, 1993). They must work to be aware of issues, process them, and manage them in a strategic manner. These skills fall under the umbrella of public relations, which, according to Arbor (1993) is “an activity often misunderstood and maligned by school boards and administrators.” (p. 45)

Public relations is a dynamic field that continues to evolve as the world revolves. Moreover, definitions of public relations also evolve over time. However, the philosophy of public relations as a systematic, two-way communication function is clearly seen whether it was defined in the fifties or in the nineties.
The National School Public Relations Association (1999) defines public relations as:

a planned systematic management function, designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with the goal of stimulating better understanding of the roles, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support. (p. 7)

Grunig and Hunt (1984) believe that public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics.

Genzer (1993), in her dissertation, cites Cuitlip and Center (1971), Dubia (1973), Flatt (1982), Marston (1963), Moore and Canfield (1977), and Steinberg (1975) and summarizes a public relations definition indicating that "public relations is a management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (p. 13).

Kindred (1957), according to Genzer (1993) defined school public relations as a "process of communication between school and community for the purpose of increasing citizen understanding of educational needs and practices and encouraging intelligent citizen interest and cooperation in the work of improving the school" (p. 13).
The underlying similarity among the definitions of public relations relates to systematic, planned, management functions to inform and communicate with the public has been consistent through the decades. Therefore, as the semantics of public relations definitions minimally vary, the philosophy remains consistent in the literature.

*Purpose of Public Relations*

Hanson and Henry (1993) believe public confidence is essential if schools are to carry out their functions. It is essential for clear and convincing information to be exchanged between the community and schools.

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) believes that public schools belong to the people of the community. In order for the community to be supportive of its schools, the public must be knowledgeable about the vision of the school district. According to NSPRA (1999) standards for Educational Public Relations Programs:

Educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive, two-way communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the organization.

Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identifying and helping shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carrying on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support. (p. 259)
Albert E. Holliday, as stated in National School Public Relations (1999) contends that the school public relations program should establish a positive school climate fostering student achievement by building knowledge and understanding. Holliday believes the success of this public relations program would inevitably lead to financial support.

Martinson (1999) concurs with other researchers including Meek (1999), Kowalski (2000), and Covey (1991), that building confidence, trust, and mutual understanding allows for more effective communication. Focusing on conversations with the community about public schooling and the values public schools have for democratic mores as well as figuring out a way to involve more citizens is a form of public relations that are not practical for school leaders trying to act as change agents (Kernan-Schloss & Plattner, 1998). Kernan-Schloss & Plattner (1998) believe while these conversations take root a more practical approach to communicating with the public is essential. It may be time to view public relations in education as a requirement rather than an option. This requirement demands innovation, creativity, intuitiveness, motivation, and hard work.

Kernan-Schloss & Plattner, (1998), Richardson, (1997), and Milo (1997) are only several researchers contending that stakeholders are people inside and outside the district. They need good information provided to help them understand where a school district is heading, why it is going, what will be seen along the way, and how long it may take to get there. If these issues can be fully and accurately conveyed to the public, chances are greater that the voting booth will reward its educational leaders with
affirmative operating budgets and bond proposals thereby offering support to their institution.

When educational leaders understand how their many publics feel about schools, utilize strategic listening strategies, and utilize the information to deliver measurable results, public support is enhanced (Kernan-Schloss & Plattner, 1998). Hard work for those whose job it is to communicate in a school district is not the communicating, but rather figuring out how to most effectively communicate about student achievement. Kernan-Schloss and Plattner (1998) go on to say that student achievement must be the overriding principle. They believe the bottom line should be increased learning.

Many school boards and superintendents are aware of the need for effective public relations. Often, only the superintendent carries out this function and his/her designee as outlined in a job description of an existing administrator (Meek, 1999). National School Public Relations Association believes the public relations practitioner should be part of the administrative council. His/her role involves looking at the district from a taxpayer’s point of view and providing a measure of perspective not clearly seen by the superintendent and his/her team (1999).

In many communities, public opinions rarely remain static. More often than not, the public opinion and therefore, public support is influenced by a multitude of evolving issues, from political to economic, and social. Glass believes the “public opinion cannot be adequately assessed through casual contacts or informal polling” (Kowalski, 2000, p. 40). Glass, in Kowalski (2000), outlines four reasons to support his belief that public opinion should be formally studied:
1. Communities are divided between parent taxpayers and nonparent taxpayers. The latter constitute a majority in virtually all districts; in some districts, nonparents may constitute 80 percent of the taxpayers. Although many districts do a reasonably good job of providing information to parents, most do very little to communicate with nonparents. Nonparents are most likely to have limited accurate information and to view the schools as being nonbeneficial to them. Just asking parents about an issue may result in a very distorted picture of reality.

2. Most communication between the school and patrons is one-sided. That is, school officials disseminate selected information but make no attempt to gather or receive information. Thus, many patrons are not accustomed to communicating with school officials, and they may be more guarded and less than candid in casual conversations than in formal surveys.

3. Informal approaches tend to be sporadic; public opinion should be collected systematically at reasonable time intervals to ensure accuracy.

4. Most communities are culturally diverse. Values and opinions may differ significantly from one group to another. Informal approaches tend to ignore certain groups. (p. 40)

The National School Public Relations Association concurs with Glass. School Public Relations Association (1999) points out that "creating opportunities for conversation between and among students, staff, parents, and other community members is a key to fostering community relations" (p. 122). They continue to suggest that in order to gain positive public relationships, school administrators must begin at
the local community level and create formalized opportunities such as the utilization of surveys and focus groups, for conversations to take place.

Often, the public relations practitioner helps ensure that the superintendent builds public support for the district by researching the perceptions held in the community, planning and implementing a comprehensive program of two-way communication, and evaluating its effects (National School Public Relations Association, 1999). Ultimately, the public relations practitioners' role is to help the superintendent and the school board build public support.

According to National School Public Relations Association (1999), districts of 2500 or fewer are not very likely to sustain a full-time public relations professional attributable to the lack of financial support. Districts carrying an enrollment of 2500 or greater should have one, if not a team of public relations professionals in place. Some school districts do not feel that this expenditure is justifiable. As school leaders struggle with fiscal responsibilities, the temptation to cut the budget for public relations is phenomenal (Meek, 1999). “Opposition to school public relations frequently is associated with a lack of understanding or misconceptions” (Kowalski, 2000, p. 14). Often, publics resisting the roles and responsibilities that public relations fulfill, see it as propaganda. Frequently, one or two complaints about the cost of mailing or printing coupled with a self-serving accusation of utilizing tax dollars to influence public opinion may cause school leaders to drastically cut the public relations budget, or forego it altogether (Kowalski, 2000; Meek, 1999). However, in today's environment the public information officer or public relations practitioner is one of the most important people hired in any school district (Hughes & Hooper, 2000).
Genzer (1993) cites a 1971 study conducted cooperatively by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Education Association (NEA), which presented a list of responsibilities carried out by the public relations professional. Included in the list are:

- writing press releases; press, radio, and TV contacts, community newsletter or publications; staff newsletter or publications, superintendents annual report;
- preparing summary of board minutes for publication; speakers’ bureau;
- photographic services; . . . assessment of public attitudes and opinions;
- development of teacher recruitment materials; . . . writing speeches, reports, or papers for central office staff; . . . handling of citizen inquiries and complaints . . . (p. 22)

Wilcox, Ault, Agee, & Cameron (2001) provide a list of five basic personal attributes and four essential abilities that are evident for all public relations professionals:

1. Ability with words, written or spoken
2. Analytical skill, to identify and define problems
3. Creative ability to develop fresh, effective solutions to problems
4. An instinct for persuasion
5. Ability to make compelling and polished presentations. (p.73)

1. Writing skill
2. Research ability
3. Planning expertise

4. Problem-solving ability. (p. 74-75)

National School Public Relations (1999) points out seven skills and attitudes that it believes are essential to becoming an effective school public relations practitioner. They include:

1. honesty and openness in behavior
2. interest in people and their welfare
3. good communication skills
4. ability to think strategically and in non-traditional ways
5. ability to do research, and based on the findings, solve problems
6. interest in seeing others succeed
7. creativity. (p.13)

Brown and Murray in Kowalski (2000) say that public relations practitioners “should possess excellent writing and speaking skills” (p. 219). “Other desirable competencies include some competence in photography, a working knowledge of how the various media operate, leadership skills, and the ability to work well with others” (p. 219).

