



23rd ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS EXECUTIVES MEETING

July 11-13, 2024

Hyatt Regency Bellevue
900 Bellevue Way, NE
Bellevue, WA 98004-4272
#PRE2024

Working Agenda

Thursday, July 11

6 – 8:30 p.m.

Dinner

Daniel's Broiler Bellevue Place
21st floor of the Bank of America Tower in
the Hyatt Regency Bellevue

Sponsors:

Apptegy
Peachjar
PowerSchool
Qualtrics

Welcome

Tonya Harris, Director of Communications
Council of the Great City Schools

Ray Hart, Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

Bev Raymond, Chief of Staff
Seattle Public Schools

Guest Speaker

Sean Goode, Chief Executive Officer
Finding Goode

Sean is a speaker, facilitator, writer, executive coach, consultant and nonprofit leader driven by his mantra, “possibilities over problems,” born from his experience growing up in overwhelmingly challenging circumstances. Prior to operating the coaching and consulting practice “Finding Goode,” he served as Chief Impact and Learning officer at the Seattle Foundation, where he worked to move money back into the communities from which it was extracted as an act of repair. Sean began that work after stewarding the now nationally recognized nonprofit CHOOSE 180, where he worked to decriminalize youthful behavior and transform the very systems that have historically caused harm to marginalized communities. Before leading this Human Rights award-winning organization, Sean served as a chaplain in juvenile detention, championed gang and group intervention efforts, and worked to provide education and employment opportunities for youth in at-risk communities.

Friday, July 12

7:30 – 10 a.m.

Registration (Cedar Ballroom, 2nd floor)

8 – 9 a.m.

Breakfast (Larch Room, 3rd floor)
Sponsor: Target River

9 - 9:30 a.m.

Welcome & Introductions (Cedar Ballroom, 2nd floor)

9:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Increasing Enrollment in St. Paul

Like most urban school districts, Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has experienced a steady decline in enrollment starting several years before the pandemic. In the 2023-24 school year, SPPS saw its enrollment begin to stabilize at just over 33,000 PreK-12 students. This stabilization can be attributed to strategic decisions to invest in the types of educational programs the St. Paul community wants. Add in strategic promotional efforts and a few proactive principals, and the district is on track to continue this trend into the future.

In this session, attendees will learn how St. Paul works with its stakeholders and partners, including SchoolMint, to positively impact enrollment at individual schools and districtwide for the 2024-25 school year and beyond.

Presenters:

Erica Wacker, Director of Communications, St. Paul Public Schools

Charli DeWhitt, Senior Marketing & Enrollment Consultant, SchoolMint

10:15 – 11:00 a.m.

Passing a Levy: How to Communicate When You Can't Advocate

Do you have an initiative on an upcoming ballot but need help acquiring support for it? This session will equip you with the tools and tips to balance educating an audience and advocating for your cause. Learn about the successful tactics that Columbus City Schools utilized for the recent November 2023 passage of Issue 11, which awarded the district a multi-million dollar tax levy.

Presenter:

Letrece Griffin, Chief Communications Officer, Columbus City Schools

11:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Coffee Break

11:15 - 12:15 p.m.

What Works! Sharing Best Practices/Breakout Groups

Round Robin discussion in which districts will be asked to share successful communication strategies and initiatives. We will also break out into groups to discuss the top issues/challenges facing urban school district communicators, including:

- Communicating school closings
- Messaging cell phone bans
- Student recruitment and retention
- Improving internal communications
- Messaging around financial transparency

Moderator:

Barbara Griffith, Communications Consultant and Former Senior Communications Officer for Fort Worth Independent School District

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch (Larch Room, 3rd floor)

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

A Fireside Chat with Microsoft's Steve Clayton: Transforming Communications with AI

On November 30th, 2022, ChatGPT broke cover and communicators worldwide wondered (and worried) what this meant for their work. Over the last year, Microsoft's Communications team has been exploring how and where

to best apply generative AI across their work - from measurement and reporting through news operations, social media, content creation, and much more.

In this session, Steve Clayton, who leads this work as Vice President of Communications Strategy at Microsoft, will take you behind the scenes of how Microsoft has approached the use of AI across the discipline, best practices for applying AI to Comms and a sneak peek at some of the tools Microsoft has built internally to transform the work that over 250 communicators globally carry out for the company.

Moderator:

Justin Grayson, PR and Communications Expert, and Former Chief Communications and Community Engagement Officer for Long Beach Unified School District

2:30 – 3:15 p.m

Streamlining PR: AI Automation Strategies from the School District of Philadelphia

Learn how the School District of Philadelphia leverages customizations and workflow automations from Let's Talk, K12 Insight's customer service and intelligence platform, to streamline inbound inquiries, transform community engagement, and centralize communications across 200+ campuses. Let's Talk has helped the Philadelphia team replace emails with custom forms and landing pages and improve interdepartmental communications thanks to automated keyword routing that sends every incoming inquiry to the right person or team.

Gain practical insights and strategies to elevate your district's PR and customer service efforts, as well as create seamless, celebration-worthy interactions with stakeholders.

