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AN INVESTIGATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS IN  
THE FIRST-CLASS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS  
IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

---

by  
Richard Grove Boon  
August, 1968

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SPECIAL  
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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Today more than at any other time of man's existence there is an urgent need for improved communication approaches and channels. The isolation among individuals and the chasms between peoples have been increased tremendously by automa-  
tive technology, burgeoning populations, and expanding know-  
ledge. In no small manner have these twentieth century pro-  
ducts affected the communities in which educational institu-  
tions exist. Certainly, school officials themselves have  
experienced the breakdown in lines of communication with the  
community.

Paramount to the establishment and maintenance of  
school-community communication is an effective public rela-  
tions program. Of equal importance is the school district's  
public relations officer. This study was conducted to ascer-  
tain the personnel and practices that were involved in exist-  
ing school-community public relations programs.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purposes of this study  
were (1) to identify the school district officers who devoted  
full- or part-time duty to the promotion of public relations;  
(2) to identify the types of communication that they employed;

and (3) to compare such factors as the previous position held by the public relations officer to the present position held by the public relations officer, the area of emphasis public relations program receives to the competency public relations officer feels in emphasized area, and the size of district student enrollment to the desire for the establishment of full- or part-time public relations positions.

Importance of the study. That democracy represents government for and by the people is for the most part unquestioned. That the public institutions within a democracy are for the people similarly is without question. Subject to much questioning would be the belief that public schools belong wholly to their students. The adult members of society who finance the schools which educate the citizenry have a vested right in laying claim to their ownership.

Jones said, "In view of the fact that the schools belong to the public, the people are entitled to be fully informed at all times regarding school problems and needs (22:61)." In further support of this contention, McCloskey purported that:

The people have a right to a thorough understanding of the education system they are asked to support. In a democracy widespread thought and analysis are primary. In the long run, only understanding can yield adequate support (26:24).

This understanding of the schools by the people can

be enhanced through a school-community public relations program. A viable program of public relations can provide the communication link between the schools and the community. Therein, the purposes and goals set forth by the educators within the educational institutions can be brought before the people and interpreted for their understanding. For McCloskey, the requirements of good community relations necessitate going beyond the mere obligation of exposing information to the people as he asserted in the following conclusion:

So for responsible educators the question is not whether we will, or will not, plan to activate public consent for support of an adequate school system, but whether we will do so responsibly and effectively. Will we use modern communication processes to inform people fully and accurately about educational values and the educational needs of their children? As specialists paid to devise and provide adequate schooling, will we furnish reliable advice to those who depend on us for guidance? The answer must be that of course we will. Refusal or neglect to do so would deprive citizens of information and judgments they rightly expect us to provide and would constitute gross neglect of professional duty (26:231).

To achieve effective and productive public relations, the program itself must be co-ordinated. The responsibility for this co-ordination belongs to an administrative member of the school district. In the first W. Harold Kingsley Memorial Lecture delivered to the National School Public Relations Association Seminar in 1963, Arthur H. Rice, past editor of The Nation's Schools, said, "School public rela-

tions requires that the specialist in this field be a high-ranking member of the administrative team or cabinet (32:17)."

Improving public understanding is an intelligent approach to securing public support of the school program. This approach is an educational imperative. Korvola, in a study which attempted to correlate mass media and success of financial elections in Washington state school districts, emphasized the importance of public relations programs in his conclusion by stating that:

The task of securing voter approval of school tax levies is crucial for the maintenance and improvement of Washington's educational standards. Additional research in this area should be conducted (25:56).

Because of the need for citizens in a community to receive information for their own understanding of the school program and since a functional public relations program must be co-ordinated by an administrative officer, this study was initiated to identify through application of the normative-survey approach the various programs now utilized by public school districts.

Delimitations of the study. This investigation included only the sixty-three first-class school districts in the state of Washington. Questionnaires were sent to all of the district superintendents except three. These three were administrators who were previously identified as district public relations officers and were sent the survey



form directly. If the districts employed individuals who devoted either full- or part-time to school public relations, then the superintendents were requested to forward the questionnaires to these people. However, if school-community public relations were the responsibilities of the superintendents, then they were to answer the questionnaires.

As time was important to the completion of the study, the respondents were allowed only three weeks in which to answer and return the survey instrument.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Significant in the discussion of any research work would be the consideration of recurring terms which constitute the important elements of a study by giving direction and emphasis. For clarification purposes, these words should be defined operationally as used within the contextual framework of an investigation. Below appear the terms and definitions which were meaningful in the researching and reporting of this study.

Public relations. Public relations was defined as those interactions between all members of the school district personnel and all inhabitants within the school district. Public relations was considered to be reciprocating communications which involved an honest interpretation of school

goals and needs by school members for lay citizens and which included a response from the community to school personnel.

Public relations officers. A public relations officer was defined as an administrator who rendered either full- or part-time services to the implementation and co-ordination of a school-community public relations program.

Informational services. An informational service was defined as those modes of verbal or nonverbal communication which could be either direct or indirect in approach and which would be either individual or group oriented in scope. The informational services referred to in the survey questionnaire were direct and indirect mail, publications, speakers' bureau, committees, school personnel, mass media, opinion poll, pilot sampling, and the depth interview.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written about the program of school-community public relations. When this writer explored the area, he soon discovered that the literature concerning school-community relationships not only reported research in education but also yielded research in the behavioral sciences as well. Such is the case in human relations studies wherein the investigator must treat the nature of attitudes and opinions.

Even though this present study was concerned with public relations, the intent of this researcher was to survey the commitments by public school district personnel to school-community interaction. Because of this direction, very little literature was included that pertained to the behavioral analysis of attitudes and opinions exhibited by various community publics.

The review of literature was three-dimensional. First, emphasis was placed upon those educational studies in the literature which reported about the needs and purposes of public relations programs. Then, reading of the literature was directed toward accumulating the various characteristics of school public relations. Lastly, the literature was reviewed to explore those existing or recommended public rela-

tions positions which are necessary to strengthen school-community relationships.

I. LITERATURE ON THE NEEDS AND PURPOSES OF  
SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

Needs of a public relations program. Concerning the school's view of the community's role in education, perhaps what could have been previously referred to as simply expectation is now termed anxious uncertainty. School administrators have learned in recent years that the people within their districts are no longer willing to continue to leave blank checks at the polls during elections with no questions asked. Consequently, the school personnel has had to draw upon the approaches of other enterprises. Wilson explained the need in this manner:

It is no longer possible for any institution which is dependent upon public support and understanding to exist without effectively and continually practicing good public relations--whether that institution is a soap company, an airline, a labor union, or a school system (43:77).

As early as 1927, interested people have sought to expand educational public relations. A. B. Moehlman (29) completed a text, Public School Relations, in which he championed the need for sound public relations programs. In the same year, R. E. Garland (15:277-280) conducted a survey to explore the practices of the largest cities in the United

States. Then, as recent as March of 1968, the Task Force on Standards, a committee of the National School Public Relations Association, gave important impetus to the need of establishing school public relations programs:

Recognition of public relations as a management function of primary importance shall be demonstrated through the existence of a public relations unit in the organization staffed by professional public relations personnel (37:2).

A more specific consideration of the public relations need of school districts was given by Cutlip and Center:

This need for sounder, more comprehensive public relations lies in the justification of the amount, kind, and cost of education. Even without the stimulus of organized PR programs, most people regard their school as important and accept the obligation to support them at their present level. Developing adequate support for more funds and creating understanding of changes needed require public relations programs (10:394).

Erbe, too, discussed the problem of community fixation at the status quo level in the educational program. He believed that "the basic reason for developing a good public relations program should be to speed up the rate at which a school can advance from its present level toward being a better school (13:32)."

The issue has two sides as most do and can be recognized in the results of a 1960 survey headed by Columbia University researcher William S. Vincent. The findings of the investigation substantiated the need of public relations programs:

Almost all the groups sampled were convinced that schools, in general, are not doing an adequate job of keeping the public informed about what they are doing. Many respondents were unable to cite a particular school or a good example to illustrate their concept of what "good" education consists of (21:68).

Campbell and Gregg (5:48) stated that every public relations program must be replete with facts. There should be no differential handling of the truth regardless of whether the information communicated is good or bad. Lack of amount and of appropriate communication on the part of school administrators was recognized at a 1953 district meeting of superintendents in Pennsylvania. They concluded that "the school definitely needs to do a better job of informing all people about their schools (17:60)."

In the 1958 recommendation report, Mass Communication and Education, the Educational Policies Commission summed up the apparent need for public relations programs:

Whatever the causes, the substantial nature of the increase is clear. It has been marked by the appearance of considerable opinions and facts about education in the popular press and on radio and television. The growth of the field of educational public relations has indicated the profession's recognition of the importance of the area (12:116).

Purposes of a public relations program. Probably one of the best considerations on the purposes of school public relations programs was set forth in the Twenty-eighth Year Book of the American Association of School Administrators. The purposes of public relations are (1:14):

1. To inform the public as to the work of the school.
2. To establish confidence in the schools.
3. To rally support for proper maintenance of the educational program.
4. To develop awareness of the importance of education in a democracy.
5. To improve the partnership concept by uniting parents and teachers in meeting the educational needs of the children.
6. To integrate home, school, and community in improving the educational opportunities for children.
7. To evaluate the offering of the school in meeting the needs of the children of the community.
8. To correct misunderstandings as to the aims and activities of the school.

Jones' list of reasons that school administrators should consider when constructing a program of school-community relations dealt with subjects in a different manner (23:2-4):

1. Changing school patterns.
2. Possibilities for improvement.
3. Citizen information.
4. Changing faculty status.
5. Public opinion of teachers.
6. Pressure groups.

Certainly, the interrelationship of needs and purposes required no lengthy discourse to prove their constituent behaviors. Any innovation in public relations would necessarily involve articulating the inherent needs and purposes of the program itself.

## II. LITERATURE ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

The literature continually revealed certain features

which investigators and reporters felt to be vital in effective public relations programs. From the reading, this author recorded the following characteristics: (1) Two-way communication, (face-to-face, feedback, opinion polls and surveys, and informational services); (2) Planning (short- and long-range); (3) Continuous programs (calendar of events and in-service); and (4) Evaluation.

Two-way communication. Many of the investigators agreed that two-way communication was highly important in the successful functioning of school-community relationships (37:1) (17:60) (18:12) (30:283). Though in general terms, Harral adequately gave perspective to this phase of public relations in this statement: "Two way communications--both sending and receiving--must be maintained at all times between the administrator and personnel and between all institutional agencies and their publics (18:12)."

For a healthy climate of communication to exist, the channels for two-way exchange must be clear. Parnell (32:50) observed that parents were cooperative in giving assistance and support to their schools. However, frequently they did not know how to offer their aid because the communication pathways were closed. His observation was bolstered by Richard F. Carter, study director for a three-year joint investigation of community understanding and financial sup-



port by the School of Education and the Institute for Communication Research at Stanford University conducted under the auspices of the United States Office of Education. Carter found this feeling among his sample voters:

Two-thirds of the voters would like to turn to a school official for information about the schools, but only 1/3 nominate a school official as a person they know who seems to be well informed on school affairs (6:247).

Much of the literature emphasized that effective school-communications were directly proportional to the extent of personable contacts between the two groups. Sumption concluded that:

Recent studies indicate that the public-relations program of the public school must be a two-way process. The older method of releasing information about the school for the absorption of the public is being replaced by the community participation method. When people in the community study school problems, they not only contribute valuable information and resources to the School, but they also gain a better understanding of the modern curriculum and teaching methods (38:326).

Schramm also maintained the importance of person-to-person contact as the findings of his studies revealed the significance of this type of public relations. The data indicated:

Voters who were involved in some personal participation or contact with school representatives and who had direct access to information about schools were twice as likely to vote favorably as those who relied for information on the media (36:205).

Klapper's findings (25:107-110) corroborated the above data that person-to-person interaction surpassed the mass

media in building and strengthening school-community relationships. According to McCloskey, as the personal approach enhances two-way communication, similarly does individual contact offer situations for people "to participate and identify themselves with the subjects they discuss and with each other. It provides what communicators call 'feedback' (28:19)."

Two-way communication: feedback. Harral sketched the necessity of obtaining information from the community when he stated:

Frequent studies should be made to reveal any fundamental changes that are taking place in public opinion, so that the institution may get a better perspective of its activities and services (18:12).

Blyth (3:48) and Thayer (39:71) declared that the schools must be concerned with the interpretation of community information. Answers to previous questions which went unanswered for lack of knowledge could be located in resource pools accumulated by various fact and opinion getting devices. As Crosby noted:

Don't overlook the importance of a post-election poll--even if you lost. It is as valuable as the priceless point after touchdown. You know how people voted, but what influenced their vote? How long before the election did they decide? A good opinion poll will give you answers to use next time (9:28).

Two-way communication: opinion polls and survey. The use of such techniques and instruments as interviews, polls,

and surveys proceeded quite naturally from the established need of obtaining community feedback (22:193-198) (30:195) (27:238). Even though these measuring devices are not empirically perfect, school administrators found that they have been refined to the point where an accurate measurement of community attitudes could be acquired, attitudes which must be known to give direction and scope to the public relations program (18:15). Harrington (19:98) and Kindred (24:11-12) gave much credibility to the utilization of the questionnaire as a communication vehicle from which to receive valuable feedback from community publics.

Two-way communication: informational services. The full range of effects in utilizing two-way communication was to say the least multifarious. However, McCloskey maintained that:

There are, of course, limits to our opportunity for two-way communication. Neither principals nor teachers have sufficient time or energy to discuss, personally, all details of school matters with each other or with all pupils, parents, or elderly tax payers. For that reason they must depend partly on letters, bulletins, news releases, television-radio broadcasts, posters, and displays to maintain some contact with those they seldom or never meet (28:19).

Crosby stated that citizens receive "their information from a number of sources--from newspapers, radio, television, and literature from parent groups and from schools, although the latter ranks low (9:27)." Thus, Harral advocated the

premise that "by continuous use of all channels and media, every segment of the public should be given a full, frank, authoritative account of institutional policies, activities, objectives, and needs (18:12)."

Planning: short- and long-range. Temporary and permanent investments in the school program both required short- and long-range planning (27:234-236). Many school authorities have experienced the unsatisfying results of a poorly planned venture or one which received no planning at all. Incidences like these led Demeter to claim:

The greatest fault of school PR is the lack of planning. School public relations programs are conducted on a crisis-to-crisis or hit-and-miss basis. The activities consist of reactions to events, rather than of efforts to control events. Thus, school PR finds itself in a defensive operation. Adequate planning would involve establishment of goals, analysis of publics, agreement on priorities, programming of a course of action, and assignment of responsibilities (11:51).

Cutlip and Center emphasized continuous public relations planning when they stated:

Sometimes public relations practitioners tend to get the cart and the horse mixed up. PR must serve education and not the reverse. This is the reason for planning your PR. Otherwise, the PR effort is likely to wander off into irrelevant byways of miscellany busywork, or it may tend to become an end in itself (10:397).

Furthermore, they believed that "the schools must take the initiative to see that all that is interesting and informative about education is put before the public, day in, day out, the year round (10:399)."

Continuous programs: calendar of events and in-service.

Throughout the literature, many educators remained adamant in their belief that an endeavor to maintain a continuous program of school-community public relations would produce greater benefits in terms of community interest and support (12:119) (37:4-5) (22:201). The 1950 American Association of School Administrators firmly adhered to each district's necessity of creating "a calendar of school publicity on a year-long basis, with stories spaced throughout the twelve months (1:277-279)." In a survey involving school district superintendents and newspaper editors in the state of Kansas, Schmidt concluded that "maintenance of publicity calendars, scrapbooks, and school news networks should be of school staff activities (35:5147)."

Cutlip and Center undertook a greater measure when they called for an integrated effort on the parts of all school personnel:

Public relations awareness must permeate the school system. Each member of the school staff, from principal to bus driver to janitor to school nurse, must be brought into the effort. This can best be accomplished through a continuing in-service training program (10:396).

An in-service program for school public relations was favored by Olds also (31:14).

Evaluation. Administrators of successful programs of school-community public relations based their achieve-

ments upon the constant appraisal of goals, approaches, and outcomes (30:267). Jones contended that all "public relations activities must be evaluated in terms of their objectives and purposes (23:45)." Others, too have concluded similarly (19:98) (37:5) (10:396).

### III. LITERATURE ON SCHOOL-COMMUNITY

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS

Organization of public relations. In surveying various school-community public relations programs, Jones found that:

There is some agreement that there are three general types of organization in current use. These are: (1) a centralized plan; (2) a decentralized plan; and (3) a coordinate plan. The centralized plan places the responsibility for the program with the chief administrative officer and his immediate line and staff personnel. The decentralized plan places the responsibility for the program with the building principal and his staff. The coordinate plan combines features from both of the others (23:31).

Hickey, in his survey study of public relations in selected cities within the United States, arrived at six organizational types of public relations programs (20:319):

1. Superintendent.
2. Administrative staff officer.
3. Director of public school relations.
4. Building principal.
5. Decentralized principal.
6. Teacher committee.

#### Administrative responsibilities in public relations.

Most apparent from the reading was the general agreement

among educators who categorized the task of discharging a public relations program as an administrative function (34:11). Many saw the superintendent who is executive chief of the school district as the leader of the program (30:268) (18:30,33) (10:394) (1:127). Some like Moehlman and Van Zwoll have identified the building principal as the key figure and as "the most important field administrative agent (30:271) (4:7) (8:2)."

Need for public relations officer. Several researchers disagreed with the contention that superintendents and principals should be the chief co-ordinators in a program of school-community public relations. Kindred viewed the difficulty in this manner:

As the chief administrative officer, the superintendent of schools has the responsibility of interpreting the school program. However, it is unrealistic to think that a superintendent can act as something of a press officer and still solve the problems of finance, building programs, curriculum changes, and bus service for the fourteen-year-old who lives a half-block off the line (24:29).

In a 1960 interview, Principal George Fitch of the Greenburgh, New York, school district, declared the same reflections as Kindred:

When any administrator is responsible for a public relation's program, he doesn't have time to do the planning he should be doing. In other words, he can't have a planned, regular program in addition to all of his other work, and do both jobs properly (14:89).

For McCloskey, the size of the district made little

difference as he purported that:

Even in a small school system a superintendent cannot perform more than a fraction of all useful communication functions. To get a reasonable portion of the total job done, he must enlist and encourage intelligent effort in the part of many others (27:268).

Reck claimed the solution lay in securing a full-time public relations officer:

Important duties make it impossible for administrative officers to give public relations the time and attention requisite for success. A full-time public relations director should, therefore, be employed as the first step in building the program (33:381).

Haring (17:62) and Chester (7:17-18) concurred on the expediency of employing a full-time school-community relations co-ordinator.

Qualifications of the public relations officer. The ideal public relations officer was depicted by Bernays in his description of the position:

I think that the ideal public relations man should, first of all, be a man of character and integrity, who has acquired a sense of judgment and logic without having lost the ability to think creatively and imaginatively. He should be truthful and discreet; he should be objective, but possessed of a deep interest in the solution of problems. From his broad cultural background, he should have developed considerably intellectual curiosity; and he should have effective powers of analysis and synthesis along with the rare quality of intuition. And with all these characteristics, he should be trained in the social sciences and in the mechanics of public relations (2:126)

A somewhat more practical concept of the qualifications for this public relations job was advanced by Rice (34:19).



The public relations applicant should be competent in working with the mass media and other informational services as well as demonstrate administrative proficiency in the areas of curriculum, finance, and personnel.

Sizes of cities and districts and public relations positions. In the literature much attention had been given to the size of population and the establishment of positions for public relations officers. However, in practices and in recommendations there was little agreement.

As early as 1927, Moehlman (29:68) posited the establishment of a full-time public relations director for cities of 50,000 or more population. In the same year, an investigation by Garland (15:278) revealed that of forty-eight major United States cities responding, only three possessed a public relations officer. Later, in 1937, Grinnell brought forth the following considerations:

In the larger school systems of the country a full-time Director of School Interpretation will be necessary. Again no definite size of community can be stipulated, but probably any city of 75,000 or more population can afford such an officer in the school system (16:46).

In 1963, a state survey of Kansas newspaper editors and school district superintendents by Schmidt turned up varying attitudes toward the ratio of public relations personnel and school enrollment size:

There was a big spread of opinion among both editors and superintendents about how large a school system

should be before adding a public relations staff member. Both groups offered a median enrollment level of 3,500 to 5,000 pupils to justify a full-time position; the median enrollment level for a part-time staffer was 1,200 to 2,500 pupils (35:5147).

Jones, in 1966, summarized the convictions of a few of his colleagues when he stated that:

Many authorities in educational administration suggest that any school district located in a community with a population of 50,000 or more can benefit by the employment of a full-time director of public relations (23:46).

In a 1966-67 survey of 198 school systems, the Educational Research Service (40:29) compiled significant information concerning the administration of school public relations programs. Full-time public relations officers were maintained in sixty per cent of the districts. Eighteen per cent of the school system employed part-time individuals for this task. Of respondents from districts containing less than 25,000 inhabitants, again sixty per cent possessed a full-time director and thirty per cent employed part-time coordinators.

As recent as March 23, 1968, the Task Force on Standards submitted their conclusions in "Standards for Educational Public Relations Programs," a report to the officers and members of the National School Public Relations Association. Included in the statement were guidelines for school districts to utilize in employing public relations officers. They were (37:3):

As a general rule, a minimum allocation of full-time professional public relations staff according to size of student enrollments in school districts shall be:

1. One for up to 24,999 pupils.
2. Two for 25,000 to 49,999 pupils.
3. Three for 50,000 to 99,999 pupils.
4. Five for 100,000 and over.

## CHAPTER III

### STUDY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Whereas the first chapter introduced the problem and the second chapter presented literature related to the problem, this chapter was created exclusively to describe and explain the investigation of the problem. The contents herein served to clarify the research design and the study procedures used to accumulate information about existing school-community public relations programs.

#### I. RESEARCH SCOPE

Survey population. The subjects for this investigation were chosen from the public school districts in the state of Washington. Specifically, this researcher selected those public school districts classified as first-class according to the 1966 Supplement to the Education Manual of Washington State (42:184), and according to the 1967-68 Washington Education Directory (41:22). School districts, ascribed to this category, were characterized as containing a population of a minimum 10,000 inhabitants. In the state of Washington, there are sixty-three first-class public school districts. A list of these school districts was placed in Appendix A, page 70.

Questionnaire. To gather data for the problem a questionnaire was constructed. This form was listed in Appendix B, page 73. This survey instrument consisted of twenty-three items which queried school personnel about their school-community relations practices. All but three superintendents of the sixty-three districts were mailed the two-page questionnaire. Each superintendent was asked to forward the questionnaire to the person who was charged with the responsibility of administering his school district's public relations program. If the public relations program was the superintendent's responsibility, he was requested to complete the instrument. In the three exceptions, the survey questions were sent to established school public relations officers within the districts.

