



SCHOOL WISE PRESS

Brown-bag
Teleconference Series



BROWN-BAG SEMINAR SUMMARY

Managing your message with media (when it's test results and accountability time)

September 10, 2008

Sylvia Soholt of KSA-Plus Communications shares lessons that she's gleaned from 28 years of experience handling media communications for schools and districts.



Here are seven tips for managing your message:

- **Communicate according to your plan.** Don't wait to be put on the defensive. Plan your messages and stick to them.
- **Reporters want your help covering the education beat.** Brief them. Background them. Send them reports for review. Direct them to supporting materials, like those from the Education Writers' Association.
- **Build credibility.** Tell the story and share all the facts, whether you have bad news or good news to share. When the moment arrives that you want your voice to be heard, a reporter will trust you if you've been a trustworthy, credible source in prior discussions.
- **Get your point across.** If you're asked questions that take you "off message," make like a presidential candidate, and build a bridge to your message.
- **Reporters want access.** Give them your phone numbers, including your cell phone, as well as your restrictions on when to use them. Let them know you're available to answer their questions, and that you respect deadlines.
- **Reporters want prompt replies.** Time counts, especially for those on daily deadlines. Returning their calls promptly helps you get your side of the story told.
- **Every press contact is a good opportunity.** Take advantage of the chance to tell your schools' and district's stories. Even if your test scores don't shine, even if your schools are entering Program Improvement, tell reporters what your district is doing to improve teaching and learning.



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