



# VOICE

KENTUCKY SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION  
The authority and voice for school public relations

Spring 2006

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Have a newsletter article?  
E-mail Monica Johnson at  
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## Public Relations: The Village Messenger

By: Anita Granier, KYSPPRA Treasurer and Spring Retreat Planner

How many ways can you skin a cat? On the other hand, how many ways can you tell your story? Come out for one colossal skill -building spring retreat targeting communication. On May 4 – 5, 2006, at Kentucky Dam Village, KYSPPRA will host its annual spring retreat. Plans are to get away, relax, and regroup.

This is the spring retreat to attend. It is stacked with insightful professionals who share your PR concerns. You will walk away with techniques and skills for your district. Moreover, it will all take place in the scenic, relaxing venue of Kentucky Dam Village.

On Thursday morning, Karl Miller and Claude Bacon, ESL specialists, kick off the retreat. These professionals share their expertise on communicating with ESL students, parents, and the public.

Next, Janett Blythe, director of public relations at West Kentucky Community and Technical College, entertains and informs us with “Diary of a Mad, Black PR Woman: Making the Case for Strategic Communication.”

Also on the agenda are Dr. Robert McGaughey and Bob Valentine, with a two-man show: “Communications—What you Say is What you Get.” They will cover communications and miscommunications, including meetings, memos, and telephone calls and will close with “Gender Communications.”

On Thursday night, we drive to Grand Rivers to eat a delicious meal at Patti’s 1880’s Settlement. A reminder of when time moved slower, this recreated historical log cabin village is tucked into the natural beauty of Western Kentucky.

On Friday, we will start the morning sessions with Dr. Robin Orvino, Lecturer, and Director of Public Relations Programs at Murray State University. Dr. Orvino’s topic, “Creating a Public Relations Program,” explains how to turn your ideas into a plan you will be able to execute successfully. She discusses the power of brainstorming, writing, planning, communicating, and paying attention to details.

Finally, we will end our retreat with a news forum including reporters from the surrounding area of western Kentucky. Molly Harper, reporter at Paducah Sun; Kristen Taylor, reporter at Murray Ledger and Times; John Lowry, news reporter at WKXY/WNGO radio of Paducah, and Berry Craig, history professor at WKCTC in Paducah and Associated Press columnist, frame the news forum. This informal roundtable session includes creative and successful reporting techniques and concludes with Questions and Answers from the floor.

It’s not too late to register. Quickly, send your registration form in and we will see you soon.

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## President's Column



Melissa Pryor,  
*KYSPRA President*

I love this time of year. For most, blooming flowers and fresh cut grass signify summer break. Not so if you are a school public relations professional. We are staring the 2006-2007 school year directly in the face and running full speed ahead, all the while, looking over our shoulder at our current school year and tidying up behind ourselves. PR folks are some incredible people and you all deserve a job well done for your efforts.

Now is the best time of year to evaluate those efforts and spring clean. How is that newsletter really working out? What programs can you enhance, reformat, or maybe even (dare I say) put to rest? Are there relationships that you need to build that will help you in your efforts?

Yes, this time of year offers second chances. To take advantage of this opportunity, allow me to offer some timely advice.

First, accurate feedback must come from multiple sources. Don't rely on the opinion of yourself or those closest to you in the office, as your only evaluation methods. Take the extra time to research and seek out many opinions.

Secondly, in the words of a dear friend and colleague, "Spear Sacred Cows". If you're doing something ONLY because it has been done for the past two hundred years and that is the way it has always been done...get rid of it. Spend your talent and energy elsewhere.

Third, get more involved in KYSPRA and your regional school pr efforts. You will learn so much about what works – what doesn't – and how to get the most out of your job.

Fourth, take a road trip to clear the cobwebs for a fresh start. Your first opportunity is right around the corner. The KYSPRA Spring Retreat is May 4-5 at the Kentucky Village Dam. You will find more information in this newsletter.

Get out there, sweep up – and brace yourself for a new beginning. You will be glad you did.

Melissa Pryor  
KYSPRA President

## Mission Statement



As the authority and voice for school public relations in the Commonwealth, **KYSPRA** will meet the professional development needs of its members and advocate for the employment of public relations practitioners in all Kentucky school districts.

## KET EncylcoMedia



For many among the general public, KET is synonymous with Big Bird, Barney and all the other characters made popular through PBS's award-winning children's programs. Those within Kentucky's education community, however, know that the statewide network has a long history of using the latest technologies to enhance and advance the educational experience for both children and adults, providing services such as distance learning classes, instructional television and college telecourses. In recent years, these services have grown to include an expansive section of KET's Web site designed specifically for educators plus multiple channels of instructional television and professional development programs via KET's digital broadcast.

The fall 2005 semester marked yet another milestone for educational services with the launch of KET EncylcoMedia, and already it is among the most well received classroom offerings to date.

### WHAT IT IS

KET EncylcoMedia is a new service for K-12 public school that offers a wealth of online, multimedia learning resources—all tied to state academic standards.