The survey population was given three weeks (from June 24, 1968 to July 15, 1968) in which to complete the form and return by the stamped, addressed envelope. Respondents' data were then recorded and analyzed for treatment of the research problem.

## II. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Organization of questions for specific data. The twenty-three items in the questionnaire were divided into three general categories, identification, communication, and comparison. None of the divisions was exclusive as questions

relating to identification could also be subject to comparison, questions concerning communication could similarly be subject to comparison as well as provide identification, and questions regarding comparison could yield identification.

In the questionnaire, the first nine items yielded information which identified the school public relations officers. They were:

1. As public relations officer, do you devote full or fractional time to public relations?
2. If fractional, approximately what per cent of your time and duty is relegated to public relations?
3. How many years have you been in this public relations position?
4. What was your previous position?
5. What is your present position?
6. What is your primary function within the school district?
7. Who assists you with the task of public relations?
  - An Assistant
  - A committee
  - No one
  - Other (Name)
8. Rate the emphasis that each of the following receives from your public relations program: (1, 2, 3)
  - Curriculum
  - Finance
  - Personnel
9. As public relations officer, in which of the following areas do you feel most competent in promoting? (1, 2, 3 or all 1's, etc. or combination)
  - Curriculum
  - Finance
  - Personnel

Questions ten through seventeen plus twenty and twenty-one revealed information about the types of communication which were employed in the school public relations programs. They were:

10. Do you maintain a calendar of events for your public relations program?

11. What length of time does your calendar of events cover?

Nine months  
 Twelve months  
 Periodic (Elections, etc.)

12. If on a twelve month approach, what informational services have you discovered to be effective during the summer?

13. What informational services are used in your public relations program?

Direct mail  
 Indirect mail (Take home)  
 Publications (Newsletters, pamphlets)  
 Speakers' bureau  
 Committees  
 School personnel  
 Mass media:  
     Newspaper  
     Radio  
     Television  
 Other

14. List in order of rating the three informational services which you have discovered to be the most effective any time.

15. When a specific public relations technique fails, is the reason for its failure sought?

16. Do you employ such measurements as the opinion poll, the pilot sampling, or the depth interview?

17. In the question above, which measurement do you use most frequently?

20. How do you obtain post-election feedback from the community?

21. Does your district have an in-service school-community relations program?

The remaining items, questions eighteen, nineteen, twenty-two, and twenty-three, were included to permit comparisons of subjects from which additional data about school public relations officers and programs could be obtained.

18. What has been the outcome of school finance elections in your district within the last five years?

For building:

Passed

Defeated

For maintenance and operation:

Passed

Defeated

19. Do you feel that inadequately promoted campaigns were a factor in the election defeats?

22. How large should a district's student enrollment be to warrant the establishment of:

A full-time public relations position?

A part-time public relations position?

23. What was the 1967-68 enrollment figure for your district?

Again, the flexibility of each division of questions should be noted, for a greater application of the respondents' data was rendered possible by this latitude.

Tabulation and analysis of data. Because of the large disparity between the school districts with low student enrollments and those districts which contain high student populations, the sixty-three first-class school systems were broken into three groups, A, B, and C. In such a division,



this researcher felt that he could obtain more meaningful information which would give a better perspective of public relations programs in existence. With the student enrollment as the basis, group A contained 10,000 and over; group B contained 5,000 to 9,999; group C contained 0 to 4,999.

The data from each group of respondents were recorded and tallied separately. This tabulation permitted the differences of the three groups to be contrasted by percentage analysis. Of particular value would be the contrasts of the computed results between the three groups in each of the three specific categories of questions mentioned above.

By merging groups A, B, and C, computation of the total data was conducted in order to permit analysis of public relations practices in all first-class school districts. From this treatment, general assumptions and inferences would be stated as indicated by the results.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Since the matrix of each school in this investigation contained differences in size, staff personnel, community publics, community history, and economic resources to mention only a few, the thought occurred to this researcher that the data, once recorded and studied, would similarly be just as diverse. Of course, any presumptions concluded before making an analysis of the findings remained just that--second guessing. However, shortly after completing the data analysis, the findings revealed similarities as well as differences in school-community public relations practices. A presentation and interpretation of the research data verified these outcomes below in the two divisions of this chapter.

#### I. IDENTIFICATION OF SCHOOL-COMMUNITY

##### PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS

Questionnaires, respondents, and districts in groups A, B, and C. The survey instruments were mailed to the sixty-three first-class public school districts in the state of Washington and to the members who are in charge of administering school-community public relations programs either on a full- or part-time basis.

With a time limit of three weeks for returning the

questionnaire, forty-nine districts or 77.8 per cent (All percentages used throughout the study were rounded off to the nearest tenth of one per cent) responded to the request for information about their school public relations programs. Of the forty-nine respondents, five superintendents wrote letters explaining why they had not completed the questionnaires. Three stated that their districts had no individuals assigned the task of administering public relations programs. The other two admitted having part-time public relations officers, but as both the officers and the programs were new, and as policies and objectives had not yet been established, they believed that their responses would have been of little value to this study. In total then, forty-four questionnaires or 69.8 per cent were completed and returned for use in compiling the data.

Respondents were divided into three groups, A, B, and C, according to student enrollments. In groups A, school districts with student enrollments of 10,000 and over, there were eleven returns out of fifteen or 73.3 per cent. Of the twenty-two districts in group B, districts having 5,000 to 9,999 students enrolled, twenty or 90.9 per cent responded but only fifteen or 68.2 per cent returned questionnaires. This group contained the five superintendents' letters. Sixty-nine and two-tenths responded with the survey forms in group C, a group which included districts with student enroll-

ments of from 0 to 4,999.

Present full- and part-time public relations officers.

Districts in groups B and C showed similar practices in the public relations positions. As illustrated by Table I, page 33, all eighteen districts responding in group C and seventeen out of twenty districts (two of the five superintendents returning only letters in the study stated that they employed part-time public relations officers) responding in group B possessed part-time public relations officers. These positions accounted for 87.5 per cent of the part-time positions reported. Group A contained the only districts which employed full-time public relations officers with six out of eleven or 54.5 per cent. The other five reported having part-time public relations officers.

Forty then of the combined groups or 87.0 per cent possessed part-time public relations officers. Only six or 13.0 per cent reporting in all groups utilized the services of full-time public relations officers. Of notable significance for discussion in the next section was the existence of the six full-time officers in districts containing a minimum of 10,000 students.

Part-time public relations officers in group A reported relegating an average of 35.6 per cent of their time to the administration of school-community relations. Groups

TABLE I

MEDIAN NUMBERS OF SUGGESTED STUDENT ENROLLMENTS WHICH WARRANT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FULL- AND PART-TIME SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS POSITIONS AND MEDIAN NUMBERS OF PRESENT SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENTS. NUMBERS OF EXISTING SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS POSITIONS IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Group	Existing public relations positions		Medians of sug. student enrollments		Medians of present <sup>a</sup> student enrollments
	Full	Part	Full	Part	
A	6	5	13,000	3,500	11,000
B	0	17 <sup>b</sup>	9,000	3,500	6,900
C	0	18	9,000	3,000	3,200
Total all groups	6	40	10,333 <sup>c</sup>	3,333 <sup>c</sup>	7,033 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Based on 1967-68 enrollment figures.

<sup>b</sup>This figure reflected two additional tallies based on letters from two superintendents who claimed employment of part-time public relations officers. However, as no questionnaires were returned by either the superintendents or the public relations officers, these two tallies were not computed with other data and tables, etc. mentioned in this study unless so specified.

<sup>c</sup>Average medians for suggested student enrollments.

<sup>d</sup>Average median for present (1967-68) student enrollments.

B and C, employed part-time public relations officers who spent 20.8 per cent and 20.2, respectively, to this task.

