



## **22nd ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS EXECUTIVES MEETING**

**July 13-15, 2023**

### **St. Louis Union Station Hotel**

1820 Market Street  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
#PRE2023

### **Working Agenda**

#### **Thursday, July 13**

6 – 8:30 p.m.

#### **Dinner**

Favazza's "On the Hill" Restaurant  
5201 Southwest Avenue, St. Louis  
(A 5-minute cab ride from the Union Station Hotel)

#### **Welcome**

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

**Ray Hart**, Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools

#### **Greetings**

**Keisha Scarlett**, Superintendent  
St. Louis Public Schools

#### **Guest Speaker**

**Debbie Monterrey**, Morning Show Host  
KMOX Radio, The Voice of St. Louis

Debbie Monterrey joined KMOX Radio in 2003 and now anchors the news for the "Total Information AM" show. Debbie has been awarded five Edward R. Murrow Awards for best feature, hard news and sports feature reporting, two Missouri Broadcasting Awards and a National Scene Award from SAG-AFTRA for her work highlighting diversity. She was named a 2022 Media Person

of the Year by the St. Louis Press Club. Debbie is proud to live and work in St. Louis City and a tireless cheerleader for the region. She is also the parent of a student in St. Louis Public Schools.

## **Friday, July 14**

7:30 – 10 a.m.

**Registration** (New York/Illinois Central, 2nd floor)

8 – 9 a.m.

**Breakfast** (Frisco/Burlington, 2nd floor)  
**Sponsor:** SchoolMessenger

9 - 9:30 a.m.

**Welcome & Introductions** (New York/Illinois Central, 2nd floor)

### **2023 PRE Survey Findings**

**Joanne Coley**, Communications Manager, Council of the Great City Schools

9:30 – 10:15 a.m.

**Lessons From the Competition:** What tactics can CGCS members learn from how charter schools market themselves to compete in an increasingly competitive student enrollment environment.

In this session, the presenter will profile the launch and expansion of The Excel Center, a network of charter schools that grew to become the largest charter network in Indiana. She will discuss the marketing approach that they used and how traditional public school districts can adopt similar strategies to better attract students.

#### **Presenter:**

**Kim Reier**, Chief Strategy Officer for Indiana's Purdue Polytechnic High Schools

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

### **Panel: Lessons Learned from a Crisis**

(New York/Illinois Central, 2nd floor)

Urban school communicators will discuss the lessons they have learned dealing with a school shooting or other tragic event.

Topics that will be discussed:

- Lessons learned about the relationship between school communication departments and law enforcement PIO's
- The most effective ways to communicate with stakeholders during a crisis (parents, staff, students, community)
- Social media as a communications tool
- Finding the balance between timeliness and accuracy in crisis communications
- Day 1 vs. Day 2 and how your messaging will evolve
- How to deal with ramifications months later and beyond

**Panelists:**

**Erica Wacker**, Director, Office of Communications  
Saint Paul Public Schools

**George Sells**, Director of Communications and Marketing,  
St. Louis Public Schools

**Lori Willis**, Deputy Superintendent of Institutional Advancement,  
St. Louis Public Schools

**Moderator:**

**John McDonald**, Chief Operating Officer of the Council for  
School Safety Leadership

11:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Coffee Break

11:30 - 12:00 p.m.

**Roundtable Discussion on Crisis Communications**

Focused time for conferees to discuss issues/challenges while learning other perspectives from their peers in urban school districts.

**Moderator:**

**Roseann Canfora**, Interim Communications Officer  
Cleveland Metropolitan School District

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

**Lunch** (Frisco/Burlington, 2nd floor)

**Sponsor:** Peachjar

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**How to be a Better Storyteller**

(New York/Illinois Central, 2nd floor)

In this keynote session, award-winning storyteller Miri Rodriguez will explore the recent journey communicators and content creators have been on to deliver quality content in the digital age, the future of marketing and communications and the potential of generative AI to revolutionize storytelling. Drawing on her experience in communications and technology, Miri will bring insight into the latest industry trends and expose the ways in which AI is already being used to enhance storytelling, from personalized content creation to digital experience journeys. Miri will also explore the ethical implications of using AI in storytelling and the challenges that must be addressed to ensure that the technology is used responsibly. Through examples and insights from her own work, Miri will inspire conferees to embrace the power of AI to create more engaging, immersive, and impactful stories. This keynote session will give you a glimpse of what the future of storytelling might look like in the very near future.

**Presenter:**

**Miri Rodriguez**, Senior Storyteller for Health and Public Sector at Microsoft and bestselling author of Brand Storytelling

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

**Branding the Nation’s Second Largest School District**

Los Angeles Unified School District has embarked on an exciting new trajectory that allows the District to be more responsive to the needs of our students and school communities. As part of this intensified focus, Los Angeles Unified has introduced a new brand that reflects the diversity of our community while also reflecting the vibrancy and excitement of Los Angeles. In this presentation, the presenters will showcase the new branding and provide information on its design and rollout processes.