As we move through the technological era, White (1990) points out the base of knowledge a public relations practitioner will require includes an expertise in technology and electronic media.

In addition to the myriad of essential attributes and abilities, the public relations practitioner fulfills many roles within the organization. Simply stated, public relations
practitioners deal with the media and reach out to the varying publics to form relationships. Hughes and Hooper (2000) recognize four objectives that apply to the duties of the public relations practitioner:

1. to develop a communications network that encourages a two-way information exchange between all community members and the school
2. to implement procedures for the involvement and participation of community members in school program development
3. to have in place, devices whereby the publics’ attitudes about schooling issues may be monitored on a continuous basis
4. to facilitate face-to-face interaction between community members and school representatives. (p. 36)

The National School Public Relations Association (1999) identifies two primary functions of the Public Relations practitioner:

1. to counsel members on the public relations implications of their policy discussions
2. to help team members plan the implementation of policies and achievement of the districts mission and goals. (p. 11)

Other responsibilities that may be performed by the public relations practitioner include fulfilling the planning and counseling roles, handle news media relations, community relations, and newsletters as well as other district-wide and community wide publications. The public relations practitioner may also offer in-service workshops to audiences including, but not limited to administrators on preparation of
news releases, faculty setting up web pages, and individuals throughout the
organization in the management of handling crisis situations.

The list of responsibilities and skills, like the definition of public relations, has
evolved over time, yet seems to remain constant. Responsibilities that were important
decades ago remain just as important today.

Meek (1999) summarizes the importance of the public relations practitioner in
promoting long-term support for education when she states:

The hope for lasting support for education depends on the ongoing, cumulative
effects of maintaining open and welcoming environments in the school,
continuing to provide responsive and competent professional services to the
community, and always valuing and strengthening relationships with
employees, citizens, parents, and the students themselves. (p. 5)

Abraham Lincoln was truly visionary when he stated, “Public
sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can
succeed”. 
CHAPTER III

Procedures and Methodology

Methodology

The general purpose of this study is to investigate how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools, the specific roles and responsibilities that a public superintendent of schools expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as essential attributes and skills necessary for success. Chapter I established the need and rationale for a more extensive exploration of the roles and responsibilities of public school public relations practitioners. Chapter II explored the history of public schooling, the importance of the link between public education and the community, and communication in schools as organizations. Skills, attitudes, and abilities that public relations practitioners practicing in public education should possess were also discussed.

This chapter presents the summary for constructing the survey instrument, determining sampling, and collecting and analyzing data. The instrument was constructed by the researcher through an exhaustive review of literature and was utilized to identify specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as the essential attributes and skills necessary for success. The instrument was mailed to 213 New Jersey public school superintendents. A second mailing was conducted approximately two weeks after the
initial mailing. Ninety-three surveys were returned after the first mailing. The second mailing produced an additional fifty-six responses resulting in a total sample of 149 responses, or a 70 percent rate of return. Upon return, the surveys were reviewed and recorded. The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) (Darren & Mallery, 1998) was utilized to aggregate the recorded data.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Grade Configuration</th>
<th>Student Enrollment Range</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Surveys Returned</th>
<th>Percent Returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Less than 1800</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>1800-3500</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Over 3500</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population/Sample Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was designed to provide information regarding the roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner. The research questions pertaining to the status of the school public relations practitioner as viewed by the superintendent of schools include:

1. Who typically performs public relations duties in the public school setting?
2. Is there a relationship between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations?
3. How frequently is public relations used to address educational issues with key stakeholders?
4. What are the most important roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the school public relations practitioner?

5. What are essential attributes and skills that the superintendent believes a school public relations practitioner should possess?

This chapter begins with a description of the population being studied and the selection of the sample. A description of the survey instrument and the methods of gathering data are presented. This chapter concludes with an explanation of data analysis as used in this study.

Instrument

For this study, information was collected from superintendents concerning their views related to school public relations practitioners in K-12 New Jersey public school districts. The researcher developed the survey instrument with careful attention to the development of each item pursuant to research questions. Specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as the essential attributes and skills necessary for success were studied.

The instrument used a combination of multiple choice and Likert-scale options. The survey contained a total of thirty-five indicators. Twenty-nine of the thirty-five items were Likert-scale items. The remaining six items addressed information about district enrollment, years of experience as a superintendent, and designation of public relations responsibilities. The subjects were asked to indicate answers to each question by placing an “X” where appropriate or by writing an answer when indicated.

The alpha reliability coefficient is a measure of internal consistency reliability. Internal consistency "refers to the consistency with which all the items are measuring the
same thing” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 436). Respondents should be expected to respond the same way to similar items. Krathwohl (1998) explains alpha formulas “estimate how well the measure represents the domain of which they are a sample” (p.437).

A reliability analysis was completed on Parts II and III of the survey. Part II of the survey explored the level of importance of the roles and responsibilities superintendents believe a school public relations practitioner should carry out. A reliability coefficient with an alpha equaling .8371 was calculated.

Part III of the survey explored the level of agreement among superintendents pertaining to specific attributes and skills necessary for the school public relations practitioners to possess. A reliability coefficient with an alpha equaling .7572 was calculated.

These calculations indicate that the subscale with the highest alpha, in this case, part II of the survey with an alpha of .8371, has a higher consistency for the sample studied. Therefore, respondents, as expected, responded in very much the same way to similar items. Although the alpha for part III of the survey was also acceptable, .7572, the part of the survey pertaining to the roles and responsibilities that should be carried out by the school public relations practitioner was minimally higher indicating an increased level of consistency.

Sampling

Identification of the selected population was extracted from the March 2001 New Jersey Department of Education Comparative Spending Guide and the 2001-2002 School Directory. The population was stratified into three categories according to the Comparative Spending Guide; New Jersey public school superintendents in K-12 districts
serving a student enrollment of less than 1,800, 1,800 to 3,500, and over 3,500 students. Only those people having the title of superintendent were contacted. A total of 213 superintendents were identified.

The sample included 149 public school superintendents practicing in New Jersey. This sample was determined on the number of surveys returned to the researcher. The study focused on information relevant to superintendents' views regarding the roles and responsibilities as well as the attributes and skills necessary for school public relations practitioners. The data was limited to views of superintendents in the time frame of the study.

Procedures

The questionnaire was the primary method of data collection. Survey information was mailed to each superintendent of the two hundred thirteen school districts identified. The survey packet included a letter of solicitation/consent, the survey, and a stamped pre-addressed return envelope. The letter of solicitation/consent explained the purpose of the study indicating adherence to the doctoral requirements and Institutional Review Board of Seton Hall University. If the superintendent was interested in participating in the study, the survey was returned to the researcher. In the event that a perspective participant may have overlooked the survey, each pre-stamped return envelope was randomly coded solely for the purpose of identification of non-respondents so a second letter of solicitation/consent and survey could be mailed as a reminder approximately two weeks following initial contact. The second mailing was done to increase the response rate of the sample. As surveys were returned to the researcher, the data was sorted and stored on a personal computer in a file accessible
only to the researcher. Anonymity was ensured because the data was reported and analyzed collectively. Upon completion of this research, data will be stored in a locked cabinet and secured for a minimum of three years.

Data Analysis

The data for the study were obtained from the completed questionnaires. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 9.0 (SPSS) was utilized to aggregate the data. Upon completion and return of the surveys, the thirty-five item responses from each participant were entered into the software.

This study examined the roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner as viewed by New Jersey public school superintendents. Analyses were conducted in relation to the survey variables addressing the research questions. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Krathwohl (1998) explains that descriptive statistics enables researchers to summarize single attributes of a set of numbers to help readers gain an understanding. The data analyses are reported in Chapter IV.
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Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools, the specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations assignee, as well as the essential attributes and skills necessary for success. The data and analysis are reported in this chapter.

To facilitate this purpose of study, a thirty-five-item survey was utilized employing both multiple response and Likert-type items. The survey was distributed to all two hundred thirteen public school superintendents serving in K-12 school districts throughout the twenty-one counties in New Jersey. The New Jersey Department of Education Comparative Spending Guide, March 2001, provided the K-12 operating types yielding sampling strata by district grade configuration and student enrollment. A total of one-hundred-forty-seven surveys were returned, representing sixty-nine percent of the population.

