

Publishing in Professional Education Magazines

Positioning your submission for acceptance and publication.

Jay P. Goldman, *School Administrator*, AASA

Theresa Kelly Gegen, *Illinois School Board Journal*, IASB

Objectives

- ◆ Encourage school communications professionals to write about relevant experiences and topics for publication.
- ◆ Consider opportunities for collaboration with colleagues to contribute story ideas.
- ◆ Recognize the array of publishing opportunities at the national and state levels.
- ◆ Describe what editors are looking for, and how to improve one's chances of having the work accepted.

Who We Are

School Administrator is the monthly magazine of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, reaching about 20,000 superintendents and central-office administrators nationwide.

The *Illinois School Board Journal* is the bi-monthly flagship publication of the Illinois Association of School Boards, reaching about 8,000 board members, school administrators, and service providers.



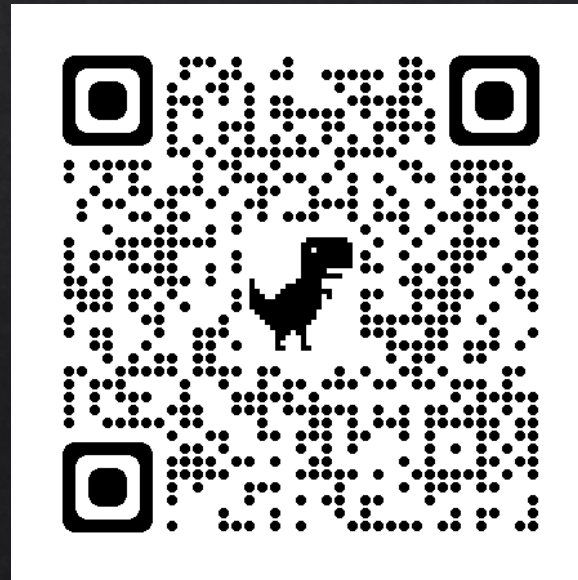
AASA
School Administrator

Illinois School Board
JOURNAL

Resources



bit.ly/NSPRA22-SA-J



Why Write?

- ◆ Education is a field of interesting, innovative, and ever-changing ideas and topics.
- ◆ A professional responsibility to enhance the field of education and share your district's story.
- ◆ An opportunity for reflection and inspiration.
- ◆ Pride of authorship.

Write for Whom?

National Professional Education Periodicals

- ◆ School Administrator (AASA)
- ◆ Principal (NAESP)
- ◆ Principal Leadership (NASSP)
- ◆ Middle School Journal (AMLE)
- ◆ Education Leadership (ASCD)
- ◆ The Learning Professional
- ◆ School Business Affairs (ASBO)
- ◆ ASBJ (NSBA)
- ◆ High School Today (NFHS)
- ◆ Techniques (ACTE)
- ◆ Teaching Young Children
- ◆ Phi Delta Kappan (PDK)
- ◆ Education Week
- ◆ District Administration
- ◆ School Planning and Management
- ◆ American School and University

Write for Whom?

State-Level Professional Education Periodicals

- ◆ School Boards Association
- ◆ School Superintendents' Association
- ◆ School Business Officials Association
- ◆ Principals' Association
- ◆ Teachers Association/Union
- ◆ Parent/Teacher Organization
- ◆ Other organizations

How to Be Successful

“Burning desire”

Pick a subject you are passionate about.



Then, catch my attention with it.

- ◆ Sell your idea.
- ◆ Know what I might be looking for.
- ◆ Understand that I don't always know what I'm looking for.

How to Be Successful

Know your audience ... and write for it.



How to Be Successful

- ◆ Write in English.
- ◆ Don't tell us everything you know.
- ◆ Show, don't tell.
- ◆ Watch the bottom line.
- ◆ Be ready to revise.
- ◆ Write with awareness.*

*Write with Awareness

- ◇ Be thoughtful with the language you use.
 - ◇ Mention a factor only if it's relevant (and sometimes it is).
 - ◇ Use “person first” language.
 - ◇ Be inclusive.
 - ◇ Avoid assumptions and don't stereotype.
- ◇ Take account of how people want to be referred to.
 - ◇ And ask if you don't know.

What Do We Look For?

“Over my 30-plus years in education, I’ve found that by using the tricks of the trade practiced by the best companies, a public school can turn around its image and culture 180 degrees.” PAGE 14

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PUBLICATION POLICY

IASB believes that the domestic process functions best through frank and open discussion. Material published in the JOURNAL, therefore, often presents divergent and controversial points of view which do not necessarily represent the views or policies of IASB.

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What Do We Look For?

AASA School Administrator

2022 Editorial Calendar for *School Administrator* magazine

January.....	Work-Based Learning
February.....	Human & Digital Connectivity
March.....	New Directions: Learning Commission 2025
April.....	School Integration
May.....	A Civic Graduation Requirement & News Literacy
June.....	Leadership Style/Diverse Talent Pipelines
August.....	Leading Communities Through Tragedy; Staff Wellness
September.....	Pause, Reflect, Plan: Regaining Focus on Mission
October.....	School Infrastructure
November.....	The Quandary of Social Media; School Culture
December.....	Community-Based Schooling and Partnerships

Notes: 1. Schedule is subject to change; 2. Major article assignments related to the theme generally are finalized at least five months prior to publication date; 3. Only a portion of each issue relates directly to the editorial theme. Submissions on topics unrelated to themes are welcome for consideration. See <http://www.aasa.org/AuthorGuidelineMagazine.aspx>.

What Do We Look For (and When)?

Guidelines for Submission

to the Illinois School Board Journal

JOURNAL

The Illinois School Board Journal is seeking compelling and relevant stories about today's important public education issues. We welcome new contributors. Potential Journal writers are invited to read current and past issues at the link below.

About the Journal and Its Readers

The Illinois School Board Journal is published bimonthly by the Illinois Association of School Boards and mailed to approximately 6,000 members of local public school boards and 2,500 school administrators, state and federal government offices, professors of education administration, organization leaders, and interested citizens. Digital editions are publicly available.