**Presenters:**

**Bích Ngoc Cao**, Senior Advisor, Communications

**Lourdes Valentine**, Senior Advisor, Communications

**Shannon Haber**, Chief of Communications, Engagement & Collaboration

3:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Refreshment Break

3:45 – 4:30 p.m.

**What Works! Sharing Best Practices**

Round Robin discussion in which districts will be asked to share successful communication strategies and initiatives.

**Moderator:**

**Barbara Griffith**, Communications Consultant

4:30 p.m.

**Adjourn**

5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

**Cocktail Reception**

SqWires Restaurant

1415 South 18<sup>th</sup> Street

St. Louis, MO 63104

(A 5-minute cab ride from the Union Station Hotel)

**Sponsors:**

Finalsite

K12 Insight

ParentSquare

SchoolMint

## **Saturday, July 15**

8 – 9 a.m.

**Breakfast** (Frisco/Burlington, 2nd floor)

9 – 9:45 a.m.

**Humanizing Your District** (New York/Illinois Central, 2nd floor)

The word “district” doesn’t usually conjure up warm, fuzzy feelings – rather the opposite usually. In such a divisive time, being seen as a faceless, nameless bureaucracy makes our school districts an easy target for community frustration. Join this session to learn actionable communication strategies you can implement today to enhance the humanity of your district communications, made even easier by using ParentSquare. Let’s humanize your district and build ambassadors of your students, staff, families, and community!

**Presenter:**

**Nikki Henry**, Chief Communications Officer, Fresno Unified School District

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

**A Workshop on Embracing New Horizons: Crafting Social Media Posts With Generative AI for PR Professionals**

Join us for an engaging workshop designed to introduce the potential of generative AI in shaping social media content. Dive into the world of ChatGPT, Canva’s Magic Write, Google’s Bard, etc., and discover how they can revolutionize your post creation across platforms. We’ll address the apprehensions stemming from traditional journalistic training and discuss how this new technology can be effectively integrated into PR strategies. Together, we’ll explore the ethical considerations and establish guidelines for responsible AI implementation, ensuring authenticity and brand trust. Don’t miss this opportunity to stay ahead of the curve in PR innovation, embrace the power of generative AI, and unleash your social media impact.

**Presenter:**

**Amy Simons**, Professor at the School of Journalism, University of Missouri

10:45 – 11 a.m.

Coffee Break

11 – 11:45 a.m.

**How Austin ISD Transformed School Board Communications**

Superintendents and trustees are under constant scrutiny, and expectations from parents are higher than ever. With the influx of feedback, questions, and concerns, it can be challenging to respond to every inquiry. Learn how Austin Independent School District's board and district leadership team have seamlessly collaborated to manage inbound communications from their community while building trust and demonstrating transparency.

**Presenter:**

**Stephanie Hawkins**, Community Relations Coordinator, Austin Independent School District

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

**Lunch** (Frisco/Burlington, 2nd floor)

**Sponsor:** Apptegy

2:00 – 2:45 p.m.

**Panel Discussion: Unleashing the Power of Digital Engagement for the Largest U.S. School Districts**

Join Finalsite, the new home of Blackboard K-12, for an impactful panel-led session that explores the power of school websites and mass communication tools in enhancing communication and marketing efforts. Discover practical strategies to establish a solid online presence, engage stakeholders, and deliver compelling content. Attendees will gain insights and leave with tips to help elevate their district's digital communication practices.

**Panelists:**

**Wendy Johnson**, Division Director, Strategic Communications, Wichita Public Schools

**Shayla Cannady**, Chief Communications Officer, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

**Kala Morrissey**, Director of Communications, Omaha Public Schools

3:00 – 3:45 p.m.

**Amplifying Impact: Leveraging Digital Advertising to Showcase ARP and ESSER Funding in Urban School Districts**

This session delves into the power of digital advertising in spotlighting the impactful use of ARP and ESSER funds by school districts. We will discuss the results of national and geotargeted Meta ads from the Council of the Great City Schools and best practices schools and districts can use to effectively leveraging digital ads and organic social to tell their story.

**Presenter:**

**Sami Ghani**, Senior Director, Digital, The Hatcher Group

3:45 – 4:00 p.m.

Wrap Up and Discussion of Next Year's Conference in Bellevue, Washington, (eastside of Seattle)

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.

**Airport Information:**

St. Louis Union Station is located:

14 miles from Lambert-St. Louis International Airport

**Evaluation Survey:** Please fill out this survey after the conference ends. Responses are anonymous.

<https://tinyurl.com/e66d85wa>