UNITING OUR MEMBERS AND THE NATION
Empowering leaders, educating students, strengthening communities

Media 201: Taking Your Idea from Pitch to Print with PR Pros

COM215

Staci Maiers and Richard Allen Smith
NEA Center for Communications
The NEA Strategic Goal and Organizational Priorities we will address in this session:

• NEA Strategic Goal
  – Strategic Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
  – Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

• NEA Organizational Priority
  – Early Career Educators
  – My School, My Voice
  – Racial Justice in Education
NEA Leadership Competency: COMMUNICATION

- NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s):
  - Level 1: Foundational
  - Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building
  - Level 3: Agenda Driving
NEA Leadership Competency: COMMUNICATION

- NEA Leadership Competency themes we will address in this session:
  - Uses current media, technology and social networks to communicate
  - Develops communication approach and style to fit appropriate audience
  - Act as an effective speaker
  - Acts as a compelling advocate for the organization
  - Identifies appropriate messenger(s)
How Did They Land That Story?

The Star-Ledger

Star-Ledger Guest Columnist

A union call to scale back school testing: Guest opinion

Do you remember a teacher or other school employee who made a difference in your life? Perhaps someone who really brought academic subject to life, or who simply helped you through a difficult time? How about a class or subject that thrilled you and made you want to learn more and more, even after you completed your assignments and passed the final exam?

Now think back in all of the standardized tests you’ve ever taken. Remember that one SAT analogies question that sat you on the course to your future career? The multiple choice math problem that gave you the courage to try something you’d always been afraid to attempt before?

If you are struggling to come up with something, don’t feel bad. Neither of us can either, because while standardized tests have long been a part of public education, until recently, they’ve never been mistaken for its point and purpose.

Let’s stop pretending that a test score tells us all we need to know about our students, their teachers, or the public schools.

That critical distinction is totally lost in our test-obsessed effort to turn our students into statistics. These tests are not meant to help teachers monitor student progress and tailor lessons to students’ individual needs. Instead, standardized tests are increasingly used as the single measure by which we judge the success of a school, the quality of its staff, and the learning of its students. And that’s just wrong.

We never told a doctor that a stethoscope is the only tool she needs to gauge her patients’ health, even if the tool is useful for its limited purpose. And we certainly object if a company that manufactures and sells stethoscopes tried to convince us to disregard ultrasounds, CAT scans and blood pressure readings. In medicine, we accept that no single measure can tell us all we need to know about a patient’s

The Washington Post

Lunch lady rises to teachers union leader and takes on all comers, bluntly

Education

Los Angeles Times

On a mission to galvanize teachers and parents

By SANDY BANAS

Lily Eskelsen Garcia is a legacy that feels like a modern-day movie.

She began her education career teaching math in a school that was in a school district and was taught under a college in a kindergarten class. She is well-respected and has a track record of success. She is a leader in the field of education.

Garcia’s leadership and vision for education are evident in her work. She is dedicated to improving the education system and making it better for all students. Her passion for education is evident in her leadership and advocacy work.

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Lily Eskelsen Garcia: Education is not Uber

“Education is not Uber. It’s not about making money or maximizing profits. It’s about investing in people. It’s about helping every student reach their full potential.”

In her role as President of the National Education Association (NEA), Garcia has advocated for policies that support public education and protect teachers and students. She has been a strong voice for education reform and has worked to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

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Lily Eskelsen Garcia is a leader in the field of education and is dedicated to improving the education system. She has a strong vision for education and is a strong advocate for students and teachers. Her leadership and advocacy work are evident in her work and in the education system.

Leadership Development

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

"They're being told it's not on them, so we can do the same,"

Eskelsen Garcia told them to push back. "They are going to work with colleagues to challenge colleagues that they need to step up. That's scary to be pegged as a tangible person when you haven't yet earned it. I would be faced with similar questions."

Eskelsen Garcia is a strong advocate for teachers and has been a strong voice for teacher empowerment and rights. She has been a leader in the field of education and is dedicated to improving the education system for all students.

By SANDY BANAS

Garcia’s vision for education is evident in her work. She is dedicated to improving the education system and making it better for all students. Her passion for education is evident in her leadership and advocacy work.

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5 Steps to Get Your Idea to Print

Step 1: Start With Your Story

• Media want something that will get their reader’s attention. But you have some competition out there.
• Did you know that 44 percent of journalists get pitched a minimum of 20 times per day?
• Your personal story is your chance to present your news in a way that’s irresistible to the press.
By developing a strong and compelling story, you’ll be off to a great start to cut through the clutter. Your story will lay the groundwork for attracting news media coverage, so spend some time on this and make sure your story’s a good one.