The Journal's aim is to serve school board members with information and insights to be effective in their governance role. Generally, these are volunteers who wish to do the best job possible for school and community. Therefore, no formal instruction or experience in education or government have demands on their time (including a full-time vocation outside education), and self-reported that is accessible and relevant.

The school board fills a role different from all the others in public education. The Journal addresses the needs of public bodies whose job it is to set goals and direction for their local systems of education, adopt school district policies, and monitor results.

If you believe your piece is an emerging topic in your area of expertise, would benefit the readers of the Journal, please read on.

How to Improve Your Chances of Seeing Your Article in the Illinois School Board Journal
The Journal includes writers from IASB staff, local, state, and national experts in their fields. Invites school board members to comment and contribute, and works with state and national education supporting institutions.

The Journal also welcomes unsolicited proposals or submissions. If the topic is compelling and relevant, the article is more likely to be accepted for publication. The proposal should be sharply focused and supported with examples, statistics, research, and expert opinions but not too sharply focused, because the piece will need to be relevant to a domain of different types, locations, sizes, and systems.

Here are some tips for improving your chances of getting published:

- 1) Define the topic and approach carefully. It is usually better to treat a narrow topic in depth than a broad topic superficially.
- 2) Be direct, and use your expertise. Write for the Journal the same way you would converse with someone you were trying to help, rather than impress.
- 3) Ask yourself:
 - a. Will school board members consider the issue important?
 - b. If not, can I reveal its importance by relating it to something that is of known concern to school boards?
- 4) The article must be written in journalistic style, which is different from academic or research styles that many submissions are accustomed to.
 - a. Journal articles begin with the most relevant, interesting, or important point and proceed with supporting detail. The "journalistic pyramid" metaphor describes this style of writing.
 - b. Academic writing is different. Academic papers usually start with data or methodology and build to conclusions. In academic prose can be re-written and edited for publication in journalistic style.
 - c. The Journal does not use footnotes or cite references in academic fashion. Such attributions should be written into the text. A list of references can be included.
 - d. Article length: We like to say "long enough to tell the story," but we also understand that writers like goals or limits. Journal articles usually range from 1,000 to 2,500 words. The important thing is to be clear, compelling, and to treat the subject matter with the necessary depth to educate the reader.
- 5) We value expertise. The Journal editors will work with authors to achieve the appropriate structure, style, and format while maintaining the author's voice.

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- 5) We value expertise. The Journal editors will work with authors to achieve the appropriate structure, style, and format while maintaining the author's voice.

Appropriate Subject Matter and Treatment of Articles
Journal readers come from different points of view and different levels of expertise. Surveys show interest in basic knowledge of school governance (laws, funding, finance, and the roles and powers of school boards), current topics and news affecting school boards, leadership achieving high standards of school performance, and information and recommendations to help avoid or address challenges facing school boards.

Each edition of the Journal contains a number of articles dealing with a single topic, plus stand-alone articles on other subjects. The editor looks for subject matter that is making news or ought to be. Recent cover stories include equity, teacher shortage, safety and security, 21st-century learning, reauthorized provisions, new board members, re-elections, and funding reform. A Journal article addresses at least one of the following:

- Shows how to be successful in conducting meetings, dealing with the public, setting policies, evaluating results of policies, or other aspects of school board work.
- Provides insights into a complex or controversial public education issue.
- Helps school board members understand the board's role in school governance and aims to inspire them to higher levels of performance.
- Helps school boards better understand and deal with problems, overcome weaknesses, and capitalize on strengths.
- Conveys information that will help school boards deal with state and federal policies or other forces bearing on their schools.

Please direct questions, proposals, and submissions to:
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Consent to publish in the Journal of the Illinois Association of School Boards is due December 1, January 1, April 1, June 1, August 1, December 1.

Submitting an Article and What Comes Next
Submit your article via email attachment to the address below. Include your name, address, and telephone number. Give your name exactly as you wish it to appear with the article, and provide a brief author identification blurb that includes your professional title and any qualifications that pertain to your article.

If the article was previously published, please include details and a link if available.

Illustrations that help tell the story are appreciated. Two paragraphs, drawings, infographics, charts, tables, etc. should be labeled with explanatory captions and credits, and submitted with the article.

Proposals and articles for consideration may be submitted at any time. The Journal editor will acknowledge receipt of your article as soon as possible. A decision on the disposition of your article may take several weeks. In many instances, there is a lead time of up to a year before your article appears in print.

Your article will be edited to conform to IASB and Journal style (adapted from the Associated Press Stylebook). It also will be edited—sometimes extensively—for increased clarity and appropriateness for school board member needs and interests. If requested in advance, the edited article can be returned to you for final approval prior to publication. In some cases, the editor will request revisions from the author. The Journal carries a byline and brief bio of its authors. Authors receive three complimentary print copies. The Journal independently employs freelance writers for projects. To send a proposal, be notified of RFPs, or for more information, please contact the editor.

Editorial Calendar
2022
January/February: Salaries, Compensation Report
March/April: More Salaries, Performance Frameworks
May/June: Extracurriculars
July/August: Summer Reading List
September/October: Civil Discourse, Student Voice
November/December: How Illinois Compares

Consent to publish in the Journal of the Illinois Association of School Boards is due December 1, January 1, April 1, June 1, August 1, December 1.

Author Guidelines

◆ Content Guidelines

School Administrator provides timely and informative coverage of school system practices, policies and programs that have widespread appeal. Articles typically emphasize actual experiences – some successful, some not – rather than theory. Articles may be written in the first person and should include insightful reflections that might help other school district administrators.

School Administrator regularly invites AASA members and non-members who are experts in various fields to contribute articles. We also occasionally hire professional education reporters as free-lancers to write the major feature articles. Here is a list of the different categories of articles that appear in most issues of the magazine along with links to examples in each category:

Features, the main articles in each issue, typically are written on assignment by experts in their field, including school system leaders, professors and consultants. Unsolicited manuscripts are considered for feature slots. Often the lead article is an in-depth examination of a topic relating to that month's editorial theme with several articles that follow clustered under the same thematic umbrella. Most issues of *School Administrator* are based on themes, such as superintendent-board relations, improving student learning or testing and assessment. Current and upcoming themes can be found on our [editorial calendar](#).

Author Guidelines

◇ “Editing Yourself”

Organize your article. Make it flow logically and effortlessly. Make your points in sequence as if you were telling them to a friend or trying to convince a colleague. Remember your audience and strive to anticipate the reader's questions.

Use plain English. Make your meaning clear to every reader. Be specific when you can. Avoid generalities or unsubstantiated assertions.

If everybody in business and government learned to write and edit well, thus produced strong copy that was direct and forceful, we could wipe out the national debt because paperwork would be cut by one-third
Jefferson Bates

Brevity is a by-product of vigor.

Strunk and White

Words, like eyeglasses, blur everything they do not make clear.

Joseph Joubert

Write concisely. Keep sentences lean and short. A simple declarative sentence is a thing of beauty. When in doubt, leave it out.

Cut clutter. Omit unnecessary phrases such as:

<i>in order to</i>	<i>say to</i>
<i>in the area of instruction</i>	<i>say in instruction</i>
<i>make decisions about</i>	<i>say decide about</i>
<i>on an annual basis</i>	<i>say yearly</i>
<i>at that point in time</i>	<i>say then</i>
<i>subsequent to</i>	<i>say after</i>
<i>a large majority</i>	<i>say most -- unless a vote was taken</i>
<i>please do not hesitate to call</i>	<i>say please call</i>
<i>in the process of updating</i>	<i>say updating</i>



Do not look for *answers and solutions to problems and difficulties*. One of each synonym will convey your thought.

Author Guidelines

Definition

Define the topic and approach carefully. It's usually better to treat a narrow topic in depth than a broad topic superficially.

Expertise

Be direct and use your expertise. Write for the *Journal* the same way you would converse with someone you were trying to help, rather than impress.

Audience

Ask yourself:

1. Will school board members consider the issue important?
2. If not, can I reveal its importance by relating it to something that is of known concern to school boards?

Article length: We like to say, “long enough to tell the story,” but we also understand that writers like goals (or limits). *Journal* articles usually range from 1,000 to 2,500 words. Be clear, compelling, and treat the subject matter with the necessary depth to educate the reader.

Common Categories

- ◆ Personal experiences and skills
- ◆ Distinctive district practices and initiatives
- ◆ Op-ed commentaries on issues of the moment
- ◆ Rewritten versions of blog posts or conference presentations
- ◆ Off-beat circumstances

Common Categories

◆ Personal experiences and skills

Managing a Small District's Online Presence

THE POWER OF being connected resonates no matter the size of the school district or the resources available. As the leader of a K-8 district with about 765 students in a community that is only three miles wide, I wanted to make sure when we began social media use that it was helpful and meaningful to our stakeholders.

We started slowly in 2013 by creating a district Twitter account, which few staff knew how to use. During that introductory phase, we helped staff learn how to tweet by participating in chats with fellow educators.

But I was disappointed when Twitter wasn't reaching our community as I had hoped. When posting about an upcoming event or sharing a student success story, the only "likes" we received were from each other and perhaps a few passionate educators following us.

We put a lot of work into those 140-character tweets, yet when we realized most of our parents were more comfortable using Facebook and most of our students were more likely to be on Instagram, it was time to change our plan.

Practical Measures

Below are some practical considerations we used when we added Facebook and Instagram to our district's communications strategy. Our questions included:

► **What are our goals for using Twitter, Facebook and Instagram?**

We wanted to connect with our audiences and provide information to students (Instagram), parents (Facebook) and fellow educators (Twitter); improve our brand; and strengthen our positive climate and culture.

► **Who would monitor and maintain information posted on our social media sites?**

We assigned one administrator and one teacher from each school to have full administrative access to monitor and post content on our newer social media sites.

► **What existing board policies covered technology and social media?**

In our review, we confirmed we already had policies to cover increasing social media use, including policies related to network access, e-mail, internet and use of district equipment.

► **What could we learn from other school districts?**

We reached out to districts to research their process, board policies and use of social media. We also identified the work to be completed to secure the district's sites. (One caution: It's easy to confuse district and personal accounts when toggling between the two. Posting political thoughts on the district site when you think you're posting on your personal site will cause a lot of extra work and headaches.)

► **How could we promote the use of social media?**

We used recommendations from Campus Suite for planning, creating and managing social media. (See <https://content.campussuite.com/social-media-guide-for-schools> for free materials.) We promoted our social media presence through links on our website and posters displayed in our buildings inviting our community to follow and like our pages.

Supplemental Duties

Creating a social media presence required our staff to wear multiple hats and take on additional responsibilities that might be primary duties for administrative staff in larger districts. We don't have a public information officer, a transportation director or a curriculum director. (Many smaller districts in our region don't have a full-time superintendent.)

All of the practical considerations from our research were put into place by district and school leaders who already were short on time and who certainly were not social media or public information experts.

It was worth it. Social media enables us to flood our followers with positive school culture and pride. No matter the platform, we're finding social media opens communication with all of our stakeholders. We're still learning and hope to improve our use to connect our educators and inform our parents, students and community about the great things happening in our northwest Montana district.

Readers can follow us at @Evergreensd50 (Twitter), Evergreen School District 50 (Facebook) and @Evergreensd50 (Instagram).

"But I was disappointed when TWITTER WASN'T REACHING OUR community as I had hoped."



LAURIE BARRON is superintendent of the Evergreen School District in Kalispell, Mont. E-mail: lbarron@evergreensd50.com. Twitter: @LaurieBarron

Common Categories

◆ Personal experiences and skills

Connecting Visually With 360-Degree Videos

I WAS INTRODUCED to virtual reality videos several years ago when I downloaded a roller coaster application and slid my phone into Google Cardboard, a fold-out cardboard viewing device. As I looked in all directions, I felt my stomach turn as if I was riding an actual roller coaster. The app was free and the cardboard device cost about \$20.

That experience started me wondering whether this technology could be leveraged to benefit communication strategies in our school district.

Easy Sharing

Our 3,500-student district in the suburbs west of Chicago does not employ a communications director so many of those responsibilities fall on our building and district administrative staff. I decided to experiment with this technology and purchased a 360-degree camera for about \$120. That camera plugs into my cell phone and allows me to capture videos that can be viewed in the same way as the original roller coaster I experienced.

As I began shooting videos, I uploaded them to YouTube and shared them with our staff and our community through e-mails and social media posts. Instead of riding on roller coasters, the viewers have been able to attend sporting events and pep rallies through my eyes. They have been able to walk behind the scenes of our district's construction projects and more.

In each video, the viewer can use either YouTube and their computer's cursor or their phones to look in all directions. If they use virtual reality headgear, they find themselves fully immersed in those experiences.

Staying Relevant

School districts need effective strategies for connecting with stakeholders. The communication can take many forms: face-to-face meetings, websites, e-mails, newsletters, press releases and more. When I watch my own children consume information, their preferred medium is video. That suggests we continually need to evolve our organization's communication to meet our audiences wherever they are.

As we strive to be relevant to our community, 360-degree virtual reality videos seem to be a logical evolution of those strategies.

To give this a try, I suggest you start by watching existing videos. Search YouTube with the terms "360" or "VR." Use your smartphone to travel to far-off places, see exotic animals and visit historic sites. Begin to imagine what your community could experience to help you tell your school district's story.

This technology can also be a game changer in the classroom. Students can use virtual reality to take an immersive tour of the Eiffel Tower, travel inside the human body and look in all directions or view a live re-enactment of the Civil War. There are virtual reality experiences for virtually all places and topics.

Proceed With Care

As in all things we do, be mindful of your district's policies and procedures. If you have students whose families have not granted permission to be the subject of photography or videography, you need to be extra careful with 360-degree video. When you begin filming, you are not only capturing what is in front of you, but also what is happening on either side of you, behind you, above you and below you.

Also, you may need to provide some level of education with your school community regarding how to access and fully experience your new video communications.

The best feedback I've received so far came from one of our support staff members who lives in our community. She stopped me in the building one day to explain that when I send out 360-degree updates of our construction projects, she always shares those videos with her neighbors. They enjoy seeing how their tax dollars are being spent, and they feel able to go behind the scenes with what is happening on the other side of those construction fences.

That type of feedback is priceless. Have some fun by experimenting with this modern way to connect with your community.

(Find our 360-degree videos at www.youtube.com/channel/UC0w7cz0L5V0cOYSQhPS03kA.)

"As we strive to be relevant to our community, 360-DEGREE VIRTUAL REALITY VIDEOS seemed to be a logical evolution of those strategies."



NICK POLYAK is superintendent of Leyden School District 212 in Franklin Park, Ill. E-mail: npolyak@leyden212.org. Twitter: @npolyak



Money Talk

Three Core Principles to Drive the District Forward

By PJ Caposey

H“*Having money isn’t everything, NOT having it is.*” —Kanye West

I am not positive, but I am pretty sure that I will be the first person to ever quote Kanye West when writing for the *Illinois School Board Journal*. But, in my experience, there is no comment or quotation that is truer when it comes to executive- and governance-level leadership of school districts.

As the quote indicates, having money will not necessarily make you a successful school district or

a successful school board. On the flipside, however, not having the money necessary to do the work, or having had the money and mismanaged it, is almost always the key to being unsuccessful.

Let me explain.

Every school district in Illinois wishes it had more money. This goes for districts spending less than \$10,000 per year operationally per student and those spending 2.5 times that. The disparities in school funding and resources are

abundant, but every leader I know wants more resources so they can do more for their kids. While whatever amount you have is “never enough,” the harsh reality is that no matter how affluent a district may seem, every leader and school board member will undoubtedly be faced with difficult financial decisions that carry an enormous amount of impact and gravity.

In our personal lives, this is referred to as lifestyle inflation. No matter how much money your

Common Categories

◆ Personal experiences and skills

Common Categories

◆ Distinctive district practices and initiatives

What We've Learned About Implementing Social-Emotional Learning

Author: 'No other initiative ... in my four districts was better received or more enthusiastically implemented'

BY SHELDON BERMAN

Creating an effective environment for social-emotional learning requires planning, professional development and significant staff time. It demands clarity of vision and focused attention by district and school leadership.

In each of the four school districts in which I have served as superintendent, social-emotional learning was pivotal in improving school climate, students' academic performance and connection to school, and teachers' morale. Over time, I've learned several important lessons that contribute to the effectiveness of SEL.

► **No. 1: The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.**

Teaching and learning are inherently social and emotional. A classroom culture where collaboration and support are the norm conveys a very different social and emotional message than a classroom based on strict discipline, rewards and punishment. A culture of caring and responsiveness supports academic learning by fostering a safe climate in which students can take risks, make mistakes, collaborate with others and receive support.

Structuring a positive social environment requires the same attention and planning for developmental appropriateness and consistency that we provide for the academic curriculum,

including clear messages, a common language and sequential skill development. When I observe a classroom, taking note of the culture and climate is key to helping me guide that teacher toward greater success with students.

The new 3rd graders in Mary Rose Meehan's classroom in Andover, Mass., gather on the rug for their morning meeting, eager to hear the hopes for the year that their parents wrote at last night's parent meeting. Listening, they compare their parents' responses with the ones they themselves wrote just days before. These hopes and goals will remain a yearlong reference point for the work they will do and the community they will build in their classroom.

► **No. 2: Weekly 30-minute lessons aren't sufficient.**

Social curricula that directly teach such skills as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building and responsible decision making are an important first step. However, these lessons must be integrated into academic instruction, modeled by adults and revisited throughout the day.

At its core, SEL is about helping students develop empathy and work cooperatively to

Common Categories

◆ Distinctive district practices and initiatives

Giving Students a Voice for Their Own Stories

WHAT'S YOUR superpower?

