Best Practices for School Communicators and More Timely Professional Development Advice Among Highlights of ALSPRA’s Spring Conference

Dozens of school communicators from across the state, including superintendents, principals, and public information managers, came together recently for the annual Alabama School Public Relations Association (ALSPRA) Spring Conference. Hosted at the Vestavia Hills City School System’s central office building, the conference focused on techniques designed to help school communicators more effectively tell their district’s stories.

The day-long conference featured workshops on social media management and engagement, including the keynote address, “Pocket PR for Principals”; an update on proposed legislative initiatives that would have an impact on K-12 public education; tips for communicating assessment data; and a crisis communications case study centered on the rebranding of the Vestavia Hills High Schools Rebels.

In addition, administrators from nearly a dozen districts received feedback on the strategic communications plans they have created as part of their participation in an ACLD-approved PLU facilitated by ALSPRA. The professional development course is assisting the representatives from the participating districts, many of which do not have a dedicated public relations practitioner on staff, with developing strategies and tactics to communicate with community and stakeholder groups.

Look Before You Leap: Consider Your Research Options

The old saying “Look before you leap” holds true in many situations, including school communication.

In our line of work, however, we might adjust the phrase to say “Look before, during and after you leap,” says Karma Krause, special projects facilitator in the Community Relations and Communications Department for Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon.

In all phases of a communication project, taking a look through research before creating content, before releasing materials, and at the close of the project will help ensure that initiative’s success, Krause said.

The ALSPRA Spring Conference also included the presentation of the organization’s Excellence in Communications Awards. Among those receiving honors were:

- Excellence in Writing – Vestavia Hills City School System: Op-EZ – A Race Stresses for Excellence
- ALSPRA Communicator of the Year – Suzyanne Sullivan, Madison County School System
- Newsletter/Newspaper – Madison County Schools: The Blue & Gold (online newsletter)
- Social Media – Madison County Schools: Buckhorn High School website

Electronic Media – Tuscaloosa City School System: Inside Tuscaloosa Schools (video)

Outstanding Leadership in School/Community Relations – Dr. Sheila Phillips, Superintendent Vestavia Hills City School System
Excellence in Writing – Vestavia Hills City School System: Op-EZ – A Race Stresses for Excellence

Electronic Media – Tuscaloosa City School System: Inside Tuscaloosa Schools (video)

Nominating Your Superintendent for the 2016 Bob Grossman Leadership in School Communications Award

The Bob Grossman Leadership in School Communications Award annually recognizes a practicing superintendent of schools or CEO of an education agency, service center or intermediate unit for outstanding leadership in school public relations and communications. This outstanding award program is sponsored by SchoolMessenger. If you’d like to nominate your superintendent, you can complete the nomination form here. Nomination deadline is April 1.

2016 ALSPRA Scholarship – Emily Brown of Arab High School

More highlights from the ALSPRA Spring Conference can be viewed here. If you are interested in becoming a member of ALSPRA, visit www.alspra.org. For information about Bob Grossman, contact Bob Grossman at bgrossman@hsv-k12.org.