PRo Tip: Your Personal Story Matters
5 Steps to Get Your Idea to Print

Step 2: Establish Your Goals

• Is your goal to turn out media for an event? Is your goal to garner positive news coverage for your association and your members? Is your goal to stop a crisis situation?

• Once you’ve defined your goals, it will help you carve out a path to achieve those goals.

• Remember that goals change.

• With those changes comes flexibility.
Less is always more. Two or three solid connections will far outweigh one foot in the door at dozens of media outlets.
5 Steps to Get Your Idea to Print

Step 3: Build a Relationship With Journalists BEFORE You Need Them

• Would you walk up to a complete stranger and ask for a favor? Most of us cringe at the thought. But what about asking a friend for a favor? Less pressure, right?

• Before you start pitching to them, it’s important to engage with them ahead of time. In fact, 64 percent of writers think that it’s important to establish a personal connection before pitching.

• Become a reader/distributor of their work. Interact on social media. Interact face-to-face (if possible).
PRo Tip: Relationships Make the Difference

Successful media outreach is all about relationships. Your best chance of coverage will hinge directly upon your relationship with the reporters in question.
5 Steps to Get Your Idea to Print

Step 4: Build the Perfect Pitch

• Look at your news from a 30,000-foot perspective, and try to imagine a headline that your customer would want to read. This will help you to craft a pitch that will be more likely to capture the reporter’s attention.

• Media pitches offer a brief and compelling explanation of a particular issue, news angle or story and offer a rep from your association to be interviewed on the topic.

• You have to persuade the reporter that your story idea is newsworthy. If your news doesn’t have a built-in story — create one.
Ideally, you won’t even have to pitch at all. You will have built rapport over time, and from there you’ll have a good idea about what type of stories they cover. The reporter will view you as a trusted source with great ideas. You’ll be able to ask if you can share some news that you believe they’ll be interested in. If you’ve done your homework right, you’ll be met with open ears.

PRo Tip: A Good Pitch Doesn’t Feel Like One
5 Steps to Get Your Idea to Print

Step 5: Keep Building the Relationship

• Just like any relationship, you’ll need to cultivate your relationships with reporters.
• Don’t confuse friendly for friends. There’s a fine line between trusted source and confidante. And just like you, reporters have a job to do.
• There’s no such thing as “off the record” with reporters.
• Acknowledge their work. If you notice a great story posted by a reporter, let them know it. Everyone loves compliments!
PRo Tip: Making a reporter’s job easier helps get the story right

Yes, relationships are king. They don’t call it “media relations” for nothing. But even the closest relationships can’t make up for a bad pitch — or a story with no meat on its bone.
Ideally, you won’t even have to pitch at all. You will have built rapport over time, and from there you’ll have a good idea about what type of stories they cover. The reporter will view you as a trusted source with great ideas. You’ll be able to ask if you can share some news that you believe they’ll be interested in. If you’ve done your homework right, you’ll be met with open ears.

Practice: Get Your Idea to Print

Create an engaging and newsworthy pitch to a reporter at your local newspaper. You want the education beat reporter to cover your event.
“Your newsroom is 30 percent of what it was 10 years ago and so, each body is expected to fill the void and do the job of two, sometimes three individuals. My job isn’t just writing a news story. It’s taking photographs for that story, creating video, editing those two visual contents and posting them, along with my written content, on the web and on social media. Against the backdrop of all this, my days have become typical, 10-hour days.”

—Maudlyne Ihejirika, Chicago Sun-Times urban affairs reporter and one of Chicago’s most prominent journalists
“Let your story speak for itself. And like most relationships, it’s about timing. Forget hype and spin. Reporters can smell BS a mile away. Come across as real and authentic because that’s what sells and that’s what builds credibility over the long run. Your job is to be seen as a connector, a translator and a trusted, reliable source.”

—Miguel A. González, NEA flack
I write, tweet, spin. Father, amateur photog, wine drinker, coffee addict. Se habla español.
Lastly *(but most importantly)*...Thank you!

Keep in touch and let us know how you’re using the media to tell your story!

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Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

– Understand the role the news media plays in your work
– Provide tips and tricks in working with the news media
– Identify message traps and how to deal with them
– Give you confidence when a reporter calls
– Encourage you to become engaged and proactive with the news media
Feedback *(We want to hear from you!)*

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- Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session by using the **NEA Summit Mobile APP**!

- Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at [www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment)