



**Liz Anderson**  
**Communications Specialist**  
**CESO/St. Anthony - New Brighton Schools**  
**[liz.anderson@isd282.org](mailto:liz.anderson@isd282.org)**  
**612-442-2330**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I first started out as a public relations assistant within the University of Minnesota public relations office, working on campus as a student while attending SJMC (School of Journalism and Mass Communication). I moved on from that role and quickly found my way into teaching, which led me to the other side of the world in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I taught kindergarten for two years before the pandemic brought me back home, where I discovered that there could be a happy medium between my two worlds!

I worked as a communications specialist at Eden Prairie Schools and then transitioned over to work at the Center for Effective School Operations (CESO), working with many people who have been in the school PR world for a very long time. I primarily serve the St. Anthony - New Brighton School district as their communications specialist.

I've been involved with MinnSPRA since 2021 and have attended in-person and virtual conferences since then. The Facebook group continues to give me great insight and ideas!

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

Although still fairly new to school PR, I bring experience of being a former teacher which I think gives an excellent perspective. I enjoy planning longer-term projects and seeing them come to life. I would enjoy coming into a group knowing that there's work to be done and that with my project planning skills, I could support some really awesome things happening within MinnSPRA's new strategic plan.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

I think PR professionals take what so many of our superintendents want to accomplish and put it into actual language that will help their community understand what they want to do. This makes us invaluable consultants, mentors, leaders and friends. Our leadership, while they're amazing in understanding how we should teach our students, sometimes fail to see that our base gets left behind, especially when they use jargon or acronyms (why are there so many acronyms!?). We as communicators build the trust that is needed to create the relationship with our base. I want school leadership to continue doing this great work because that is what will keep our K-12 public schools at the forefront of our democracy.

**What major issues face PR professionals today?**

A lack of capacity, simply from lack of resources and/or people, can lead to a lot of frustrations and issues within school PR. If your budget was cut and your entire graphic design fund was slashed, that can make a huge difference if you plan on creating a robust marketing campaign aimed at student enrollment.

I'm also finding that districts are moving towards hiring marketing professionals since several of the schools are suffering from enrollment deficits. I think this is great for our field, however the training and resources necessary to keep ahead with every other district and being the "latest and greatest" is expensive and possibly leaves other districts, with fewer spending dollars and resources, to suffer more.

At the end of the day we support and care for students. Despite the issues that we confront in our own lives as PR professionals, I'm happy I get to share my time with the students who will lead our future nation.



**Celi Haga**  
**Director of Communications and Community Relations**  
**Eastern Carver County Schools**  
**HagaC@District112.org**  
**952-556-6121**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I have spent almost 25 years in public affairs, communications, and community engagement work in the public and nonprofit sectors, five of them at Eastern Carver County Schools. I have also been a member of MinnSPRA during my time in school PR and currently serve as Treasurer.

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

I believe in honest, authentic, and transparent communication. I take a collaborative approach to leadership using both a strategic lens and an equity lens to drive work forward.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

I believe we have more than earned our seat at the table with senior leaders. By working collaboratively to support each other and educate others about the invaluable role communications plays in a district's success both internally and externally we can continue to elevate the importance of our work.

**What major issues face PR professionals today?**

Like others working in public education, burnout is a real thing. Continuing to tell the real and powerful stories of the good work happening in our schools every day is increasingly challenging as the landscape gets noisier and political and cultural clashes interfere regularly with our work. I also think it's incumbent on us to be thoughtful and intentional about making sure we amplify all stories from a wide variety of perspectives and lived experiences so that we're not missing the voices of those who have historically not had a seat at the table.



**Rachel Hicks**  
**Director of Communications**  
**St. Louis Park Public Schools**  
**612-402-4289**  
**[hicks.rachel@slpschools.org](mailto:hicks.rachel@slpschools.org)**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR work and MinnSPRA experience here.**

I've worked in school public relations for 15 years and served in Rochester Public Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools, Intermediate District 287 and St. Louis Park Public Schools. I've been a long-time MinnSPRA Board member and engaged in the organization through my school PR career.

**What qualities and perspectives would you bring to the MinnSPRA Board?**

As a white woman, I strive to:

- Continually raise my level of racial consciousness and support others in their racial equity journey
- Grow in my professional learning and advocate for others' growth while elevating the profession
- Bring fun and positive energy to our work :)

**How can public relations professionals advance our communications management role in schools?**

The best way to advance the profession/role in schools is by strengthening our role as strategic advisors. By building trust, listening fully, and forecasting possible outcomes, we help leaders lead thoughtfully and strategically.

**What major issues face school PR professionals today?**

Two major issues I would say impact school PR professionals regionally are: becoming more individually racially aware so that we can better lead and navigate our school districts in equity work, and well as diversifying our profession to better align with the people we serve.



**Shawn Hogendorf**  
**Director of Communications and Public Relations**  
**South Washington County Schools**  
**shogendo@sowashco.org**  
**612-590-4516**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I have worked in school PR for the last 10 years. I began my school PR career in Saint Paul Public Schools leading communications for large-scale projects, overseeing the district's digital communication systems (websites, app, special digital projects, etc.) and managing crisis communications. From there, I went on to work as a Senior Communications Specialist in Robbinsdale Area Schools before accepting my current role as Director of Communications with South Washington County Schools.

I have been a MinnSPRA member since 2014, and joined the MinnSPRA Board of Directors in November 2018. I have served on multiple conference planning committees, helped develop and launch Good Trouble PR and have been involved with the creation of MinnSPRA's new strategic plan.

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

I would bring an understanding of best practices in community engagement, equity, project management, marketing and strategic communications to MinnSPRA leadership. I work hard to be an advocate for children, youth and families from marginalized groups. I believe in transparency and advocate for the use of plain language to communicate information to our families, staff and stakeholders.

I am dependable, kind and open-minded. I am a collaborative leader who creates trusting relationships with colleagues. I listen to learn, seek different perspectives and pride myself on giving valuable advice when facing challenging situations.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

My simple, short answer is to assist with strategic communications planning. These plans require creating innovative and thoughtful campaigns that can be used across a variety of platforms to continuously share stories of student achievement, success and positive interactions in the community. These plans also require discipline to stay on message and be transparent. If done well, strategic communications plans can help increase enrollment, pass levy requests and improve a school and district's reputation online and throughout the community.

**What major issues face school PR professionals today?**

Balancing the ever-increasing demand for school communications with limited resources continues to be a major issue for school PR professionals. The demands of the work require increasing--or at least maintaining--staffing levels to meet the complex communications needs of school districts. I believe in advocating for the importance of our work, and working to ensure that school PR professionals have a seat at the table for important decisions. An important aspect in advocacy is informing other school professionals about the critical work PR professionals do to support the goals of the district.



**Ryan Mayers**  
**Communications Coordinator**  
**Austin Public Schools**  
**ryan.mayers@austin.k12.mn.us**  
**507-460-1935**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I have worked in school PR at Austin Public Schools for the last 10 years. When I moved into this position, we had little to no communications infrastructure. During my time here, I've developed a robust social media presence, created a unified communications plan, and shepherded numerous initiatives designed to help promote the district. I joined MinnSPRA just after COVID, so I've only been able to attend two virtual conferences and one in-person this past fall.

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

I love to learn new things, especially when I can then use them in my job. I am also based in southern Minnesota, which means I'd be able to bring a different viewpoint than that of someone based in the cities.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

As dumb as this may sound, communicators communicate, and so the best way to advance our role as communication leaders is to communicate. Becoming a communication leader means tirelessly advocating for what you believe in, and so the more we're able to share the message that our students and schools matter, the more that passion is felt by the community and, in turn, the more we are able to advance our leadership. This is also a key component of building the understanding that communication is a core management function. When admin and other leaders see the effects of communication, it allows inroads to help them see how developing their communication skills could lead to positive effects too.

**What major issues face PR professionals today?**

To me, one of the biggest issues facing school PR professionals today is the pervasive, generally negative view of schools and education. I believe that there are amazing things happening in our schools every day, but, unfortunately, education is such a siloed profession that a lot of that is never seen outside of the classroom. The more we can share our stories and experiences with the community, the more we can fight that negative perception.



**Tia Quirk**  
**Communications Specialist**  
**White Bear Lake Area Schools**  
**tia.quirk@isd624.org**  
**651-706-5096**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I joined the school PR professional world in August 2021. Having just left the TV news industry after 5 years, I was timid, slightly nervous but eager to start this new journey. I'm very glad I made the leap as now I get to work with people passionate about their work in our school district who inspire me every day to learn something new and broaden my abilities to lead and serve our community. On my first day, my Director of Communications said I needed to sign up for MinnSPRA. I'm so happy I did as I've made new professional connections and friends who I can lean on for support.

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

Enthusiasm and dedication are two attributes I would bring to the table as a member of the MinnSPRA board. I'm very passionate about working with others and bringing life to important projects and topics. This is the first time I've been a member of a professional organization within my industry and I would like to serve my peers and community that has welcomed me with open arms.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

Public Relations professionals are a vital part of any organization. We provide essential information during different situations from crisis control to daily messaging. Our community members, families, co-workers and students rely on us for accurate information about school happenings. I believe we can advance our role as communication leaders and build an understanding of communication as a core management function by continuing to be transparent and open with the stakeholders and constituents of our organizations and school districts.

**What major issues face PR professionals today?**

I think one issue facing PR professionals is the new and emerging technology and apps. It can be difficult to keep up with the trends and what new social media apps our stakeholders are on. We have to constantly adapt and pivot from one software to another. While on the other hand, the up and coming technology can be used against us to cause harm to our organizations which means we have to stay alert and ready.





**Ashley Sukhu**  
**Communications Senior Specialist**  
**St. Louis Park Public Schools**  
**sukhu.ashley@slpschools.org**  
**612-581-4883**

**Please provide a brief description of your school PR experience and MinnSPRA experience.**

I joined MinnSPRA in fall 2021 after starting my school PR journey at Osseo Area Schools. I never thought I would find myself in schools, but I am glad that I did. After pursuing a Master of Arts in Strategic Communication, I worked in non-profit youth organizations for several years. Schools brought me a great balance of getting to use my skills and the joy of working with young people. I love getting to know students and telling the stories of the amazing things they do every day. Since joining MinnSPRA, I have moved districts, and I am now at St. Louis Park Public Schools. Though I am relatively new to schools, the experience connecting with other like-minded professionals has been extremely rewarding. It is nice to have a community that is welcoming and open minded. I have been able to attend two fall conferences and one spring. I also enjoy participating in the coffee chats and other opportunities for development.

**What attributes would you bring to the MinnSPRA board?**

There are a few attributes that I feel would be valuable to the MinnSPRA board. My experience in non-profit communication has given me a different perspective, which often leads me to ask questions about processes. I like to understand why things have been done a certain way and look for opportunities for improvements. Additionally, my interests lie within diversity communication. This has been one of my main focuses as a professional, and as an Indian/Guyanese American I am often looking for ways to improve communication. I am looking forward to using this insight to help with making our board more inclusive and equitable.

**How can public relations professionals advance our role as communication leaders and build understanding of communication as a core management function?**

Public relations is a key role in communication. Managing the image of our schools through partnership with media, collaborating within the community and telling stories, are all components of the work we do every day. To me, the important element of this is done through relationship building. Building relationships within our professional community and the broader public help us to be successful at maintaining and growing support for our school community.

**What major issues face PR professionals today?**

Whether it be simplifying messaging, working through crisis, or building trust, there are a number of issues that face PR professionals. One of the issues that I see often and have experienced is what messaging is most important and essential. Everyone has something they want communicated, and there are a lot of opinions on how it should be distributed. Even within our school communities, there is competition for space. Developing community and relationships has helped to resolve some of the issues because it provides an opportunity for people to understand what tools may work best for their needs.