The data included responses to survey questions relating to designation of the person handling public relations responsibilities, if an organizational unit exists within the district, present student enrollment, the belief that public relations efforts have been effective and the total years of experience as a superintendent.
The results related to research questions included Likert-type responses and one open-ended response item. Ratings and analysis associated with appropriate tables were incorporated throughout the text. Repetitive text and semantics were used to maintain uniformity of the data analyzed.

**Research Question One**

Who typically performs public relations duties in the public school setting?

Part one of survey question number two asked the respondent to indicate the title of the person who typically performs public relations duties. There were twelve possible responses to this open-ended question as defined by the researcher. The possible categories included superintendent, assistant superintendent, public relations professional, directors, director of communications, communications coordinator, school information coordinator, principal, supervisor, teacher, special projects coordinator, and secretary.

The title “public relations professional” was applied to those respondents who indicated the titles of public relations coordinator or public relations director on their survey. Table 2 was rank ordered to display the frequencies and valid percentages of the title of those people who typically perform public relations duties.
Table 2

*Response to Who Typically Performs Public Relations Duties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations Professional</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Information Coordinator</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost forty percent, 39.6% of superintendents who responded to the survey indicated that the superintendent performs public relations duties in the public school setting. Of the responding superintendents, 18.2% assigned public relations duties to the public relations practitioner, and 12.6% responded that the principal performed these duties. Therefore, 70.4% of responding superintendents indicated that the superintendent, public relations practitioner, and/or principals typically performed public relations duties in the district. The remaining 29.6% of respondents indicated a variety of people who may perform public relations duties within the school district. Thirteen respondents, or 8.2% indicated that the assistant superintendent performed these duties, while 6.3% indicated that the school information coordinator performed public relations duties. Eight respondents, or 5.0% indicated that a teacher performed these duties within the district while another 5.0% had a district director handle these responsibilities. A supervisor typically handled public relations duties in 2.5% of districts that responded, and the
remaining 2.4% of respondents indicated that a director of communications, a communications coordinator, a special projects coordinator, and even a secretary might typically perform public relations duties in the district.

As indicated in Table 3, a significant chi-square calculation of .001 was completed incorporating student enrollment. However, it must be noted that the cell count of 27 exceeded the minimum expected count of .23. This was due to the range of titles respondents filled in for this open-ended question. There were several titles in which a very low percentage of respondents indicated the same answer. However, a significant standardized residual calculation of 2.5 was seen in districts enrolling over 3500 students where 13.8% of the respondents indicated that the school information coordinator was primarily responsible for carrying out public relations duties.

Table 3

*Chi-Square Test One*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>48.405α</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>57.801</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. α. 27 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum count is .23.

As seen in Table 4, a cross tabulation of data were also completed incorporating student enrollment. Of those superintendents responding from districts with a student enrollment less than 1800, 50.0% indicated that public relations duties are not delegated, but performed by themselves within their role as superintendent. This cross tabulation also indicated that 20.6% of responding superintendents indicated that the principal
performs these duties. The public relations professional performed these duties for only
5.9% of responding superintendents in this enrollment stratum.

Table 4

*Crosstabulation: Student Enrollment with Who Typically Performs Public Relations
Duties Districtwide*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Present Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,800 to 3,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 3,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Information Coordinator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the performance of public relations duties in districts where student enrollment is between 1800 and 3500, a larger percentage, 57.4% of responding superintendents indicated that public relations duties are not delegated, but performed by themselves within their role as superintendent. However, in these districts, the public relations professional is used more than the principals to handle public relations duties. Almost 15% (14.9%) of responding superintendents in this enrollment category indicated that the public relations professional was used to handle these duties rather than the principal.

In districts with a student enrollment exceeding 3500 students, 27.7% of responding superintendents indicated that superintendents themselves perform public relations duties, 21.5% indicated that the public relations professional performs these duties, and 13.8% indicated that the assistant superintendent and the school information coordinator each perform these duties.

In enrollment strata less than 1800 and between 1800-3500, half or more than half of responding superintendents indicated that the superintendent him/herself seemed to carry the responsibility of performing public relations duties for the district. That is, 57.4% of superintendents responding from districts with a student enrollment between 1800–3500. However, a clear difference is seen between the larger school districts with student enrollments over 3500 and the other categories of student enrollment strata. Responding superintendents indicated that they do not rely on themselves to perform public relations duties as much in larger school districts as compared to districts with student enrollment less than 1800.
Therefore, based upon superintendents' responses, it may be said that in districts with a student enrollment over 3500, it is clear that although they do perform these duties, superintendents are less likely to perform the public relations duties for the district him/herself than in districts with a lesser student enrollment. As student enrollment increases, the likelihood that the public relations professional will handle public relations duties in the district also increases.

It may also be assumed based upon the titles of the employees, that internal members of the administrative team (superintendents, assistant superintendents principals) are more likely to handle public relations duties than external members of the staff (teachers, secretaries).

Research Question Two

Is there a relationship between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations?

Data included responses to survey question one which asked the respondent to indicate whether the district designates a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities. A significant chi-square of .013 as outlined in Table 5, was noted in this cross-tabulation. This indicates an expectation that as district size increases; the percentage of districts designating a person or persons to handle public relations also increases. Table 6 revealed that overall, 63.9% of responding superintendents indicated that they designate a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities as compared to 36.1% of responding superintendents who indicated that they do not designate a person or persons specifically to handle public relations responsibilities.
As the data is cross-tabbed and aggregated by strata, it was revealed that in districts with a student enrollment of less than 1800, 51.4% of respondents designated a person or persons to handle public relations. Of the superintendents employed in districts with a student enrollment between 1800 and 3500, 55.3% of those that responded designated a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities. Finally, 76.9% of responding superintendents employed in districts with student enrollment exceeding 3500 reported that they designate a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities. Districts with greater student enrollments are more likely to have a person designated to handle public relations responsibilities.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.644α</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.856</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>7.538</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. α. 0 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum count is 12.62.
Table 6

*Crosstabulation: Student Enrollment with Whether a Person is Designated to Handle Public Relations Responsibilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Student Enrollment Where</th>
<th>In the District</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,800 to 3,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 3,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your district designate a person or persons (in or out of district) to handle public relations responsibilities?</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                                                                                                   | 35    | 100%    |
|                                                                                                                          | 47    | 100%    |
|                                                                                                                          | 65    | 100%    |
|                                                                                                                          | 147   | 100%    |

A Spearman rho correlation was also calculated to determine whether a relationship existed between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations. The calculation revealed a low positive correlation of .370, which was statistically significant at the .01 level. Therefore, it may be concluded that as district size increases, the number of personnel assigned to handle public relations also increases. Respondents were asked to indicate how long they have been employed as a superintendent. Although the chi-square calculation reported in Table 8 is insignificant, Table 7 shows the data cross-tabbed and aggregated by strata. This cross tabulation revealed that in districts where respondents have been a superintendent from one to five years, 56.5% designated a person to handle public relations responsibilities. In districts
where respondents have been a superintendent from six to ten years, 72.2% indicated that they designate a specific person to handle public relations responsibilities. Finally, 70.2% of responding superintendents employed for more than ten years designated a person to handle the responsibilities of the public relations professional. The percentage of designation increases as the number of years as a superintendent’s experience increases. Therefore, it may be observed based upon superintendents’ responses that a greater percentage of superintendents with more than five years experience designate a person to handle public relations responsibilities. This may indicate that the less experienced superintendent does not realize that impact public relations has for a district and the importance to designate a specialist to handle those responsibilities.

Table 7

_Crosstabulation: Years as Superintendent with Whether a Person is Designated to Handle Public Relations Responsibilities_

| Does your district designate a person or persons (in or out of district) to handle public relations responsibilities? | Years As Superintendent | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1-5 years | 6-10 years | More than 10 years |
| Yes | Count | 35 | 26 | 33 | 94 |
| | Percent | 56.5% | 72.2% | 70.2% | 64.8% |
| | Std. Residual | -.8 | .6 | .5 |
| No | Count | 27 | 10 | 14 | 51 |
| | Percent | 43.5% | 27.8% | 29.8% | 35.2% |
| | Std. Residual | 1.1 | -.7 | -.6 |
| Total | Count | 62 | 36 | 47 | 145 |
| | Percent | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
Table 8

*Chi-Square Test Three*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>3.369a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>3.361</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>2.418</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. α. 0 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum count is 12.66.

*Research Question Three*

How frequently is public relations used to address educational issues with key stakeholders?