Recommended full- and part-time public relations positions as based on medians of suggested student enrollments. Consideration of the relationship of how large school districts should be to employ full- and part-time public relations officers necessitated reference again to Table I, page 33. Represented by medians of suggested student enrollments, the figures in group A for establishment of full- and part-time public relations officers were 13,000 and 3,500, respectively. For group B, the median suggested enrollments for full- and part-time positions were 9,000 for the former and 3,500 for the latter. Group C's suggested figure for a full-time public relations position was 9,000, and the part-time figure was 3,000.

When comparing these figures, the observer was immediately aware of two exact similarities. One, the school districts in groups B and C had the exact median for suggested enrollment as the basis for establishing full-time public relations position. Second, the median suggested for part-time positions was exact for groups A and B. Also, continuing the similarities between B and C groups were the very close medians, 3,500 to 3,000 respectively, for suggested enrollment as a basis for establishing part-time public rela-

tions positions.

Highly important in the results were the average medians of all groups for suggested student enrollments as the basis for the establishment of full- and part-time school-community public relations officers. The figure for full-time public relations positions was 10,333; the figure for part-time positions was 3,333.

All three groups were in agreement as to the size of student enrollment and the need for a part-time public relations officer. As noted in the preceding section, there were no full-time district administrators in charge of school-community relations in districts with student populations below 10,000. Actual practices appeared to be in close harmony since the average median suggested size of student enrollment of full-time public relations positions was 10,333 for all districts. As also brought out previously, 54.5 per cent of the respondents in group A actually employed full-time officers.

Years of experience in public relations positions.

Very little difference was observed among the three groups with reference to district officers and years of experience in school public relations. Group C had an average of 5.5 years. The average years of experience for public relations officers were six in group B. Lastly, group A in which full-

and part-time officers were employed averaged 5.1 years and 4.8 years for the two types respectively. The low averages in these findings probably reflected the relatively late awakening of the need for effective school-community public relations programs co-ordinated by public relations officers.

Comparison of previous and present positions. Judging from the tallies, the individual who appeared to be responsible for his district's present school-community relations programs was, in group C districts, more often than not in his previous position: a superintendent, as seven respondents listed this position; an assistant superintendent, as five people gave this position; or a high school principal as this position was named by three persons. In fifteen out of eighteen questionnaires returned by this group, the respondents identified themselves as superintendents. Only one present position listed alluded to public relations--public information and administrative assistant.

An observation not unlike that discussed in group C characterized the previous and present positions of public relations officers in group B. Three respondents had been in superintendent positions, and three had been high school principals. Two of the respondents had been elementary principals. In present positions, the role of superintendent was listed by nine out of the fifteen respondents in this group.



In group A, the previous positions were as varied as the present positions' titles, and as a consequence marked this group as being quite different from the other two groups in this respect. Previous positions held were: a university alumni director, newspaper editor, industrial public relations and advertising man, four high school teachers, only two superintendents, and one principal. Present positions had the following labels: director of special programs and community services, director of public information and publications, community information officer, director of publicity and information, and co-ordinator of public information.

Emphasis that curriculum received in public relations programs and public relations officers' competencies in promoting curriculum. Two of the questionnaire items asked respondents to rate the emphasis which curriculum was given in their districts' school-community public relations programs and to rate their own competency in promoting curriculum in school-community relationships. Table II, page 38, illustrated the rating the respondents in each group, A, B, and C, gave to both the emphasis-curriculum item and the competency-curriculum item.

A positive correlation existed in each group in that going up the rating scale (from 3 up to 1) there was a larger percentage of respondents. Also, all groups rated themselves

TABLE II

RATING OF EMPHASIS THAT CURRICULUM IS GIVEN IN PUBLIC  
RELATIONS PROGRAMS AND SELF-RATING OF COMPETENCY  
IN CURRICULUM BY PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS  
IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Area	Rating	Group A		Group B		Group C		Total all groups	
		No. of cases	Per cent <sup>a</sup>	No. of cases	Per cent	No. of cases	Per cent	Cases	Per cent
Emphasis given to curriculum	1	7	63.6	9	60.0	8	44.4	24	54.5
Competency rating in curriculum	1	9	81.8	10	66.7	10	55.6	29	65.9
Emphasis	2	3	27.3	6	40.0	7	38.9	16	36.4
Competency	2	2	18.2	4	26.7	4	22.2	10	22.7
Emphasis	3	1	9.1	0	00.0	3	16.7	4	9.1
Competency	3	0	00.0	1	6.7	4	22.2	5	11.4

<sup>a</sup>All percentages were rounded off to the nearest tenth of one per cent.

higher in competency-curriculum than they rated the programs in emphasis-curriculum. Over 50.0 per cent in each group rated themselves a one in competencies for promoting curriculum. Interesting opposites were group A in which an overwhelming 81.8 per cent rated themselves a one in competency-curriculum as compared to the 22.2 per cent in group C who rated themselves a three in this item.

Emphasis that finance received in public relations programs and public relations officers' competencies in promoting finance. Table III, page 40, reflected the tabulation of a similar question based on public relations officers' responses to emphasis-finance and competency-finance. Apparently, in all three groups respondents either felt that they comprehended well and could communicate well matters of school finance or believed that this area should be left to someone more knowledgeable. This dichotomy was most pronounced in group A in which only 9.1 per cent of the respondents rated themselves a two in competency-finance and in which no one rated the program a two rating in emphasis-finance. However, the rating receiving the largest percentage in each of the groups was the rating of one in competency-finance.

Emphasis that personnel received in public relations programs and public relations officers' competencies in

TABLE III

RATING OF EMPHASIS THAT FINANCE IS GIVEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS  
PROGRAMS AND SELF-RATING OF COMPETENCY IN FINANCE BY  
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Area	Rating	Group A		Group B		Group C		Total all groups	
		No. of cases	Per cent <sup>a</sup>	No. of cases	Per cent	No. of cases	Per cent	Cases	Per cent
Emphasis given to finance	1	4	36.4	6	40.0	8	44.4	18	40.9
Competency rating in finance	1	8	72.7	10	66.7	10	55.6	28	63.4
Emphasis	2	0	00.0	4	26.7	6	33.3	10	22.7
Competency	2	1	9.1	2	13.3	4	22.2	7	15.9
Emphasis	3	7	63.6	5	33.3	4	22.2	16	36.4
Competency	3	2	18.2	3	20.0	4	22.2	9	20.4

<sup>a</sup>All percentages were rounded off to the nearest tenth of one per cent.

promoting personnel. Personnel, too, was treated the same as curriculum and finance in the discussions above. The response data was projected in Table IV, page 42. Among the groups, specific differences became observable. In group A, the largest percentage or 72.7 per cent gave a two rating to emphasis-personnel. In group B, the emphasis-personnel item received a rating of three by the largest percentage, 60.0 per cent. An equal number of respondents or 50.0 per cent in group C gave a rating of one in competency-personnel and a rating of three in emphasis-personnel. No one in group A chose to register a one rating for emphasizing personnel in public relations programs.

Totals of groups A, B, and C, and public relations programs' emphases and public relations officers' competencies in curriculum, finance, and personnel. Table V, on page 43, provided an over-all view of the ratings of curriculum, finance, and personnel by the total number of respondents to the questionnaire. An apparent trend in the table is the consistency of respondents in rating themselves high--rating of one--in competency in each of the areas. This concentration was balanced by a relatively low frequency of response in the rating of three for competency.

According to this study's population sample, curriculum received the greatest amount of emphasis in school-comm-

TABLE IV

RATING OF EMPHASIS THAT PERSONNEL IS GIVEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS AND SELF-RATING OF COMPETENCY IN PERSONNEL BY PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Area	Rating	Group A		Group B		Group C		Total all groups	
		No. of cases	Per cent <sup>a</sup>	No. of cases	Per cent	No. of cases	Per cent	Cases	Per cent
Emphasis given to personnel	1	0	00.0	1	6.7	4	22.2	5	11.4
Competency rating in personnel	1	6	55.6	6	40.0	9	50.0	21	47.2
Emphasis	2	8	72.7	5	33.3	5	27.8	18	40.9
Competency	2	4	36.4	4	26.7	6	33.3	14	31.8
Emphasis	3	3	27.3	9	60.0	9	50.0	21	47.2
Competency	3	1	9.1	5	33.3	3	16.7	9	20.4

<sup>a</sup>All percentages were rounded off to the nearest tenth of one per cent.