In public education, everyone has one. But in the midst of everything else going on in the world, whose superpowers are we letting go unnoticed?

Students want to be heard, represented and supported, and our purpose in the equation is to help them succeed. In precarious times, it's important to keep that in mind. We sometimes get wrapped up in numbers, and while they are important in keeping a school district operating, putting a face to why we do what we do is something we cannot afford to forget.

People want something they can connect with. When human connections are formed they evolve into trust. In education, student voices contain an authenticity that everyone can connect with. From a marketing perspective, they are our "customers" who can give their testimonials for others to believe in and invest in our organization.

Alternative Spokespeople

In today's world, social media provides storytelling tools that give us the power to reach thousands within seconds. But as Marvel Comics taught us, with great power comes great responsibility, and how we use the tools and sources is what really counts. Working smarter, not harder, is more crucial than ever before.

In school communications, we often have our go-to spokespeople: Those great on-camera individuals who can get the message out without spending hours editing "ums" and "aahs" in post-production (as a videographer, I thank these people!). But what if, rather than our experts, we turned to our students to tell those stories?

With nearly 22,000 students at Kenosha Unified School District, located in southeastern Wisconsin, we have not only been using student voices to represent our marketing and communication efforts, we've also found value in giving students an opportunity to tell their own stories.

We launched our Unified Heroes campaign in 2016 to highlight the stories of students who have big dreams, have risen above the odds or

have faced unimaginable challenges. Through the use of video and imagery, we introduced these young heroes to our community and beyond by sharing their stories on our social media platforms, primarily Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

Their stories immediately went viral. It turns out, if you give your students a voice, people will listen and share and want to hear more, which is exactly what happened for our Unified Heroes.

Following the launch, an elementary school organized a schoolwide art project around the stories and hosted a Unified Heroes meet-and-greet for students and families — they acted as if they were meeting celebrities!

They also were celebrated through an op-ed column our superintendent wrote for the local newspaper, which sparked a feature story in the same publication and coverage from regional TV stations. The public support from our leaders amplified these student voices. (Don't forget about this superpower!)

Tales of Determination

But beyond all the incredible things that happened for and because of our Unified Heroes, the thing that will forever stick with me, even more than their unique and incredible stories, is the students' courage. Every one of them opened up without hesitation to people who barely knew them. They trusted us with their world for the pure hope that it would somehow make a difference in another life.

What we need to keep in mind is that striving to make a difference is a common theme among our youth today. Making a change, no matter how small, is something so many feel determined to do, despite adversities they may have faced in life.

We all want to be heard. We all want to feel valued. We all want to belong to something. Make sure your students know and trust that your school or district is a safe place to express themselves. You never know what they may have to say and the impact it may have on the world.

Find the stories. Give them light. Meet Kenosha Unified School District's Unified Heroes at www.kusd.edu/unifiedheroes.

"In education, student voices contain an AUTHENTICITY that everyone can connect with."



JESSICA TUTTLE is a communications specialist for the Kenosha Unified School District in Kenosha, Wis. E-mail: jtuttle@kusd.edu. Twitter: @kusd



Reaching Beyond the Basics of School Safety

By Joshua W. Stafford

"It is one of the best things that I have been involved with in my 24 years of serving on a school board," explains John Summers, president of the Vienna HSD 13-3 school board. Summers is a retired clinical social services director and a certified substance abuse counselor who holds an undergraduate degree from Eastern Illinois University and a master's in educational psychology from Southern Illinois University. "To me it is a model that gets help to kids that they need ahead of time,

as opposed to being reactive to what could be a terrible situation. The wrap-around of having all of the community stakeholders and school personnel working in tandem for the best interest of our kids is a win for everyone."

School safety is a topic that continues to be vitally important, even more so in light of the current global pandemic. With schools across the state and nation taking various approaches to students returning back to learning, people who take a traditional

look at school safety might not see the need for continuous focus. But the reality is that no matter how your district is returning to learning, school safety must be a priority.

All the schools in the Vienna dual-district system have been offering in-person instruction, five days per week, with a slightly early dismissal for teachers to work with students who have chosen remote learning. Currently, about 90% of Vienna students are in-person, and 10% are remote learning.

Common Categories

◆ Distinctive district practices and initiatives

Common Categories

◆ Op-ed commentaries on issues of the moment.

Why Are We Scaring Off the Referees?

LAST FALL, AT a high school football game in Grand Rapids, Mich., I found myself focused on the visiting team's sideline much of the night and its interaction with the game officials. In the fourth quarter, I finally had seen enough. "Why would anyone want to do this?" I said, thinking it was muttered under my breath. Judging from the heads that spun toward me, it must have come out louder than I intended.

For much of the evening, whenever something negative happened to those on the opposite sideline, the coaches, followed by most of their fans, reacted angrily and boisterously. I rarely heard an encouraging word but instead watched a steady stream of vocal arrows slung at the five men wearing the striped shirts.

Most amazing to me was this: All the emotion was coming from the side that had trailed by more than 25 points much of the game. The referees had little impact on the results and zero influence over which team won or lost. Those officials walked off the field that night, with the final score 40-6, to a verbal storm of insults that defied any logic.

A Fulfilling Role

Why would anyone want to willingly subject themselves to this abusive behavior by serving as a referee at a high school sports event?

For the past 20 years, I've been able to answer that question with confidence, as the officiating avocation has enabled me to remain part of the game I love. Officiating scholastic football has kept me physically active and allowed me to build important and, frankly cherished, relationships with my on-field colleagues. At compensation of about \$70 per game, none of us has profited financially, yet it has been a richly fulfilling part of my life, and

thousands of others can articulate a similar feeling.

However, nationwide, we are experiencing a shortage of referees, umpires and game officials, owing to widespread retirements of many and the unwillingness of others to continue to be targets of abuse. Far fewer younger people are willing to step up today to be next in line to pick up the whistle, mask or penalty flag.

In trying to address why the decline is becoming so pronounced, our organization in Michigan asked groups of former high school sports officials who had left officiating why they haven't continued. In each survey, the top two reasons continue to be: (1) a lack of sportsmanship and,

(2) a lack of respect shown to officials by coaches and adult spectators.

It's ironic that, in school sports, which are extracurricular activities provided for the benefit of students, that our biggest challenges in recruiting and retaining game officials has little to do with the young people. Rather it is rooted deeply in the lack of civility and respect shown by adults.

Good Character

Can school leaders play a role in changing this downward dynamic? I believe so.

From years of observation, I see the person with the greatest impact on the culture of any sports program

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Common Categories

◆ Op-ed commentaries on issues of the moment.

Politicians Have a Role in Bullying, Too

ABOUT THE TIME my school district was updating its policies governing harassment and bullying, the election campaign season kicked into high gear. That meant our airwaves were inundated with political advertisements. The mean-spirited and hurtful rhetoric directed from one candidate to another has been impossible to ignore.

And it is not just the adult electorate who are noticing. Our children are watching, listening and learning.

I cannot help but wonder whether the incessant personal attacks have some bearing on the bullying that all of us in education are trying hard to address.

The behavior of those in the public eye — sports stars, musicians and, yes, candidates for public office — does influence our impressionable youth.

Personal Attacks

I admire all who seek to serve today in elected roles in our local, state and national governments. These individuals are to be commended for entering courageously into the democratic process — the likes of which can be vicious. The brutal nature of running for office has intensified to the point where well-qualified citizens will not even consider becoming a candidate because they so fear the risk of personal attacks on their reputation,

character and family.

Our students, with their eyes wide open, are observing how we adults are treating one another. This behavior is contributing to the rise in the number of bullying incidents that occur inside and outside of our schools.

I recognize that bullies have been a part of society throughout human existence. However, the intensity of bullying behavior has increased to unprecedented levels — sometimes to the tragic extent that a child feels the only way to escape is to commit suicide.

I am not proposing that politicians and political candidates are solely to blame. Certainly, the rapid



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Educator Shortage in 2021: Response and Recommendations

By Jim Rosborg

A committed group of educators has worked for the past six years to research the changes in the state rules and regulations and their impact on the number of candidates going into education in the state of Illinois.

The group includes the author, along with the Illinois Council of Professors in Education Administration (ICPEA), the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), Centralia High School Superintendent Chuck Lane, and

University of Illinois Clinical Professor Patrick Rice.

For the first three years, we surveyed and received data from a cross-section of universities in the state of Illinois. The past three years, we have worked with Jason Helfer, Emily Fox, and the IT department at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to present data from ISBE Annual Reports along with teacher shortage efforts made by ISBE as reported in their September 2018 report, "Teach

Illinois: Strong Teachers, Strong Classrooms." Teach Illinois provided ISBE's policy solutions to alleviate teacher shortages in Illinois. I encourage you to read this and the 2020 ISBE Annual Report which gives data on educators entering the field including full-time teacher equivalents, teacher and administrator licenses, endorsements, and license tests.

The number-one positive effort by ISBE continues to be the decision to eliminate the Test of

Common Categories

- ◆ Op-ed commentaries on issues of the moment.

Extracurriculars: An Important 'Extra'

By Denise Barr

If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it's that we all have a deep need to connect with other people. Our interactions and relationships with others directly impact our social-emotional well-being and are key to mental health. We all experienced limited social activity during the pandemic, whether due to social distancing, quarantine, isolation, or all of the above. Our youth experienced it, too, as schools were forced to close and take teaching and learning online.

During remote learning, most students were able to engage in their education and connect with their teachers and classmates. Still, they did not have an opportunity to experience other parts of a typical school day that may have previously been taken for granted, such as eating lunch with a friend, talking with others in the hallway or in between classes at lockers, or playing with others on the playground.

Besides these personal interactions throughout the school day in a normal school year, students have opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities after school. Whether looking to gain leadership skills through student council; connect with the community through clubs and honor societies; pursue an interest in books, STEM, music, or the environment; or play a sport for physical activity, students have a wide array of activities to choose from, and all provide

camaraderie with peers and promote healthy growth and development outside the classroom.

Crystal Lake CCSD 47 serves approximately 7,100 students in grades PK-8. The district's three middle schools currently offer over 70 clubs and activities and 11 sports. If a school doesn't offer a club or activity, students can start a new club as long as they obtain an adult sponsor. This is one of the ways the district is fulfilling its mission of "Empowering All Students: Learners Today—Leaders Tomorrow." Student-led extracurriculars allow for exploration and creative self-expression. Students typically try new things, learn a new skill, and meet people they wouldn't otherwise encounter.

Bringing students back to our schools this year for in-person learning has been challenging but rewarding. Students and staff seem truly grateful and happy to be back in school. However, we've discovered that, while many students have gained skills and experience with technology, maturity is lacking. Students are behind in the interpersonal skills needed to

interact appropriately with others or resolve conflict with peers. This is no doubt due to their limited social interactions during the pandemic. Because of this, it's more important now than ever for students to take advantage of the many afterschool clubs and activities that schools offer or that they connect with others by participating in activities outside of school. Schools can partner with community organizations to help spread the word to families about these extracurricular programs and activities through electronic backpack programs, such as Peachjar, a program used in our district.

Schools are more than academics, just as students are more than test scores. It's imperative that schools focus on the whole child and address students' mental health and social-emotional needs along with academics. For some students, the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports is a "window to the world." These experiences can leave a lasting impression on students and even change the trajectory of their lives. ■

Denise Barr is Director of Communications and Public Engagement at Crystal Lake CCSD 47.

Visit the *Journal* resources page at bit.ly/MJ22/res to learn about Peachjar and view a video with a spotlight on extracurricular clubs and activities at Hannah Beardsley Middle School.

I N S P I R A
Columns are submitted by members of the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association

Common Categories

◆ Op-ed commentaries on issues of the moment.