The result of a partnership between KET and the Kentucky Department of Education, KET EncylcoMedia provides more than 4,000 videos,

40,000 video clips and thousands of digital images in the subject areas of language arts, arts and music, health, math, science and social studies. Available free to every Kentucky public school, KET EncylcoMedia also provides lesson plans, encyclopedia articles, calendars and a variety of other online tools and resources. Plus, all of these items within the database are searchable by keyword, content area, grade level and Kentucky academic standards.

### CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

KET EncylcoMedia is a highly flexible system designed for use by both teachers and students. Teachers can use KET EncylcoMedia to introduce a unit; to show students an unfamiliar place or demonstrate a concept; to supplement independent or small-group learning; and to create dynamic presentations through PowerPoint® or other similar programs.

Teachers can also use KET EncylcoMedia to develop lesson plans on a particular subject and then share those plans with teachers all across the state. The system even includes a quiz library and allows teachers to quickly and easily create and share new assessment materials.

Students with diverse learning styles can use KET EncylcoMedia to enhance their learning experience through the system's interactive and engaging resources. Accessible both in the classroom and at home, KET EncylcoMedia allows students to do research and find the resources needed to create multimedia reports and presentations—all through a single, safe Web site.

### EARLY REACTION

At an August press conference announcing the launch of KET EncylcoMedia, Education Commissioner Gene Wihoit enthused, "All Kentucky schools will now have instant access to this incredible tool," and Education Cabinet Secretary Virginia G. Fox added, "Today will stand as a milestone in the way that technology is used to educate the youth of Kentucky."

Following the launch, KET's education coordinators visited several areas throughout the state to introduce KET EncylcoMedia to school technology coordinators, library media specialists and others who would be training teachers within their district on how to use the system. And the reaction from these trainings has been equally enthusiastic.

Comments from these trainings about KET EncylcoMedia have ranged from "Students are really going to want to use this ... it's going to impact education in a marvelous way" to "I think it is one of the greatest resources that has come along since I have been teaching for 30 years."

Among the many recurring themes from these trainings, several educators have commented on how the resources from this system will better serve students with diverse learning styles and how it will engage and excite all learners. "This is one of the first things that students can actually grab hold of and use to show they're learning," commented one attendee of a training session in Hazard.

Now, as educators throughout the state begin to make this revolutionary new tool a regular part of the classroom experience, KET's staff will continue to help and encourage its use. For more information about KET EncylcoMedia or any of the many other services for educators, please visit the KET Web site at [ww.ket.org/education](http://ww.ket.org/education).



## Reaching Proficiency in School P.R. - - KYSRA Fall Conference 2006



Does your school district's P.R. program measure up? It's not the CATS test, but the 2006 KYSRA Fall Conference in Bowling Green will help you develop the skills and implement the programs needed for a proficient public relations program.

Among the presenters sure to give any P.R. pro a boost toward proficiency:

- \* Ron Koehler, National School Public Relations Association regional vice president, who will have a session entitled "PR -- It's Everyone's Job".
- \* Skip Wirth, a Bowling Green-based motivational speaker, who will give a session on stress management.
- \* Ken Payne, a Western Kentucky University public relations professor, who is an authority on using technology in P.R. efforts.

Other topics to be covered at the fall conference: event planning, school foundations, writing, and evaluating your P.R. program. And, of course, the annual OASIS Awards Banquet will be a highlight of the conference.

So don't be left behind. Mark your calendars for November 2-3, when the conference will be held at the Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green.

Check your mailbox in early May  
for the OASIS call for entries.

## “Administrative Turnover: both in principals and superintendents is the greatest single hindrance to improving the quality of our Schools.”

By: Brenda Gustafson, Senior Communications Officer, Portland Public Schools, for the NSPRA Environmental Scanning Committee.

### Why is there a high turnover?

1. Many states initiated “rule of 85” which allow some principals and superintendents to retire at 55 years of age with full benefits if they have 30 years of experience. The individuals that have the experience to take over the positions generally have several years under their belt as well (average age for principals is 45 years), leaving them in the positions for just a few years.
2. Many educators with the right skills and qualities to be good superintendents and principals are steering clear of the administrator track because of the increased duties, added hours, and late-night meetings associated with the job.
3. Administrators are facing increasing public and media scrutiny.
4. Standards-based reforms and tough, new accountability measures mean that administrators now need a whole new set of skills that they did not need a few years ago.
5. Too many duties are piled on administrators' plates - from managing facilities to coordinating bus services to negotiating contracts - leaving them with little time or energy to be what researchers conclude they most need to be, instructional leaders.
6. There is a lack of good training programs and materials that produce quality administrators in the industry.
7. Racial and Gender gaps still persist within leadership roles.
8. The salary gap between principals and teachers is shrinking. A teacher making \$58,000 for nine months work may look unfavorably at \$70,000 for a full year of work.

### What Does the Educational Community Need To Curb Administrator Turnover and To Provide An Adequate Supply of Leaders?