TABLE V

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES<sup>a</sup> OF ALL GROUPS RATING EMPHASIS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS AND RATING PERSONAL COMPETENCY IN CURRICULUM, FINANCE, AND PERSONNEL

All groups	Rating	Curriculum		Finance		Personnel	
		No. of cases	Per cent <sup>a</sup>	No. of cases	Per cent	No. of cases	Per cent
Emphasis	1	24	54.5	18	40.9	5	11.3
Competency	1	29	65.7	28	63.6	21	47.7
Emphasis	2	16	36.4	10	22.7	18	40.9
Competency	2	10	22.7	7	15.9	14	31.8
Emphasis	3	4	9.1	16	36.4	21	47.7
Competency	3	5	11.3	9	20.5	9	20.5

<sup>a</sup>All percentages were rounded off to the nearest tenth of one per cent.

unity public relations programs. This area was also cited by the respondents as being the one in which they felt most competent in promoting. Personnel received the least first ratings of the three areas. Groups B and C had more cases which tallied a rating of three in both program emphasis and personal competency in the areas of finance and personnel than did group A.

## II. COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN SCHOOL- COMMUNITY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

Use of calendar of events. When respondents were asked if they maintained a calendar of events for their public relations programs and, if so, how long did the calendar of events continue, they supplied answers that bordered inconsistency. By checking the data in Table VI, on page 45, the conflicting responses were isolated for identification. Twenty tallies or 45.5 per cent recorded as putting no for maintenance of calendar of events yet all respondents answered the next question about duration of calendar of events. Of these twenty "no maintenance" tallies, twelve constituted 80.0 per cent of the "periodic duration" responses. The remaining eight marked "twelve months duration" as a result of probably misinterpreting the generally implied meaning of calendar of events as being "planned, continuous activities."



TABLE VI  
 COMPARISON OF MAINTENANCE AND DURATION OF CALENDARS  
 OF EVENTS IN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS  
 IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Group	Maintenance of calendar of events		Duration of calendar of events		
	Yes	No	Nine months	Twelve months	Periodic
A	7	4	0	8 <sup>a</sup>	3 <sup>b</sup>
B	7	8	1	9 <sup>c</sup>	5 <sup>d</sup>
C	10	8	3	8 <sup>e</sup>	7 <sup>f</sup>
Total all groups	24	20	4	25 <sup>g</sup>	15 <sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup>This number reflected two "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>b</sup>This number reflected two "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>c</sup>This number reflected five "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>d</sup>This number reflected three "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>e</sup>This number reflected one "no-maintenance" case.

<sup>f</sup>This number reflected seven "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>g</sup>This number reflected eight "no-maintenance" cases.

<sup>h</sup>This number reflected twelve "no-maintenance" cases.

A total of 54.5 per cent claimed having a calendar of events for their school public relations programs. The eight "no maintenance-twelve months" respondents notwithstanding, the remaining public relations officers or 38.6 per cent conducted school-community relations on a twelve month basis.

Informational services: use in total program. Responses to item thirteen in the questionnaire revealed that direct and indirect mail, publications, speakers' bureau, school personnel, committees, newspaper, radio, and television were all used regularly by groups A, B, and C. Some respondents wrote in citizens committees, direct contact, and service organizations as frequently used approaches.

Informational services: use during summer. Unquestionably, the most utilized summer mode of communication in school-community public relations programs was the mass media. Outstanding among these approaches was the newspaper as all three groups indicated in their responses. Most of the written-in answers concerned staff relations. (For example, graduate studies activities, up-dating handbooks, curriculum projects, in-service.). However, a few did mention activities which assisted in the orientation of community members to the schools' programs. Some of these were bulletins to parents, in-depth stories on personnel or program, Head Start, tuition free summer school, neighborhood youth corps, and "welcome

wagon" brochures.

Informational services: three most effective. When queried in item 14 of the survey instrument about the three informational services found to be the most effective any time, again all groups chose the newspaper. Radio was rated second in groups B and C, but publications were second in group A. Indirect mail (taken home by students) rated quite high in group C. Beyond these modes of communication, no others received any concentrated interest of over three tallies by the respondents.

Use of follow-up approaches to attain community feedback. The tabulated figures in Table VII, page 48, indicated that groups A, B, and C conducted follow-up procedures when public relations techniques failed. A percentage analysis gave these results: group A, 90.0 per cent; group B, 80.0 per cent; and group C, 66.7 per cent. Seventy-seven and three-tenths per cent of the combined groups followed-up public relations failures.

Such measurements as the opinion poll, the pilot sample, and the depth interview were utilized by 63.6 per cent of group A, by 73.3 per cent of group B, and by an even 50.0 per cent of group C. The total for all groups was 47.7 per cent.

Of these measuring instruments, the pilot sampling

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING USE OF FOLLOW-UP MEASUREMENTS<sup>a</sup>  
TO ATTAIN FEEDBACK AFTER PUBLIC RELATIONS FAILURE  
IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Group	Follow-up taken after public relations failures			Use of follow-up measurements <sup>a</sup>		Rating of measurements used most frequently			
	Yes	No	No response	Yes	No	Opin. poll	Pilot sample	Depth inter.	No resp.
A	10	1	0	7	4	2	4	1	4
B	12	2	1	8	7 <sup>b</sup>	2	5 <sup>b</sup>	2	6
C	12	1	5	6	12	3	2	1	12
Total all groups	34	4	6	21	23	7	11	4	22

<sup>a</sup>Measurements referred to were the opinion poll, the pilot sample, and the depth interview.

<sup>b</sup>These numbers reflected one respondent who answered negatively to "use of follow-up measurements," but he tallied the pilot sample as his district's most frequently used measurement.

technique was employed by 50.0 per cent of those individuals responding to this question. The opinion poll and the depth interview were used by 31.8 per cent and 18.2 per cent, respectively, of those respondents indicating use of these three measurements in follow-up procedures.

Significant too, was the finding that twenty-two or 50.0 per cent of the public relations officers did not indicate employment of the three measurements mentioned in questionnaire item 16, but thirty-four or 77.3 per cent indicated use of follow-up in public relations failures. A comparison of these two figures led to the assumption that school districts must use techniques other than the opinion poll, the pilot sample, and the depth interview.

In-service school-community relations programs. In groups A, B, and C, school districts appeared to be in unison concerning in-service public relations programs. In group A, three respondents or 27.3 per cent claimed having such a program while eight or 72.7 per cent responded negatively. In group B, four or 26.7 per cent had an in-service program in public relations and eleven or 73.3 per cent said no. Lastly, in group C, three or 16.7 per cent of the respondents' districts maintained in-service school-community relations programs while fifteen or 83.3 per cent did not. Totally, 77.3 per cent did not use such a program.

In the previous discussion about what informational services were being used during the summer, in-service was listed but no distinction as to type was included.

Finance elections and promotions of campaigns. As a group, all of the first-class districts responding to the questionnaire have enjoyed a modest record of 84.6 per cent in passing financial elections within the last five years. (Table VIII, page 51). Their supporters voted approval on 270 out of 319 elections involving both building bonds and maintenance and operation levies.

A closer observation accounted for the following breakdown in each group: (1) group A had passed seventy-three of eighty-two finance proposals for a high 89.0 per cent; (2) group B registered eighty-five victories in one hundred and seven attempts which resulted in a 79.4 per cent history; and (3) group C's voters were convinced that 112 of 130 or 86.2 per cent of the issues were needed enough to receive affirmation at the polls.

The respondents were asked to judge the adequacy or inadequacy of the campaigns in the relatively few defeats experienced by each group. From group totals, 22.7 per cent of the respondents believed that inadequate campaigns were a definite factor in the losses. Thirty-six and four-tenths per cent thought the public relations campaigns were satis-

TABLE VIII

ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS AS FELT BY SCHOOL PUBLIC  
RELATIONS OFFICERS IN THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF BUILDING  
BONDS AND MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION LEVIES<sup>a</sup>  
IN GROUPS A, B, AND C

Group	Type of finance sought	No. of finance elections <sup>a</sup>	No. passed	No. failed	Inadequate campaign promotions in both types		
					No	Yes	No response
A	Building	32	27	5	5	0	6
	Maint. and operation	50	46	4			
B	Building	39	35	4	6	5	4
	Maint. and operation	68	50	18			
C	Building	60	52	8	5	5	8
	Maint. and operation	70	60	10			
Totals		319	270	49	16	10	18

<sup>a</sup>These elections included all attempts since 1963, as reported by the respondents of the questionnaires.

factory. However, 40.9 per cent of the public relations officers refused to answer this question probably on the basis that discretion was the best policy.

None of the respondents in group A judged the public relations campaigns before defeated financial issues to be inadequate. Groups B and C once again demonstrated similar characteristics as five individuals from each believed that inadequate campaigns were a factor in the election defeats of their groups.

### III. CHAPTER SUMMATION

The data presented in this chapter made one point that is readily apparent: first-class school districts were very much conscious of the importance of establishing and maintaining good community relations. As evidenced by the charge of public relations duty to a district officer, the respondents were cognizant of the efficiency and effectiveness of a co-ordinated approach to school-community relations programs. An all-systems approach would describe those practices by public relations co-ordinators, for, excluding the newspaper, all types of informational services were put to use.

They were aware, too, of the need for continuous reinforcement of these ties. For many of them, this necessity led to following a planned, on-going schedule of communicative activities designed to stimulate and involve the comm-



unity interest. When, in instances, these interactions failed to reciprocate the feed-back necessary for meaningful communication, some prudent public relations officers had then taken follow-up steps to secure this information.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this investigation, sixty-three first-class public school districts in the state of Washington were surveyed by questionnaires to determine the personnel and practices that comprised existing school-community public relations programs.

Of the forty-nine respondents, forty-four constituted the research sample as five failed to return completed questionnaires. The survey instruments were categorized by student enrollment in the following manner: group A, 10,000 and over; group B, 5,000 to 9,999; and group C, 0 to 4,999. Data analysis was administered then to ascertain intra- and inter-group characteristics and procedures. This information and the total findings, attained after combining all the groups, assisted the researcher in solving the problems of this investigation.

Through restatement, the purposes of this research study were (1) to identify the school district officers who devoted full- or part-time duty to the promotion of public relations; (2) to identify the types of communication that they employed; and (3) to compare such factors as the previous position held by the public relations officer to the present position held by the public relations officer, the area of emphasis public relations program receives to the

competency public relations officer feels in emphasized area, and the size of district student enrollment to the desire for the establishment of full- or part-time public relations positions.

## I. SUMMARY

A clearer illustration of the findings was projected if the summary was divided into two groups, identification of school public relations officers and practices of school-community public relations programs. Also, this division of the summary enhanced a nearer approximation of the format in which the problem was presented and analyzed.

A summary of the findings in the identification of school public relations officers:

1. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondent districts reported having a part-time public relations officer. Eighty-seven and five-tenths per cent of the part-time public relations officers were from groups B and C. In groups B and C, the public relations officers spent average times of 20.8 and 20.2 per cent, respectively, toward this duty.

2. Only thirteen per cent of the districts reporting had a full-time public relations officer. These full-time positions were only in the school districts of group A.

3. The average medians for suggested enrollment as the basis for employing full- and part-time public relations

were 10,333 and 3,333, respectively. Breakdown by each group for medians of suggested student enrollments for full- and part-time positions resulted in the following figures, correspondingly: (1) group A, 13,000 and 3,500; (2) group B, 9,000 and 3,5000; and (3) group C, 9,000 and 3,000.

4. Average years of experience for part-time public relations officers in groups A, B, and C were computed respectively at 4.8, 6.0, and 5.5 years. The full-time officers in group A averaged 5.1 years.

5. In groups B and C, the person most likely to be charged with the task of administering school district public relations programs had been a superintendent and was presently in a superintendency position. The number of cases for past and present position in groups B and C were respectively: (1) for past--three out of fifteen and for present--nine out of fifteen and (2) for past--twelve out of eighteen and for present--fifteen out of eighteen. In group A, the person came from a wide variety of positions. His present position identified him as a school district public relations officer.

6. Among the three areas--curriculum, finance, and personnel--the one most emphasized in public relations programs was curriculum. The least stressed was personnel. Respondents rated their competencies in promoting each of the three areas quite high. Groups B and C had more ratings of

three in both program emphasis and personal competency in the areas of finance and personnel than did group A.

A summary of the findings in the practices of school-community public relations programs:

1. Fifty-four and five-tenths per cent of the respondents claimed having a calendar of events for their school public relations programs. Thirty-eight and six-tenths per cent conducted school-community relations on a twelve month basis.

2. Respondent public relations officers revealed that direct and indirect mail, publications, speakers bureau, school personnel, committees, and mass media were all used regularly by groups A, B, and C. The most utilized summer informational service was the newspaper. The three most effective modes of school-community communication were said to be the newspaper, radio, and publications, in order of effectiveness.

3. Seventy-seven and three-tenths per cent of the districts used follow-up techniques in public relations failures. In usage of such measurements as the opinion poll, the pilot sample, and the depth interview, 47.7 per cent of the respondents said that they were employed for feedback purposes. The pilot sampling technique was utilized by 50.0 per cent of those individuals responding to this question. Fifty per cent said that they did not use these

measurements, but again 77.3 per cent indicated the use of follow-up in public relations failures.

4. Seventy-seven and three-tenths per cent of the respondents did not have in-service school-community relations programs.

5. In the last five years, the first-class districts in this study had a success record of 84.6 per cent for submitted building bonds and maintenance and operation levies. In the defeated elections, 22.7 per cent thought that inadequately promoted campaigns were a factor; 36.4 per cent thought that the public relations campaigns were satisfactory. Forty and nine-tenths per cent of the public relations officers refused to answer this question.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Certainly, the most evident assumption which could be advanced from this research study was that all respondents and their districts are aware of the need for effective school-community relations programs co-ordinated by individuals who are given administrative status. This statement was supported by these findings:

1. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondent districts had part-time public relations officers; the remaining 13.0 per cent had full-time positions.

2. A calendar of events was maintained by 54.5 per cent of the respondents' districts.

3. All districts indicated wide and regular use of informational services.

4. Seventy-seven and three-tenths per cent of the districts used follow-up techniques to attain community feedback.

Actual practices of maintaining full- and part-time school public relations officers coincided with recommended district sizes for the establishment of these positions. Average medians for suggested student enrollments as the basis for warranting full- and part-time public relations positions were 10,333 and 3,333, respectively. All of the respondents from districts with less than 10,000 students had part-time public relations officers but no full-time positions. The only full-time positions reported were from those respondents whose districts had a student population in excess of 10,000.

Although school-community relations programs were employed in one fashion or another by the district officers answering this questionnaire, they have not been in practice for any great length of time. Several factors in the data were indicative of their short histories. The average years of experience in both full- and part-time public relations positions ran from about five up to six years. Of forty-four district officers reporting, this low average would certainly not represent long-standing public relations programs. The finding that superintendents generally filled the school

public relations positions in districts with less than 10,000 students enrolled would seemingly refute the above short histories of school-community relations programs especially in view of the tendency for smaller districts to hang on to their superintendents for a longer period of time. But then, this longevity could have been offset by a corresponding growth in complacency and channel-vision.