Presenter:

Alexandra Coppadge, Chief of Communications and Customer Service, School District of Philadelphia

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Refreshment Break

3:30 – 4:15 p.m

Beyond the Logo: Reimagining a School District's Brand Identity Through Leadership Transition

In this presentation, we explore navigating the shift in leadership of a legacy workforce that has been under

consistent leadership for 12 years. The plan highlights the strategic approach to introducing the District's new brand identity and voice while repositioning its recognizable logo and colors, aligning with evolving priorities and values. A key focus is guiding a legacy workforce through this transition, encouraging new ways of thinking, working, messaging, and reimagining the District.

This presentation also examines securing buy-in for the reimagined brand identity, reflecting the renewed direction and commitment to excellence, and discussing the importance of thoughtful leadership and communication.

Presenter:

Candice Grose, Deputy Chief of Communications,
Cleveland Metropolitan School District

4:15 p.m.

Adjourn

5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Cocktail Reception

Bake's Place Bar & Bistro

155 108th Ave NE, Ste

110

Bellevue, WA 98004

(A one-minute cab ride from the Hyatt Regency Bellevue)

Sponsors:

Finalsite

K12 Insight

ParentSquare

SchoolMint

Saturday, July 13

7:30 – 10 a.m.

Registration (Cedar Ballroom, 2nd floor)

8 – 9 a.m.

Breakfast (Larch Room, 3rd floor)

Sponsors:

The Grayson Agency

Barbara Griffith, Communications Consultant

9 – 9:45 a.m.

Humanizing Your Negotiations

When negotiations with your labor partners get rocky, it's human nature to want to take a step back to avoid becoming a target. However, in these trying times, your staff and families need you the most. They're seeking information, humanity, and calm. By humanizing your district in peaceful times, you've built the foundations necessary to bring that human element to difficult negotiations.

Join this session to get the inside scoop on Fresno Unified's communications strategy throughout 18 months of tough negotiations with the Fresno Teachers Association that ultimately averted a strike and ended in an agreement.

Presenter:

Nikki Henry, Chief Communications Officer, Fresno Unified School District

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

Meaningful Connections: Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Audiences

With approximately 25 million individuals in the U.S. speaking a language other than English at home, the educational landscape in the United States has never been more diverse. School districts must effectively communicate, engage, and connect with linguistically diverse students and their families.

This presentation explores the transformative potential of inclusive design, representation, and meaningful language accessibility. Throughout our discussion, we will unpack key components, including multicultural outreach, plain language, translation, inclusive design and language access strategies.

Presenter:

Marifer Sager, Director, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, Multnomah Education Service District

10:45 – 11 a.m.

Coffee Break

11 – 11:45 a.m.

All Means All - Expanding Parent Participation for Engaging Results

This session delves into the complexities of building meaningful connections between school and home. We'll share practical approaches and innovative solutions to foster inclusive and effective engagement, ensuring every family feels seen, heard, and valued in the educational journey. Attendees will leave with tips for building vibrant, engaged school communities.

Presenters:

Shayla Cannady, former Chief Communications Officer for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Anu Vaid, President & Founder, ParentSquare

Jay Klanfer, SVP Sales, ParentSquare

Noon – 1:15 p.m.

Lunch (Larch Room, 3rd floor)

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Your Social Media Content is Boring (but You Don't Have to Be)

Spending hours on a video just for it to bomb on social media hurts. Fluffy content that gets likes but doesn't move your strategy forward should hurt you just as much. School PR content hasn't kept up with the rest of the world. Our audiences are right to reject rote, outdated content. Break out of the cookie cutter of what school PR should be with a content development pipeline that proves being strategic should never mean being boring.

Presenter Request: Boring mindsets need not attend.

Presenter:

Mikel Philippi, Communications Manager at 27J Schools, Brighton, CO

2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

Effective Community Engagement: Insights from Detroit Public Schools Community District and Finalsite

Join Chrystal Wilson, APR, from Detroit Public Schools Community District and Cristina Pawlica from Finalsite for an insightful session on maximizing community engagement in urban school districts. This presentation will focus on adapting to diverse demographics by considering socioeconomic status, language diversity, learning levels, and generational differences.

Chrystal will share best practices for effectively communicating with stakeholders in urban school settings based on her extensive experience. Cristina will address districts' challenges in accommodating families, regardless of their home situations, and advocate for an "everything-first" approach. This approach aims to mitigate common disparities such as varying access to devices and broadband internet, differing levels of technology familiarity, platform preferences, and scheduling constraints of working parents or caretakers.

Presenters:

Chrystal Wilson, Assistant Superintendent, Detroit Public Schools Community District

Cristina Pawlica, Finalsite

3:15 - 4:00 p.m.

An open forum for attendees to discuss any additional issues or challenges facing urban school district communications that have arisen during the conference or were not covered in previous sessions

This is an opportunity to raise new topics and engage in a broader dialogue.

4:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Attire for the Conference: Business Casual. Please bring a sweater, blazer or wrap because the hotel meeting room may be chilly.