Common Categories

◆ Rewritten versions of
blog posts or
conference
presentations

Coping With Malcontents

They are everywhere. We have to deal with them everyday, and they can tear apart an organization or a family. I am referring to negative people.

They are tremendous energy drainers for adults, children and themselves. Negative people consume large financial and human resources and usually stand in the way of new ideas and programs. Parents, students and other staff members do not want to be around them. We become emotionally upset with negative people, who are frequent targets of complaint by others.

As school leaders, we become frustrated with negative people and the draining effect they have on everything and everybody they touch. Sometimes it becomes so difficult to deal with the negativism that we start becoming negative ourselves. We try to improve morale by accommodating some of their concerns, transferring them to other assignments and sometimes providing honest feedback through formal and informal evaluations.

Unfortunately, none of these approaches usually results in long-term positive change. Only when the nega-

You can deal with negative staff and prevent yourself from becoming negative

tive person leaves do we see any change taking place. With luck, no one else will step in to take his or her place.

Climate Control

Four years ago I set out on a quest to better understand negativism and develop strategies to reduce its impact on staff members, students and the overall school environment. I hoped to share what I learned about how to deal effectively with negative people, improve the overall atmosphere of a school district and increase the positive energy in classrooms. I also wanted to keep my own negativism in check and protect myself from getting dragged into the negativism. I realized personal change was necessary if I had any hope of

changing others.

After two years of research, interviews, observations and field testing and after six months of writing, I led my first training program titled "How To Deal With Negative People and Keep From Becoming Negative Yourself" for a school district administrative team. Since then, I've shared my training at state and national conventions. Clearly, many of us face this challenge in our school communities. What follows are practical suggestions that I hope will help you become a more positive leader and enable you to deal more effectively with negative people and situations.

● **Visualize success.**

Start by developing a picture in your mind of what you want to happen. Visualize staff members being positive and supportive of one another along with being respectful and nurturing toward students. See your principals working together as a positive, cohesive team with you and the board of education.

Keep this vision firmly implanted in your mind because this is what you will act on and move toward. If your vision becomes clouded with negative pictures,

Common Categories

◆ Rewritten versions of blog posts or conference presentations

Unleash Humor Wisely in Your Posts

ANY OF YOUR school district's English language arts teachers will tell you that tone and voice are important aspects of writing, and your district's director of public relations, if you are lucky enough to have one, will tell you that you should tailor those qualities to your particular audience.

The audience for your social media accounts has different expectations than the audience for a more formal publication or a letter to an individual. Social media is more conversational.

This is why you'll find big, national brands posting messages with humor and corresponding with followers as if they are texting a friend.

Social Humor

Fast-food chain Wendy's is known for being funny on Twitter. Recently, the company teased its competition: "Hey @McDonalds, heard the news. Happy #NationalFrozenFoodDay to you for all the frozen beef that's sticking around in your cheeseburgers."

School districts are no different — particularly districts fortunate to have social media specialists on their teams.

The Waterloo Region District School Board in Ontario, Canada, recently posted this on Twitter: "The weather wizards weren't ready to give our students and staff a #snowday. All our schools are OPEN and buses are running. Happy #FriYAY." They even included an animated GIF.

The Franklin Special School District in Tennessee posted several tweets on Valentine's Day that parodied the silly puns that children often send each other on the holiday. One of the district's posts showed some students wearing fake mustaches and other photo-booth props with the caption, "There's no disguising it ... we hope you have a #HappyValentinesDay."

And the Cherokee County Schools in Canton, Ga., got national attention last year when the district responded with humor to students trying to lobby them for a snow day. To a student who asked, "Tryna cancel school tomorrow?" the district's Twitter account responded, "We're not tryna, but we're monitoring conditions and forecasts to see if we hafta."

Underlying Messages

These kinds of fun or silly messages might be too informal for the district's official newsletter or website, but they are quite appropriate for social media. More importantly, they are engaging ways to convey district messages. The underlying message for Waterloo's snow tweet was that school was in session, but the delivery made the message more palatable to disappointed children.

The underlying messages for Franklin's Valentine tweet was that students are having fun and the district cares about its stakeholders, but the delivery was much more effective than stating that sentiment in dry, formal terms.

And the intention of the Cherokee County response was that safety is the primary factor in snow-day decisions, but the delivery was more suited to the question and medium.

Not So Funny

The risk in using humor in your school district's social media is not about sounding too informal. It is using inappropriate humor.

Particularly when students send snarky messages to the district's Twitter account as they lobby for a snow day, it can be tempting to reply with equal snark.

But if we ever give anyone a hard time from our social media accounts, it should be directed at ourselves. Self-deprecating humor is funny. Teasing students is not.

In my school district, we try to use an informal tone and engaging, personal content in our social media, but we are not as adept with quick humor as other districts.

So we recently took advantage of a professional development opportunity to hear Greta Perel speak. An expert copywriter and former university professor, Perel boiled down successful social media copywriting to four elements: humor, likeability, curiosity and small words.

She told us all readers are "lazy, selfish and distracted" when consuming content, so we must write in a way that grabs readers and cuts through the clutter.

With this road map in mind for my district's social media voice, my team and I are ready to punch up our tweets and Facebook posts and try our hand at a little more humor.

"The audience for your social media accounts has **DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS** than the audience for a more formal publication or a letter to an individual."



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Common Categories

◆ Off-beat circumstances

My Romance With Another Superintendent

BY BRUCE BLANCHARD

When people learn that both my wife and I are superintendents, they seem overcome with curiosity. The most frequent questions are: "Why would you do that?" "What's wrong with you anyway?" and "How does that work?"

The first answer involves philosophical discussions too lengthy for this forum, and the second gets into abnormal psychology, but I can try to explain the logistics of how it works.

As with many professional couples, our careers have not always been controlled by only work considerations. Job choices have been tempered by the other spouse's professional needs and considerations of our children. When the move to administration seemed right to both of us, we were fortunate enough to find principalships in the same school system.