One other factor supported the assumption that organized school public relations has had a short history. Despite recent investigations and projects which have extolled the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of in-service programs and training, 77.3 per cent of the respondents did not have in-service school-community relations programs. Some of the respondents, however, listed citizens committees and lay groups as experiments in school-community in-service interaction.

School districts with student enrollments of over 10,000 were more successful at the election polls in the last five years. The personnel and programs of these districts displayed certain characteristics and practices which rendered them different from the districts which had less than 10,000 students. Public relations officers from these larger districts felt more confident in the areas of finance, personnel, and especially curriculum. Their school-community relations programs emphasized curriculum most of all. The



officers came from positions with more varied backgrounds which might account for more successful public relations programs. Some of them had gained experience in the fundamentals of public relations in other work situations. Some came directly from the classroom. That these larger district public relations officers came from these sources might relate to the major stress on curriculum. The greater success of financial elections in the larger districts also might be associated with the positive attitude and approach taken during bond and levy campaigns. Not one public relations officer felt that the few election defeats suffered were the results of inadequately promoted public relations campaigns.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions for district adoption. Every public school district, irrespective of class, should maintain a program of building and strengthening school-community relationships. Such a program is indeed an educational imperative. Assisting public understanding is conducive to gaining public support. Since school districts must heed that successful school public relations programs are planned and continuous, they are behooved to follow a calendar of events. They must realize, too, that a comprehensive public relations program utilizes as many informational services as possible to foster effective school-community communication. Evaluation,

certainly as important as the planning stage, must be employed in all districts' programs for the purpose of feedback, a vital element in all reciprocal relationships.

All first-class districts should have a school public relations officer, an individual who, regardless of full- or part-time capacity, must administer a co-ordinated communications approach to school-community interaction. This individual, as an administrator, must be granted by written policy considerable latitude for the fulfillment of his community relations duties. Through abundant freedom, the diversity of resources, then available, would permit a more comprehensive approach in his district's public relations program.

One important requisite to freedom is the absence of fear. For security, the public relations officer need not have to make extravagant auditory and visual motions simply for the satisfaction of the board members and the superintendent. Nor must he be cajoled into soft-peddling curriculum and personnel while clandestinely pushing what one wise educator termed the three "B's"--bonds, buildings, and buses. His focal point is external, reaching out to the community with an honest and clear interpretation of the schools for the public's understanding.

Suggestions for further study. As groups B and C were similar in many respects, another study of this nature should

create only two divisions by using a student enrollment of 10,000 for grouping school districts. Or, since the research populations of this investigation came from first-class school districts, a future study might include samples from second- and third-class districts as well.

Two closely related topics which were not pursued in this investigation and which are important enough to deserve attention are setting policy for school public relations programs and establishing qualifications for public relations officers.

Of course, for purposes of reliability and validity, this same study should be conducted again to either verify or refute the data found concerning the identification of school public relations officers and the practices of school-community relations programs.

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**APPENDIX A**

LIST OF FIRST-CLASS PUBLIC SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS IN THE STATE OF  
WASHINGTON, 1967-68

Aberdeen School District	Mukilteo School District
Anacortes School District	North Kitsap School District
Auburn School District	North Thurston School District
Battle Ground School District	Northshore School District
Bellevue School District	Oak Harbor School District
Bellingham School District	Olympia School District
Bremerton School District	Pasco School District
Burlington-Edison School District	Port Angeles School District
Central Kitsap School District	Pullman School District
Central Valley School District	Puyallup School District
Centralia School District	Renton School District
Clarkston School District	Richland School District
Clover Park School District	Seattle School District
Edmonds School District	Sedro Woolley School District
Ellensburg School District	Shoreline School District
Everett School District	Snohomish School District
Evergreen School District	South Central School District
Federal Way School District	South Kitsap School District
Franklin Pierce School District	Spokane School District
Highline School District	Sumner School District
Hoquiam School District	Sunnyside School District
Issaquah School District	Tacoma School District
Kelso School District	Toppenish School District
Kennewick School District	University Place School District
Kent School District	Vancouver School District
Lake Washington School District	Walla Walla School District
Longview School District	Wapato School District
Marysville School District	Wenatchee School District
Mead School District	West Valley School District (Spokane)
Mercer Island School District	West Valley School District (Yakima)
Moses Lake School District	Yakima School District
Mount Vernon School District	

APPENDIX B

# CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON

98926

% Dr. William G. Gaskell  
June 24, 1968

Sir:

The enclosed questionnaire is part of an investigation of public relations programs of Washington public school districts. This instrument is an attempt to gather information needed for completion of a master's thesis at Central Washington State College.

Since its purpose is to identify school district officers who devote full- or part-time duty to the promotion of public relations, to identify the approaches that are available to them, and to identify the types of communication that they employ, I would appreciate your forwarding it to the individual who is charged with the responsibility of administering your district's public relations program. If public relations is your responsibility, please answer the questionnaire yourself.

As time is very important to the completion of this study, I would please like to have your data returned to me before July 12.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Richard G. Boon

Enclosures

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Public Relations Officer:

Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire and in returning it by the stamped, addressed envelope as quickly as possible will be greatly valued. Please return before July 12.

1. As public relations officer, do you devote full or fractional time to public relations? (Designate on line) \_\_\_\_\_
2. If fractional, approximately what per cent of your time and duty is relegated to public relations? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been in this public relations position? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was your previous position? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your present position? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your primary function within the school district? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who assists you with the task of public relations? (Please check)  
An assistant \_\_\_\_\_  
A committee \_\_\_\_\_  
No one \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (Name) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Rate the emphasis that each of the following receives from your public relations program: (1, 2, 3)  
Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_  
Personnel \_\_\_\_\_
9. As public relations officer, in which of the following areas do you feel most competent in promoting?  
(1, 2, 3 or all 1's, etc. or combination)  
Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_  
Personnel \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you maintain a calendar of events for your public relations program? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What length of time does your calendar of events cover? (Check)  
Nine months \_\_\_\_\_  
Twelve months \_\_\_\_\_  
Periodic \_\_\_\_\_  
(Elections, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

12. If on a twelve month approach, what informational services have you discovered to be effective during the summer?

13. What informational services are used in your public relations program?

(Please check)

- |                          |       |                  |       |
|--------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Direct mail              | _____ | School personnel | _____ |
| Indirect mail            | _____ | Mass media:      |       |
| (Take home)              |       | Newspaper        | _____ |
| Publications             | _____ | Radio            | _____ |
| (Newsletters, pamphlets) |       | Television       | _____ |
| Speakers' bureau         | _____ | Other            | _____ |
| Committees               | _____ |                  |       |

14. List in order of rating the three informational services which you have discovered to be the most effective any time:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

15. When a specific public relations technique fails, is the reason for its failure sought? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you employ such measurements as the opinion poll, the pilot sampling, or the depth interview? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In the question above, which measurement do you use most frequently? \_\_\_\_\_

18. What has been the outcome of school finance elections in your district within the last five years? (Fill in numbers)

- |              |       |                                |       |
|--------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
| For building |       | For maintenance and operation: |       |
| Passed       | _____ | Passed                         | _____ |
| Defeated     | _____ | Defeated                       | _____ |

19. Do you feel that inadequately promoted campaigns were a factor in the election defeats? \_\_\_\_\_

20. How do you obtain post-election feedback from the community? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Does your district have an in-service school-community relations program? \_\_\_\_\_

22. How large should a district's student enrollment be to warrant the establishment of a full-time public relations position?  
..... a part-time public relations position? \_\_\_\_\_

23. What was the 1967-68 enrollment figure for your district: \_\_\_\_\_