1. Provide an environment of nurture. Leadership-oriented superintendents believe that strong district support for building-level administrators, especially those green to the administrative playing field, is crucial.
2. Districts conducive to leadership have professional development supports in place.
3. Leaders in place that provide role models. This means demonstrating integrity and trying to be the leader others wish to become.
4. Provide mentors and coaches for aspiring administrators.
5. Professional Development is a must including data analysis, dealing with special interest groups, and policymaking. Professional Development also needs to discuss the psychological needs of a leadership position.
6. Programs in place to identify teachers with capacity and potential. Keeping eyes open for future talent, then providing opportunities for these people to be engaged and involved. This includes opportunities to work on district wide committees.
7. Providing a flexible career ladder.

Not Everyone Feels There Is A Problem with Administrator Turnover  
A recent report by Public Agenda (2003) suggests that turnover among principals may actually be inefficiently low. Indeed, relative to the turnover experienced in the private sector and even federal government organizations, the turnover observed among public school principals is low. However, the school accountability movement may change the situation by imposing more demands on principals, possibly resulting in higher turnover.

# ???

# Ask the Expert

# ???

**By: Armando Arrastia, Director of Publications and Web Services, Kentucky Department of Education**

**A regular Q & A**

**feature of the Voice**

**6:55 a.m.:** A mother visits your school district Web site looking for school lunch menus, but can't find them.

**9:30 a.m.:** A leader in your community visits your site looking for the district calendar so he can schedule a community-wide event, only to find that the calendar that's posted is outdated.

**10:13 a.m.:** Another parent visits the site looking for bus schedules but can't find the one for her home.

**11: 45 a.m.:** Someone who is moving to your school district from Colorado visits the site trying to decide which school is preferable for her child, but cannot find a list of schools.

So each person calls the central office. The receptionist and other staff then take the next 40 minutes handling the four phone calls. And several others....

## Q: What's wrong with this picture?

**A:** With Kentucky Connect reporting that 55 percent of all Kentucky adults have Internet access at home, this picture should serve as a wake-up call for those districts that have neglected, or failed to prioritize, their Web presence.

While some Kentucky school districts have established model Web sites, many others view their sites as a necessary evil, or simply as "technology." They fail to recognize that the Web is a powerful, dynamic *communication* tool that allows them to disseminate information in real-time, to large numbers of their constituents. The unfortunate result is that they spend a considerable amount of time handling telephone calls and other inquiries that could simply be directed to particular sections of their Web site.

How can school districts make the most of their Web sites to communicate effectively? Here are three simple steps:

- 1. Place control of your site's content in the hands of a communicator.** Too many school district communicators have told me about conflicts with their technology staffs when making decisions about the look, feel and content of their sites. Our Web sites should be the result of partnerships between the technology and communication professionals. Too many districts still allow their technology staffs to rule the Web-site roost. As much as we appreciate our technology folks, we must recognize that they have other fish to fry. School and district leaders need to relieve them of responsibility for content and let them to handle the technology that allows the Web to be. Then we need to empower the professional communicators to handle what we call the "front-end" of the Web – the design and content that visitors see. After all, professional communicators should know their audiences and what's important to those audiences.
- 2. Recognize that content is king.** I'll rephrase that: *Content is King*. It attracts visitors to your site, and it answers their questions. If your content is incomplete, inaccurate, outdated or just plain hard to find, you have an inadequate Web site. It really is that simple! And an inadequate Web site results in time and effort spent on phone calls that could have been avoided. Will your Web site eliminate all phone calls? Of course not! But having the right content where it can be easily found on your site will reduce those calls dramatically.
- 3. Connect with your audiences.** District communicators need to regularly spend time talking with parents, community members and others to learn about their information needs and desires. Of course, this has implications beyond the Web site, but it speaks directly to Item 2 above – *Content is King*. Knowing your audiences and what they want is critical to creating valuable content. Oftentimes, supervisors think that time out of the office is time off-task, wasted time. Wrong! The district communicator who establishes and regularly has dialogue with his or her constituents will do a better job all-around, and the Web site, the district - and yes, the superintendent - will reap the benefits.



# Spring Retreat 2006



## PUBLIC RELATIONS THE VILLAGE MESSENGER

**MAY 4-5, 2006**  
**KENTUCKY DAM VILLAGE**  
**REGISTER BY APRIL 1, 2006**

**Wednesday, May 3**

**Thursday, May 4**

**Friday, May 5**

Check-in and enjoy  
Kentucky Dam Village

Continental breakfast  
from 8:00-8:45am

Continental Breakfast  
from 8:00-8:45am

KYSPRA Board meeting  
4:00pm

Conference Sessions  
9:00am- 4:00-pm  
Dinner at Patti's 7pm

Conference Sessions  
9:00am-11:00am  
Checkout 12 noon

Send conference registration to:  
Kay Sharon  
P.O. Box 1286  
Elizabethtown, Ky. 42702

For room reservations:  
Karen Faughn  
(800) 325-0146  
by April 1, 2006

Room rates:  
\$79.95

### Spring Retreat Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School District/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Conference fee includes all sessions plus continental breakfasts.

KYSPRA member \$50    Non-KYSPRA member \$75    Student \$35