Table 9 represents the valid percentages for the educational issues of budget, teacher quality, public information, test scores, referendum passage, technology infusion, bussing, and food services as they fall with the key stakeholders of parents, non-parents, faculty/staff, and politicians. The percentages were rank ordered by the category of very often for each issue addressed.

Cumulative frequency levels of very often and often revealed that 95.9% of superintendents responding use public relations to address public information to parents. Table 9 clarifies that issues with budget and test scores follow, with 84.9% of respondents indicating that they use public relations for budget issues and 83.5% indicating the use of public relations for test scores.
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>1405</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Quality</td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Scores</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum Passage</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Infusion</td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bussing</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost 81%, 80.6% of responding superintendents utilize public relations to address non-parents for the issues of budget and referendum passage respectively.

Moreover, 91.7% of superintendents responding utilize public relations most often for
public information dissemination to faculty and staff, followed by 81.2% of respondents who utilize public relations for budget and 79.2% for test scores. Finally, 59.8% of superintendents used public relations for politicians less frequently for dissemination of public information; followed by 63.4% of respondents utilizing public relations to address politicians for referendum passage, and 58.8% of responding superintendents used public relations to address politicians regarding the issue of budget. The utilization of public relations for issues related to food services and bussing consistently fell last or nearly last among all stakeholder categories.

Public relations were most often utilized to address parents and faculty/staff for all of the educational issues surveyed according to responding superintendents. In several cases, such as referendum passage and bussing, parents and non-parents were addressed more frequently when compared to the frequency levels of the other issues. This may be due to the nature of the issue being addressed. The community has a greater interest in voting for the passage of a referendum because this issue directly affects their willingness to expend personal resources in the form of additional taxation in support of the schools. School budgets, whereby the community-at-large or non-parents, has a voice in its passage, does not fall within one of the top two stakeholders.

Politicians consistently fell last among all stakeholder categories for all issues addressed. Politicians often have a reserved interest in education. If a large educational issue is at stake, such as the passage of a referendum, local politicians may take a wait and see attitude; see how the community responds and then take a stand. Thirty-three percent (33.3%) of responding superintendents indicated that they utilize public relations
for politicians regarding the issue of referendum passage than any other educational issue studied in this survey.

Although the belief that public relations efforts have been effective in influencing the target audience at all levels of student enrollment, based upon the minimal differences in affirmative answers, the Chi-square calculation indicated a value of .365 as seen in Table 11. While not significant, this calculation may indicate that as student enrollment increases, superintendents are somewhat less likely to believe public relations efforts to be effective.

According to Table 10, overall, 91.0% of responding superintendents believed public relations efforts were effective in influencing his/her target audience. A small percentage, 9.0% did not believe that their public relations efforts were an effective influence over their target audience. A cross tabulation revealed that in districts with smaller student enrollments, a larger affirmative answer is indicated regarding whether public relations efforts were effective in influencing the target audience. That is, 97.1% of superintendents in districts with less than 1800 students indicated that they believe public relations efforts have been effective as compared with 89.4% of superintendents employed in districts enrolling 1800-3500 students. In districts with a student enrollment over 3500, 88.9% of respondents believed that public relations efforts have been effective in influencing the target audience.
Table 10

_Crosstabulation: Student Enrollment with the Belief that Public Relations Efforts have Been Effective with target Audiences_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Present Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1,800</td>
<td>1,800 to 3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does you believe that public relations efforts have been effective in influencing your target audience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

_Ch i-Square Test Four_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2-sided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.015α</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>2.485</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>1.517</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. α. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum count is 3.07.

_Research Question Four_

What are the most important roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the school public relations practitioner?
Survey questions eight through twenty-five were categorized to consider the level of importance the superintendent believes each of the items are for school public relations practitioners to carry out. Table 12 reports the valid percentages in alignment with Likert-type scale responses of very important, important, uncertain, unimportant, and very unimportant. The roles and responsibilities have been rank ordered by the percentages in the “very important” category.

Table 12

*Distribution of Superintendent’s Responses to the Importance of Specific Roles and Responsibilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write newsletters</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the district image</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare press releases</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create informational brochures</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize press/media coverage</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop community networks</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write policies</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take pictures</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend board meetings</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as district spokesperson</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend administrative meetings</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop handbooks</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop district in-services</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct surveys in community</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design presentations</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write speeches</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct surveys in county</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 97.7% of superintendents believed that writing newsletters is the most important responsibility for the public relations professional to carry out, followed by 97.0% who believed building the district image is either very important or important.
Preparing press releases (95.5%), creating informational brochures (91.7%), and organizing press/media coverage (88.8%) round out the five primary responsibilities superintendents believed to be either very important or important. These five primary responsibilities represent a specific form of public relations that must not be overlooked.

Superintendents responded least favorably to the responsibility of conducting surveys in the county. Only 34.6% of respondents believed this to be an important job responsibility. In fact, 43.6% of respondents believed this responsibility to be either unimportant or very unimportant.

The roles and responsibilities most associated with external audiences (parents, community members, media) were considered more important than those responsibilities aligned with internal audiences (faculty, staff, administration). This may occur because community perception does not always coincide with positive results occurring in schools. Therefore, expending public relations resources to external audiences may help the community realign their perceptions and acknowledge the positive experiences taking place in public schools.

Table 13 provides a comparison of the means for each of the questions eight through twenty-five. It became apparent that between enrollment strata, there was little difference between means. This implies that the size of a school district has little or no impact on what superintendents believe are the most important responsibilities for school public relations professionals to carry out.
In districts with student enrollments less than 1800, the difference in the means between the responsibility that received the highest mean (build the district image, 5.5) and that responsibility which received the lowest mean (conduct surveys in the county, 2.63) is 2.87. In districts with student enrollments between 1800-3500, the difference in the means between the responsibility that received the highest mean (write newsletters, 4.69) and that responsibility which received the lowest mean (conduct surveys in the county and write speeches, 3.07) is 1.62. Finally, in districts with student enrollments...
over 3500, the difference in the means between the responsibility that received the highest mean (write newsletters, 4.64) and that responsibility which received the lowest mean (conduct surveys in the county, 2.74) is 1.9. The mean difference in districts with student enrollments over 1800 was lower than the mean differences in districts with student enrollments less than 1800. It was revealed that there is a greater difference in the discrepancy between the means for the importance of specific roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner as viewed by superintendents.

*Research Question Five*

What are the essential attributes and skills that the superintendent believes a school public relations practitioner should possess?

Survey questions twenty-six through thirty-five were categorized to consider the cumulative level of agreement regarding how strongly superintendents believe specific attributes and skills are necessary for school public relations practitioners to possess. Table 14 represents valid percentages in alignment with the Likert-type scale response of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. The essential attributes and skills have been rank ordered by percentages in the category of “strongly agree.”
Table 14

*Distribution of Superintendents' Responses to Essential Attributes and Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes and Skills</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent writing skills</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work well with others</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent speaking skills</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make polished presentations</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological expertise</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong leadership skills</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous educational experience</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possess traditional values</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results indicated that excellent writing skills were the most important attribute for the school public relations practitioner to possess with respondents' cumulative agreement at 99.3%. The second most important attribute or skill as indicated by 98.5% of respondents was honesty. The ability to work well with others (97.8%), creativity (96.3%), and technological expertise (92.6%) along with excellent speaking skills (92.6%) round out the five primary skills/attributes superintendents believed a school public relations practitioner should possess. The least important attributes cumulatively agreed upon by 74.2% of responding superintendents believed the school public relations practitioner should possess included strong leadership skills; followed by 68.4% and 60.3% of superintendents who believed that previous educational experience and possession of traditional values respectively. The least important attribute was the possession of traditional values where 28.7% of superintendents indicated uncertainty.
A Spearman rho correlation was also calculated to determine whether relationships exist between superintendents' responses regarding the skills and attributes school public relations practitioners should possess for success in the field. Table 14 provides a summary of these calculations that produced a multitude of significant correlations, most at the .01 level of significance.

There is a positive correlation between technological expertise and creativity of .362, the ability to make polished presentations of .330, excellent writing skills of .311, and honesty of .244. The higher the technological expertise of the public relations practitioner, the higher the creativity, the ability to make polished presentations, the level of writing skills, and the level of honesty. These relationships are all significant at the .01 level. Further, technological expertise revealed a positive correlation of .189 with traditional values and a positive correlation of .174 with the ability to work well with others. These correlations are significant at the .05 level.

A positive correlation exists between excellent writing skills and technological expertise (.311), excellent speaking skills (.296), ability to make a polished presentation (.243), creativity (.243) all at the .01 level of significance. This indicates that the higher the level of writing skills one possess, the higher the technological expertise, level of speaking skills, the ability to make polished presentations and creativity one may also possess. The correlations significant at the .05 level with excellent writing skills include strong leadership skills (.194), ability to work well with others (.203), and honesty (.187). There is no significant correlation between excellent writing skills and previous educational experience or traditional values. This indicates that excellent writing skills are not dependent upon educational experience or possession of traditional values.
A positive correlation exists between excellent speaking skills and strong leadership skills (.498), ability to make polished presentations (.419), previous educational experience (.306), excellent writing skills (.296), creativity (.263), and the ability to work well with others (.247). These results indicate that a practitioner possessing excellent speaking skills, may also have strong leadership skills, be able to make polished presentations, have previous educational experience, possess excellent writing skills, is creative, and has the ability to work well with others. These correlations are significant at the .01 level. Excellent speaking skills also possess a positive correlation with traditional values (.169) yet the significance is at the .05 level. Therefore, these results imply that a practitioner acquiring a skill in speaking may also have other skills necessary for success.

Previous educational experience has a positive correlation at the .01 level with strong leadership skills (.406), excellent speaking skills (.306), ability to make polished presentations (.262), and traditional values (.255). These correlations indicate that one with previous educational experience also possess strong leadership skills, excellent speaking skills, the ability to make polished presentations, and traditional values. There also exists a positive correlation of .205 with creativity and .174 with honesty. These are significant at the .05 level. No significant correlation exists between previous educational experience and technological expertise, excellent writing skills, and the ability to work well with others.

Strong leadership skills have a positive correlation significant at the .01 level with excellent speaking skills (.498), the ability to make polished presentations (.423), traditional values (.408), previous educational experience (.406), the ability to work well
with others (.358), creativity (.329), and honesty (.236). This indicates that the stronger ones’ leadership skills are, the better one’s speaking skills, ability to make polished presentations, the possession of traditional values, and the possession of previous educational experience. The ability to work well with others, creativity, and honesty also increase as strong leadership skills increase. There is also a positive correlation of .194 at the .05 level of significance between strong leadership skills and excellent speaking skills. No significant correlation exists between strong leadership skills and technological expertise.

A positive correlation significant at the .01 level exists between the ability to work well with others and the ability to make polished presentations (.375), strong leadership skills (.358), creativity (.350), traditional values (.248), excellent speaking skills (.247), and honesty (.242). A positive correlation significant at the .05 level exists between the ability to work well with others and technological expertise. There is no significant correlation with previous educational experience.

The ability to make polished presentations correlate at the .01 level of significance with strong leadership skills (.423), excellent speaking skills (.419), creativity (.394), the ability to work well with others (.375), technological expertise (.330), traditional values (.280), previous educational experience (.262), excellent writing skills (.243), and honesty (.243). Of these variables, the ability to make polished presentations has the strongest association with strong leadership skills and excellent speaking skills. Although the ability to work well with others, technological expertise, traditional values, previous educational experience, excellent writing skills, and honesty
also correlate positively with the ability to make polished presentations, the correlations for these variables is lower.

A positive correlation exists between creativity and all other variables at the .01 level of significance with the exception of previous educational experience, which is significant at the .05 level with a positive correlation of .205. The correlation for creativity and technological expertise (.362), excellent writing skills (.243), excellent speaking skills (.263), strong leadership skills (.329), ability to work well with others (.350), ability to make polished presentations (.394), traditional values (.280), and honesty (.355) implies that creativity has a positive relationship with the aforementioned variables.

Traditional values hold a positive correlation significant at the .01 level with strong leadership skills (.408), the ability to work well with others (.284), ability to make polished presentations (.280), creativity (.280), honesty (.221), and previous educational experience (.255). Technological expertise and excellent speaking skills, though significant, are only so at the .05 level with correlations of .189 and .169 respectively. There is no significant correlation with traditional values and excellent writing skills.

Finally, a positive correlation exists between honesty and creativity (.355), technological expertise (.244), the ability to make polished presentations (.243), the ability to work well with others (.242), strong leadership skills (.236), and traditional values (.221). These correlations imply that if one possesses honesty, there is a greater likelihood that the person will be creative, possess technological expertise, be able to make polished presentations and work well with others, as well as possess strong leadership skills and traditional values. These are all significant at the .01 level. A
positive correlation significant at the .05 level is seen between honesty and excellent writing skills (.187) and previous educational experience (.174). No significant correlation exists between honesty and excellent speaking skills.

The Spearman rho correlation calculated to determine whether relationships exist between superintendents’ responses regarding the skills and attributes school public relations practitioners should possess for success in the field produced a multitude of significant correlations, most at the .01 level of significance. The levels of significance noted may be an indication about the level of consistency and agreement in superintendents’ responses to essential attributes and skills possessed by public school public relations practitioners (see Table 15).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Technical Expertise</th>
<th>Excellent Writing Skills</th>
<th>Excellent Speaking Skills</th>
<th>Previous Ed. Experience</th>
<th>Strong Leadership Skills</th>
<th>Ability to Work Well With Others</th>
<th>Ability to Make Polished Presentations</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Trad. Values</th>
<th>Honesty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technological Expertise</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.311**</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.174*</td>
<td>.330**</td>
<td>.362**</td>
<td>.189*</td>
<td>.244**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Writing Skills</td>
<td>.311**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.194*</td>
<td>.203*</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.187*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Speaking Skills</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.306**</td>
<td>.498**</td>
<td>.247**</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td>.263**</td>
<td>.169*</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Ed. Experience</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.306**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.262**</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.255**</td>
<td>.174*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Leadership Skills</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.194*</td>
<td>.498**</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.358**</td>
<td>.423**</td>
<td>.329**</td>
<td>.408**</td>
<td>.236**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Work Well With Others</td>
<td>.174*</td>
<td>.203*</td>
<td>.247**</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.358**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.375**</td>
<td>.350**</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>.242**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Make Polished Presentations</td>
<td>.330**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td>.262**</td>
<td>.423**</td>
<td>.375**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.394**</td>
<td>.280**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>.362**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.263**</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.329**</td>
<td>.350**</td>
<td>.394**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.280**</td>
<td>.355**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trad. Values</td>
<td>.189*</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.169*</td>
<td>.255**</td>
<td>.408**</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>.280**</td>
<td>.280**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.221**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>.187*</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.174*</td>
<td>.236**</td>
<td>.242**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.355**</td>
<td>.221**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents a review of the purpose of this study, the research questions, and a summary of the research findings based upon an analysis of the data assembled from 149 New Jersey public superintendents of schools regarding their beliefs related to the roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner. A summary of the research findings based on an analysis of these superintendents’ beliefs is also presented. Conclusions and subsequent recommendations for future research are further presented in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how public relations responsibilities are carried out on New Jersey public schools, the specific roles and responsibilities a superintendent expects of the district public relations practitioner, as well as the essential attributes and skills necessary for success. Descriptive statistics and Spearman rho correlations are used to analyze data derived from the survey. The research questions pertaining to the status of the school public relations practitioner as viewed by the superintendent of schools include:

1. Who typically performs public relations duties in the public school setting?
2. Is there a relationship between district size and the number of personnel dealing with public relations?

3. How frequently is public relations used to address educational issues with key stakeholders?

4. What are the most important roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the school public relations practitioner?

5. What are essential attributes and skills that the superintendent believes a school public relations practitioner should possess?

Chapter I established the need and rationale for a more extensive exploration of the roles and responsibilities of public school public relations practitioners. Chapter II explored the history of public schooling as well as the link between public education and the community. Skills, attitudes, and abilities that public relations practitioners practicing in public education should possess were also discussed. Chapter III provided an explanation of the research design used for this study. A description of the population being studied and the selection of the sample, as well as a description of the survey instrument, data collection, data analysis, and statistical procedures utilized were also included in Chapter III. Chapter IV contained analysis of data. Superintendent's expectations of the district public relations practitioner were investigated via superintendents' responses.

The instrument that served as the primary data-gathering device was developed by the researcher after an extensive and thorough review of literature encompassing the history and politics of schooling, schools as organizations, communications within schools as organizations, and the purpose of public relations.
The instrument utilized to obtain answers to the research questions used a combination of multiple choice and Likert-scale options. The survey contained a total of thirty-five indicators. Twenty-nine of the thirty-five items were Likert-scale items. The remaining six items addressed additional information including size of district enrollment, years of experience as a superintendent, and designation of public relations duties. The subjects were asked to answer each question by placing an "X" where appropriate or by writing an answer when indicated.

The sample consisted of 149 public school superintendents practicing in New Jersey. The return rate for the study was 70%. The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 9.0 (Darren & Mallery, 1998) was utilized to aggregate the data.

*Findings and Conclusions Related to Research Questions*

This section restates the research questions and establishes conclusions based on the findings. It should be reiterated that this study is primarily exploratory and descriptive in nature. The role of the superintendent as a public relations ambassador or the roles and responsibilities that s/he believe to be most important for the public school public relations practitioner is an under-researched area in educational administration and supervision. Therefore, this precluded formulating any hypothesis or propositions. This study may serve to be the impetus for other studies.

*Research Question One.*

Who typically performs public relations duties in the public school setting?

New Jersey school districts often conduct public relations efforts within the district. With regard to assuming responsibility for public relations duties, the superintendent was identified by 39.6% of respondents as the most frequent person in the
district who typically performed public relations duties. The public relations practitioner ranked as the second most frequent assignee for public relations duties in 18.2% of respondents. In 12.6% of respondents, it was the principal who performed the district public relations duties. Therefore, in 70.4% of responding superintendents, either the superintendent, public relations practitioner, or principal performed public relations duties in the district. The remaining percentage of respondents indicated a variety of people who may perform public relations duties within the district including the assistant superintendent, school information coordinator, teacher, and a secretary. However, overall, the superintendent carried the larger percentage of the responsibility for public relations in the district regardless of district enrollment.

The general review of literature regarding performance of public relations duties indicates that superintendents typically perform public relations duties. The National School Public Relations Association (1999) believes districts with student enrollments fewer than 2500 are not likely to sustain a full-time public relations professional. Based upon this present research, and the breakdown of district size, districts with an enrollment between 1800 and 3500 are indeed not likely to sustain a full time public relations practitioner. In fact, there are very few, if any districts who employ even one full-time public relations practitioner. Although many school boards and superintendents are aware of the need for public relations, it is often the superintendent or his/her designee who carries out this function. These results imply that public relations responsibilities may be embedded in several job descriptions throughout an organization, however most frequently these efforts become an administrator’s responsibility. This confirms the research of Meck (1999) who believes these responsibilities are included in the job
As the data is cross-tabbed and aggregated by strata, it was revealed that in districts with reported student enrollment less than 1800, 51.4% of respondents designate a person or persons to handle public relations. Those districts with student enrollment between 1800-3500, reported that 55.3% of respondents designate a person or persons to handle public relations. Of those responding superintendents employed in districts with student enrollments over 3500, 76.9% designate a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities.

The Spearman-rho correlation calculation revealed a low positive correlation of .370, which is statistically significant at the .01 level. Therefore, as district size increases, the number of personnel assigned to handle public relations also increases.

A discrepancy between the review of literature and this study seems to exist regarding the relationship between district size and number of personnel dealing with public relations. The National School Public Relations Association (1999) asserts that districts with an enrollment less than 2500 are not very likely to sustain a full-time public relations professional, however districts with student enrollment figures over 2500 should have at least one full-time public relations employee in place. Although superintendents may designate a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities, it is often embedded in an administrative job description. In fact, in districts with student enrollments less than 1800, there were no respondents indicating an organized unit or department whose primary function is public relations.

In districts with student enrollment between 1800-3500, 12.8% of respondents indicated having a department whose primary function is public relations, and in districts
with student enrollments over 3500, 33.8% of respondents indicate having a department whose sole function is public relations.

When asked to indicate how many people are employed in the department, it is revealed that a higher percentage of districts with student enrollments over 3500 have only 1-3 people employed. One respondent with student enrollments over 3500 indicate employment of 4-6 people in the department solely designated to handle public relations duties within the district.

Although the literature indicates a need for people designated solely to public relations responsibilities, and superintendents believe public relations to be an important responsibility, there are few districts that maintain a department. Meek (1999) and Kowalski (2000) believe that opposition to school public relations stems from misconceptions about exactly what the employee or department accomplishes. Some school districts struggle with the financial responsibility necessary for public relations to be carried out responsibly and believe justification to the public is difficult. The community at large sees public relations as propaganda. However, as Hughes and Hooper (2000) point out, today’s educational environment necessitates the procurement of a public relations professional. Unfortunately, educational leaders do not seem ready to take a stand for public relations personnel as a necessary player on the administrative team. This lack of support may be a contributing variable to the state of our educational system.

*Research question three.*

How frequently is public relations used to address educational issues with key stakeholders?
This question was measured by survey item number five and is best answered by referring to the research and data analysis from responses that addressed this query and the qualitative data. The results from this study show that in a rank-order analysis of issues, based upon the cumulative frequency levels of very often and often, superintendents use public relations most often to address dissemination of public information to all stakeholders; parents (95.9%), faculty and staff (91.7%), non-parents (80.6%), and politicians (59.8%).

The issue of budget information ranks second for all stakeholders except politicians, for which referendum passage ranks second. Test scores ranked third for those stakeholders most involved in public education. That is, of those superintendents who responded, 83.5% of them indicated using public relations regarding the issue of test scores for parents and 79.2% of them indicated using public relations regarding the issue of test scores for faculty and staff. Only 64.6% of respondents utilize public relations for the issue of test scores for non-parents and 47.3% of respondents for politicians. It is important to note that issues regarding bussing, food service, and teacher quality consistently fell last or nearly last among all stakeholder categories.

The review of literature regarding the utilization of public relations to address educational issues with key stakeholders reveals that some members of the community feel schools include them while others believe that they are not provided information according to Puriefoy (2000). She also believes that non-parents, politicians, and senior citizens say many things are wrong with our schools; yet make no effort to obtain information. Fege (2000) concurs with Puriefoy; parents and non-parents want
information, yet are unlikely to seek out information; hence the creation of an uninformed general public begins.

It becomes the job of the school district to make sure that the public has access to accurate information. According to the Center on Educational Policy and the American Youth Policy Forum (2000), many people believe public schools are failing, however, this is not surprising considering the emphasis media plays in emphasizing negative stories about public schools. School public relations provide the tools necessary to bridge the communication gap.

Bolman and Deal (1997) believe that the structure of the organization is the blueprint for communication patterns internally among administrators, faculty, and staff; and externally among taxpayers, parents, non-parents, and the community-at-large. This study reveals that in districts with smaller student enrollments, superintendents are more likely to believe that their public relations efforts are effective in influencing the intended audience. These results imply that smaller districts have a closer connection to the community-at-large thereby aiding the public relations efforts. Increased incidents of informal communication may occur because educational leaders are more likely to become an active member of a smaller community. The various publics have greater access to the leadership in districts with lower student enrollments thereby creating a climate of honesty and trust. Larger communities do not lend themselves to easier access and informal methods of communication. The structure necessary to effectuate change and complete daily responsibilities in larger communities is more formalized. Public information efforts also become more formal and effectively communicating with larger communities becomes more difficult due to varying levels of knowledge and experiences.
Schmuck and Runkel (1994), Bolman and Deal (1997), and DePree (1998) agree that the size of an organization affects its channels of communication. As the size of an organization increases, the channels of communication become more structured and formal.

Research question four.

What are the most important roles and responsibilities fulfilled by the school public relations practitioner?

This question was measured by items eight through twenty-five on the survey questionnaire, and is best answered by referring to the research and data analysis from responses to the eighteen items that addressed this query and the qualitative data. The results from this study indicate that superintendents believe several roles and responsibilities are distinctly more important than others when the level of cumulative importance is considered.

Superintendents believe that writing newsletters is the most important responsibility a public relations practitioner carries out (97.7%). Building the district image (97.0%), preparing press releases (95.5%), creating informational brochures (91.7%), organizing press and media coverage (88.8%), taking pictures (85.7%), writing policies (84.2%), developing community networks (81.2%), conducting community surveys (72.9%), developing handbooks (71.4%), attending board meetings (69.2%), designing technological presentations (63.2%), acting as district spokesperson (59.9%), attending administrative meetings (55.6%), conducting research (51.9%), and writing speeches (51.5%) each retained a cumulative importance level above fifty percent. Those
responsibilities with a cumulative level of importance below fifty percent include developing district in-services (49.2%) and conducting surveys in the county (34.6%).

The review of literature regarding the most important roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner differs in importance, however are similar in scope. Hughes and Hooper (2000) believe that developing community networks is essential to the public relations practitioners' role, whereas those superintendents surveyed gave community networking a cumulative level of importance of 81.2%, or a ranking of sixth in level of importance. According to the National School Public Relations Association (1999) policy discussions rank as the primary responsibility of the public relations practitioner. Saffir (2000) concurs with the NSPRA stating that public relations is important in setting and implementing all educational policy within the district. Writing policy and implementing policy ranked seventh in the present study.

The National School Public Relations Association also indicates that handling news and media relations, writing newsletters, and offering district in-services are also important roles. Of their list, two items that the National School Public Relations Association believe to be important; writing newsletters and handling news and media relations, are listed within the top five cumulative levels of importance as concluded in the results from this study. This Study indicates that superintendents believe writing newsletters is the most important responsibility of the public relations practitioner.

Genzer (1993) cites a 1971 study which presents a list of responsibilities carried out by the public relations practitioner including writing press releases, creating staff and informational newsletters, handling of citizen inquires, and assessing the attitudes and opinions of the public. Of the list cited in 1971, writing press releases is ranked third in
the present study and creating information newsletters is ranked as the most important responsibility by K-12 New Jersey superintendents. Handling citizen inquiries and assessing attitudes and opinions of the public were not specifically studied in the present research however; these responsibilities may be embedded within conducting surveys in the community which ranked fourteenth in this study.

Based upon research completed by the National School Public Relations Association (1999), Hughes and Hooper (2000), Genzer (1993), Wilcox, Ault, Agee, and Cameron (2001), and Kowalski (2000) the list of responsibilities important for the public relations practitioner to fulfill is similar in scope to those responsibilities that were important decades ago.

*Research question five.*

What are the essential attributes and skills that the superintendent believes a school public relations practitioner should possess?

This question was measured by items twenty-six through thirty-five on the survey questionnaire, and is best answered by referring to the research and data analysis from responses to the ten items that addressed this query and the qualitative data. The results from this study indicate that there are several attributes and skills essential for public relations to be successful when the level of cumulative agreement is considered.

Superintendents, 99.3%. either strongly agree or agree that excellent writing skills are the most important attribute for school public relations professionals to possess. Honesty (98.5%), the ability to work well with others (97.8%), creativity (96.3%), technological expertise (92.6%), and excellent speaking skills (92.6%) round out the top
five primary attributes and skills superintendents believe a school public relations professional should possess.

The ability to make polished presentations (89.7%), strong leadership skills (74.2%), previous educational experience (68.4%), and possession of traditional values (60.3%) are, although important, not as important as the others.

The review of literature regarding the most important skills and attributes that public school public relations practitioners should possess are similar in scope with this study.

Wilcox, Ault, Agee, and Cameron (2001) outline attributes and skills they believe are essential for public relations practitioners including the ability to work well with written or spoken words, creativity, and the ability to make polished presentations. Creativity ranks fourth and the ability to make polished presentations ranks sixth out of ten in the present study.

National School Public Relations Association (1999) points out additional skills it believes are essential to effective public relations. Several of the skills designated align with previous researchers, yet additional skills include honesty and nontraditional strategic thinking.

Brown and Murray, as cited in Kowalski (2000) believe excellent writing and speaking skills are essential as well as leadership skills and the ability to work well with others. Finally, White (1995) believes expertise in technology is essential whereas this study ranks technological expertise seventh out of ten possible attributes and skills.

DePree (1998) speaks to the honesty as the requirement for all relationships to remain healthy. Lane and Reardon (2001) and Covey (1991) believe communicating
meaning and achieving understanding occur when trust and confidence are established, therefore researchers and respondents alike believe honesty is an essential attribute/skill for the public relations practitioner to possess.

Overall, the research and review of literature seem to concur with the levels of cumulative agreement outlined in this study. Every researcher studied indicates that honesty, excellent speaking skills and excellent writing skills are very important to the success of the public relations practitioner. In fact, honesty ranks second to excellent writing skills as the most important attribute for school public relations practitioners to possess and excellent speaking skills rank fifth out of ten in the present study.

Just as the list of responsibilities important for the public relations practitioner to fulfill is similar in scope to those responsibilities that were important decades ago, so too are the skills and attributes essential for school public relations practitioners to possess today.

Conclusions

Information regarding how public relations responsibilities are carried out in New Jersey public schools as well as the roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner does not readily exist in the literature.

Many New Jersey school superintendents designate a person or persons to handle public relations responsibilities, yet more often it is the superintendent him/herself who handles public relations.

The total number of years superintendents have been in the position contributes to whether a person is designated to handle public relations responsibilities. Of those that superintendents who responded, 72.2% of those with total number of years experience
between six and ten years and 70% with more than ten years indicate they designate a person to handle public relations responsibilities. However, 43% of superintendents with total number of years experience between one and five indicate that they do not designate a person to handle public relation responsibilities. These results suggest that less experienced superintendents do not either realize the impact an organized public relations effort has on a school district, or simply believe that they can handle it themselves; possibly because they believe that it is too important to delegate.

This research shows 91.0% of responding superintendents believe that no matter whom the target audience or the issue at stake, public relations efforts have been effective. It also appears that the roles and responsibilities of the public relations practitioner, as well as the skills and attributes necessary for success are similar to those that a person employed in higher levels of management. Instead, it may be due to either financial restraints or a belief that a need does not exist to have someone solely for public relations; it is a responsibility that the superintendent or other district leaders could maintain.

These findings can be significant to the professional job efficacy of school public relations advocates regarding the necessity of employing school public relations practitioners. It could be hypothesized that if the superintendents hired a public relations practitioner solely to handle all public relations efforts, the time spent dealing with public relations issues could be better spent on other important educational matters. The ties between both the school community and the community-at-large with the school itself may be more closely maintained if people solely dedicated to building the district image and establishing trust through honest, effective two-way communication are employed.
However, regardless of whether a public relations office is maintained or there are employees assigned to complete the task, school leadership needs to have formal training in public relations. The changing nature of our schools coupled with an amorphous audience make getting the message more difficult. Just as the roles of schools are dynamic and constantly changing, so is the public's demand for information.

Arnold Fege (1992) opines that public schools are on trial and survival is not guaranteed. St. John and Clements (Kowalski, 2000) agree with Fege in their review of public opinion confirming that public support for education is built upon a shaky foundation. There are a number of challenges facing today's schools that seek to destroy the original purpose of public schooling. Meek (1999, p. 2) explains, "as clients, today's parents are demanding consumers..." Hughes and Hooper (2000) believe the opinions of the general public are formed in many different ways and foregoing an organized public relations program leaves too much to chance.

Often educational leaders will outsource difficult projects or jobs to qualified individuals or experts in the field, outside of education. An example of an outsourcing project is the current mandate for completion of a Long-Range Facilities Plan for any New Jersey school district considering a construction bond referendum. Many boards of education and superintendents will not hesitate to outsource this project simply because the district does not employ personnel qualified in architecture construction, or formalized long-range planning. However, most boards of education and superintendents believe they can handle public relations responsibilities in-house without personnel qualified to complete the efforts. Superintendents may automatically assume these functions for various reasons beyond those of budget restraints. It may be that
superintendents believe they are the brokers of information. They model the vision and
mission of the district and may believe it is too important to assign the task. Although the
belief that public relations is important seems to be common, very few New Jersey K-12
school districts invest in a public relations professional, i.e. one educated in marketing or
public relations. However, it may be that a distinction must be made between public
relations and public information. Often, public information suggests the centralization of
information within a public school setting.

As stated earlier, school leaders are just beginning to realize the potential that
positive public relations has for today’s public schools. This study looked at public
relations in a limited way and those knowledgeable in the field may indicate that
superintendents are only scratching the surface. Carried out correctly, public relations
has the potential to move public education to new heights. If educational leaders are to
rise to the level of excellence currently emerging within our society and move from our
present placement of skepticism and distrust to where public education needs to be, they
must thoroughly understand the potential impact of public relations. The public relations
practitioner has the responsibility and skill necessary to maintain the link between the
school and the community and to strengthen it over time (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Establishing and maintaining a respect for educational public relations is an important
first step in helping to move education from mediocrity to excellence.

Recommendations for Further Research

In considering this study, a variety of additional unanswered questions arose that
could be the impetus for future research. The following are suggested research ideas that
may be of value.
1. Surveying a similar sample from different geographical areas utilizing a similar instrument. Similar research would be of value using mailing lists from other organizations.

