

Ways to Build and Grow Relationships With Your Community

A New Superintendent's Checklist

As the chief executive and top decision maker, superintendents are the single most identifiable leader of a school district. Much of your work may take place behind the scenes or in a boardroom, but you remain the face and the name of most school districts. When school districts make major announcements, launch campaigns or seek bonds, the superintendent takes the lead; likewise, when problems arise the superintendent is the person the community looks to for answers. In addition to teachers and other school district employees, strong and effective relationships with parents, community groups, residents, media, and police — before crisis strikes — is essential to maintaining a superior reputation and community support.

Superintendents who proactively and personally reach out to these key audiences with messages and actions that demonstrate their concern for students, teachers and quality education for their community will build lasting relationships of respect and trust.

1. Parents

- ❑ Get to know the parents in your district and let them get to know you. Schedule and promote “Super Night” or “Super Snack” events at local schools so parents have an opportunity to get to know you.

2. Community Groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Zonta, etc.)

- ❑ Your community’s business leaders are meeting every week. Make sure you’re with them by joining one of these key groups.

3. City and State elected and appointed officials

- ❑ Get to know the local officials in your district — mayor, city manager, county commissioners, township board members, police chief, fire chief, city or township clerk, county clerk, county sheriff.
- ❑ Meet with your district’s *state* legislators at least twice a year to discuss education issues and seek their input.

4. Opinion Leaders

- ❑ Identify the top five to ten opinion leaders in the community — the mayor, local Chamber(s) of Commerce president, local pastors, neighborhood association leaders, hospital CEO, etc. — and meet with them regularly.

5. Media

- ❑ Get to know the editorial editor of your local newspaper(s) and meet with him or her for lunch or coffee at least twice a year.
- ❑ Make sure you establish a working relationship with the local reporters who cover your district as soon as possible.
- ❑ For additional media connection ideas visit www.NSPRA.org and www.MSPRA.org.

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