However, as the time came to consider moving on, we recognized the unusual opportunity we had and took stock of our situation. Our youngest was in college, and my wife France and I decided to pursue the next logical job, a superintendency. We realized this might necessitate living apart, but after six years as principals in close proximity we weren't sure there ever was enough time left over after work to notice on a weekday. We hoped there would be common time available on weekends.

A Low Point

This is how three years after we both accepted district superintendencies we continue to make our career choices work. We maintain two homes. Even when France moved to a position much closer to my district, 36 miles instead of 106 miles apart, both school boards have an expectation of residency.

Maintaining two homes, while necessary, has been the low point of our dual superintendencies. It is not desirable from an emotional or financial point of view. We are getting better at it, and we will continue with this arrangement for at least a few more years if it allows us both to pursue professional goals.

We spend almost all weekends together at one house or the other (usually determined by who has a Saturday football or basketball game and which house is closer). Weeknights are up for grabs. In nice weather, if there aren't too many night meetings, one of us will commute. During basketball season with weather concerns, we are grateful for an in-town house and a good long-distance phone plan. At a minimum we have a midweek "date."

After meeting perhaps 25 times at a restaurant that was about halfway between our school districts, we were amused to learn that the staff had just figured out that despite separate cars arriving from separate directions, we were ac-

tually married and not involved in some torrid affair. Personally, at my age and condition, the thought that I could be mistaken for a Don Juan is the best compliment I've had in awhile.

Game Planning

A typical week looks like this:

Monday: We begin the day from my house where we spent Sunday. France arises an hour before me because her school is in the Central Time zone and mine is in Mountain Time zone. She has to be on the road by 5:45 a.m. At the end of the day I have a 7 p.m. meeting so we'll settle for a phone call.

Tuesday: We begin from our respective homes. We have the same educational service unit meeting so I stop at her school and we travel together, a bonus. Her school has a game that night and mine doesn't, so I stay to watch that with her. Supper is at the concession stand, of course. I stay at her house for the night.

Wednesday: We can both leave for school at 7:20 a.m. even though I am starting from her house because I lose an hour going back to Mountain Time. What a coup—we have no evening activities that night so France comes to my house for supper. There is snow in the forecast so she goes back to her place that evening in case she needs to make a cancellation call.

Thursday: No snow, of course. There never is when you've planned ahead. I have to host family-school conferences until 9 p.m. and she has a board meeting, so we stay in our own homes tonight.

Friday: We both have away games. Her house, while not exactly next door to either sports venue, is the closest spot so after the games the night is spent there.

Saturday: Her school plays at my school tonight. We carefully each wear the correct colors, listen to the same comment about "Who are you cheering for?" at least 463 times and then spend the night at my house.

Sunday: We check the weather forecast and the next day's schedule and decide who stays where and start all over.

Personal Protection

Despite the hectic schedule, which isn't that unfamiliar to most superintendents, our professional lives have many positive aspects. While becoming a superintendent can be a lonely and isolating experi-

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Common Categories

◆ Off-beat circumstances

A Personal Challenge: My Semester in 4th-Grade Band

ON OPENING DAY of my 10th year as a superintendent, I challenged all of our district's employees with this: If what we most want for our students is they be agile, curious, interested, independent learners, then *we must be that very thing first*.

We cannot talk about developing a learning community committed to creating learning environments where modern learners discover, connect, contribute and adapt to the changing world *if we're not doing so first*.

What I didn't count on soon after was a request to meet with one of our newest music teachers, Jamie Briggs. She asked me to join her 4th-grade introductory band — not for one ses-

“If I'm going to walk the talk, PUSH BOUNDARIES and ask our teachers to move beyond what we've always done, then I'd better do the same.”

sion but for the long term. Her reasoning was simple: Come and learn what it is that music teachers do, first hand. I heard her saying, “I so believe in the importance of music in our schools that I want to share it with you.”

Pushing My Limits

My reason for agreeing was also simple. If I'm going to walk the talk, push boundaries and ask our teachers to move beyond what we've always done, then I'd better do the same. I'm curious and a constant questioner. I'm not afraid to tackle hard subjects, hold difficult conversations or accept a new challenge. But this?

I can assure you there is likely no learning experience that would push me, extend my own boundaries and expose my limitations, insecurities and feelings of ineptitude as joining a band and performing publicly. (I'm in a full body sweat just writing about it here.)



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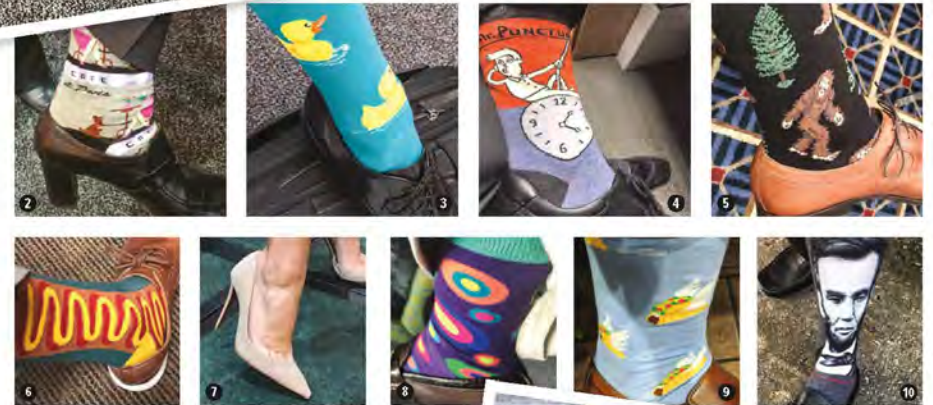


Sartorial Statements Through Socks

Convene some creative spirits among superintendents and toss in the combustible reach of social media and you just may wind up with an expansive collection of colorful socks.

At AASA conferences over the past year, association staff members have encouraged superintendents to take photos of their distinctive socks and shoes and share them on Twitter with the hashtags #suptsocks or #suptshoes.

In recent months, superintendents have taken this game to their schools and districts by encouraging principals and other staff members to follow suit, often sharing with the hashtag #sockgame.



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