2. Expanding the study to include all school districts in New Jersey testing for significance of socio-economic status of the student population.

3. Surveying the public relations practitioner directly and comparing their responses to the present study concerning superintendent's responses.

4. Expand the study surveying county superintendents to assess what they believe to be the role of the public school public relations practitioner and to determine whether the position is essential to the success of New Jersey public schools.

5. Surveying boards of education to assess what they believe to be the roles and responsibilities of the public school public relations practitioner.

6. Broaden the scope of the study to distinguish between public relations and public information suggesting the centralization of information within a public school setting.

7. Utilization of interview techniques to check inaccuracies in data collection due to the survey instrument. This would allow for respondents to ask clarifying questions and the researcher to provide explanations.

8. On-site naturalistic studies may be conducted to determine, through observation, the extent to which the roles and responsibilities and the skills and attributes conforms to the findings of this study.

9. Setting up an improved research design. Future research could benefit from creating a design that provides data analysis of the influence of the previous
experiences of the superintendent, his/her level of education, the number of years as a superintendent, and his/her formalized training and preparation in public relations.

10. Expand research to include the reasons superintendents believe a public relations practitioner is essential or non-essential to the organization, and how much time s/he spends on public relations tasks.

11. Examine the impact of public relations from the perspective of key stakeholders: parents, non-parents, faculty and staff, and politicians.

12. Compare the use of public relations practitioners employed by institutions of higher education to use in elementary and secondary educational institutions.

13. Compare the use of public relations professionals formally educated in marketing or public relations to the public relations practitioner educated in educational administration and supervision.

14. Expand research to include other types of communication, such as informal communication.

15. Expand the research to explore the effects of limited time and experience of superintendents on the designation of public relations roles and responsibilities.

16. In light of technological advancement and the reduction of many local school budgets, a replication of this study should be considered in five years.

17. Expand and extend research to include a prognostic study of various interest groups regarding the changing roles of the public relations practitioner for school districts in the future.
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Appendices
APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument
The Roles and Responsibilities of the Public School Public Relations Practitioner

The purpose of this survey is to investigate the specific roles and responsibilities a public school superintendent expects of the district public relations personnel, as well as essential attributes and skills necessary for success. Your assistance in completion of this survey instrument is essential to the success of this study. Your participation is voluntary in nature and the completion of this survey will imply your consent. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and the data derived from this study will be presented collectively in a manner to ensure anonymity of the participants. I do recognize the constraints on your time and deeply appreciate the 10 minutes of your time necessary to complete this survey.

Instructions: Please indicate your answers to each question by placing an X where appropriate or by writing your answer where indicated.

Part I

1. Does your district designate a person or persons (in or out of district) to handle public relations responsibilities?  
   ______ yes  ______ no

2. Please indicate who typically performs public relations duties in your district and to whom the person or persons report. (If more than one person, please specify)

   Title     Reports to:
   __________________________  __________________________
   __________________________  __________________________
   __________________________  __________________________
   __________________________  __________________________

3. Is there an organizational unit or department in your school district whose primary function is public relations?  
   ______ yes  ______ no

   If yes, please indicate how many people are employed in this department

   ____ 1-3  ____ 4-6  ____ 6-10  ____ more than 10

4. Please indicate the present student enrollment in your district:

   ____ less than 1,800  ____ 1,800-3,500  ____ over 3,500
5. Rate how frequently you use public relations to address each of the following educational issues with key stakeholders.

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<td>Non-Parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
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</table>

6. Do you believe that public relations efforts have been effective in influencing your target audience?  ____yes  ____no

7. Please indicate how long you have been a superintendent:

   ____ 1-5 years  ____ 6-10 years  ____ more than 10 years
Part II

In this section, I would like to know how important you believe the following items are for your school public relations (in or out of district) professionals to carry out. Please indicate where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>8. Prepare press releases</td>
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<td>9. Write newsletters</td>
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<td>10. Develop district in-services</td>
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<td>11. Organize press/media coverage</td>
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<td>12. Write speeches</td>
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<td>13. Attend board meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Attend administrative meetings</td>
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<td>15. Create informational brochures</td>
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<td>16. Act as district spokesperson</td>
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<td>17. Take pictures</td>
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<td>18. Develop handbooks</td>
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<td>19. Develop community networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Conduct research</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Conduct surveys in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Conduct surveys in the county</td>
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<td>23. Design technological presentations</td>
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<td>24. Build the district image</td>
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<td>25. Contribute to the development of public relations policies</td>
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</table>
Part III

In this section, I would like to know how strongly you believe the following attributes/skills are necessary for your school public relations (in or out of district) professionals. Please indicate where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Technological expertise</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Excellent writing skills</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Excellent speaking skills</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Previous educational experience</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Strong leadership skills</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Ability to work well with others</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>Ability to make polished presentations</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Possess traditional values</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
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</table>

Thank you for completing this survey.
APPENDIX B

Letter of Solicitation/Consent
October, 2001

Name
Title
School
Address
City, state, zip

Dear <title>:

I am currently working on a doctorate in educational administration and supervision at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services under the direction of Dr. Elaine Walker. Any questions you have may be directed to Dr. Walker at (973)-275-2307 or to the researcher at (973)-663-0974.

Presently I am gathering data for inclusion in my dissertation entitled “The Roles and Responsibilities of the Public School Public Relations Practitioner.” This descriptive study will investigate the specific roles and responsibilities of the educational public relations practitioner as well as essential attributes and skills necessary for success in school public relations. Your assistance in completion of the enclosed survey instrument is essential to the success of this study. Please take the 10-15 minutes necessary to complete the survey.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. There are no experimental procedures taking place within this survey. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning your response.

Be assured that participation in this study is voluntary in nature and refusal to participate will involve no penalty to you or your school district. If you would like to participate, please return the survey.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. The data derived from this study will be presented collectively in a manner to assure anonymity of participants. Each return envelope is coded solely for identification of non-responding participants to be subsequently mailed a second survey as a reminder.

Completion and return of the survey indicates your understanding of the project and your willingness to participate. To maintain confidentiality, data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher upon receipt of the survey.

Data may be shared with the researcher’s mentor located at Seton Hall University and possibly the dissertation committee members, if necessary.

Please be assured that there are no anticipated risks to you or your district for participating in this research project.

There are also no expected benefits to be derived individually by you or your school district by completion of the survey.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Ammune
Doctoral Student

APPROVED

NOV 06 2001

IRB
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

College of Education and Human Services
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
Tel. 973.761.9397
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

ENRICHING THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SOUL
APPENDIX C

Letter of Solicitation/Consent: Follow-Up
October, 2001

[ placeholders for Name, Title, School, Address, City, state, zip ]

Dear [title]:

Approximately two weeks ago a survey seeking information regarding the roles and responsibilities of educational public relations practitioners and essential attributes and skills necessary for success was mailed to you. Many surveys have been returned, however more need to be returned for the study to be successful. As a potential respondent your inclusion in my doctoral study will be meaningful to this project.

In the event that your survey has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed, including a preaddressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Please take the 10-15 minutes necessary to complete the survey. If your survey has been mailed, or is presently being completed, please accept this letter as a note of thanks for assisting me with my dissertation

Once again, please be assured that there are no experimental procedures taking place within this survey.

Also be assured that participation in this study is voluntary in nature and refusal to participate will involve no penalty to you or your school district. Failure to respond to the survey will imply non-consent.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. The data derived from this study will be presented collectively in a manner to assure anonymity of participants.

Completion and return of the survey indicates your understanding of the project and your willingness to participate. To maintain confidentiality, data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher upon receipt of the survey.

Data may be shared with the researcher's mentor located at Seton Hall University and possibly the dissertation committee members, if necessary.

Please be assured that there are no anticipated risks to you or your district for participating in this research project.

There are also no expected benefits to be derived individually by you or your school district by completion of the survey.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures sufficiently safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 761-2974.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Antunes
Doctoral Student

[ Signature ]

College of Education and Human Services
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
Tel: (973) 761-9397
400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685
APPENDIX D

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
November 6, 2001

Lisa Antunes
157 Aster Court
Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889

Dear Ms. Antunes:

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns noted for your proposal entitled “The Roles and Responsibilities of the Public School Public Relations Practitioner.” Your research protocol is hereby approved as amended. Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped Consent Form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Elaine Walker, Ph.D.

Office of Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall
Tel: 973.275.2974 • Fax: 973.275.2978
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2641