The Adair County School Board has decided on developing a public relations plan in order to build a relationship with the media and provide positive awareness for the school system. They unveiled a possible plan at last month’s regular board meeting.

I am all building for a relationship with the school system that creates a solid line of communication, I see to the school board, “By all means, go for it,” I applied you for making the effort. However, I do have a few concerns.

PUBLIC RELATIONS
VERSUS
DIRECT ENFORCEMENT

A little over a week after the meeting, I received a press release from the school district. As a journalist, sometimes press releases and public affairs officers make my life easy, but sometimes they make it a lot harder.

When I am doing a story, working with a school system or a feature, I like to talk to the people involved.

For example, if I were doing a story on any crime that had occurred, I would commit, I would talk rather to the officer that was there that day, or to the officer that was there the other day. Sometimes public relations officials already know all of the information, but the officer on the scene can give me a better picture of what happened because he was actually there. Some organizations have a policy where they won’t talk to the media without going through a public relations person first.

That doesn’t happen in this situation. I believe that employees of any school district already have reservations about speaking to the media without a rule/policy that it needs to go through a public relations department.

In some cases employees are scared to go on the record for any kind of story already with out having that stigma behind it.

About a year ago, I called a teacher in the Adair County School District about a feature story that was non-controversial. That teacher made it clear that she was uncomfortable talking to the media.

I have also had instances where staff or teachers are extremely forthcoming.

I strongly believe I in the school district develops a system where employees have to go through a public relations department before they can speak to me or any other media, it will increase that. I hope as the board is developing how they are going to approach the public relations plan, they take that into consideration.

PRESS RELEASE
VERSUS
ORIGINAL CONTENT

Treece said at the board meeting last month that they want to come up with “print ready” news releases. I don’t have a problem with news releases. More often than not I can take a news release and run with it. They give me story ideas.

When I receive a press release in “print ready form” the first thing I do is come up with a way to change it that is appropriate to our publication.

Any good journalist worth their salt would do the same thing.

I can honestly say that any feature/news story I receive that is worth printing or investi gation is not going to be printed as it is with the excep tion of regular announcements, etc., and even then we change the wording or grammar to match our specific style.

In other words, if we receive a story tip or news/feature release, we are going to go beyond “print ready.”

MODEL PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN

While in college, I had one year of public relations classes where I developed public relations plans. I know how it works on the side of an organization that wants to maintain a positive image.

I also worked on the student newspaper where I had to refer to the public relations department.

With experience on both sides, I believe a good public relations plan matched with a school system that has an open line of communication beyond the public relations depart ment.

I believe Lindsey Wilson College is a good example of that.

They have a public relations department. I send them out news releases on a daily basis. They are asked to report any missrepresentation by any advertisers.

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They also have an open line of communication. I can call just about anybody at LWC and have an under-standing conversation.

That is another thing I hope the school board thinks about before they develop this plan. Developing a relationship with the media is more than just sending out story tips or press releases.

I believe a school developing an open line of communication between the media and school officials is the key.

If they feel comfortable talk ing to the press, then that will go a long way in building a positive relationship with the media.

This is my view of how plans should be developed.

We welcome your comments and suggestions!

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:

Adair County Community Voice
P.O. Box 159
Columbia, KY 42728

Letters to the editor must be original and include the writer’s name and daytime telephone number of the writer. The editor reserves the right to edit to conform to newspaper style and limit the number of letters per writer. The opinions expressed in the letters to the editor and other editorials are those of the Adair County Community Voice.

Letters must not contain material that is objectionable advertising. Readers are asked to remain civil and respectful in their correspondence by any advertisers.

The Adair County Community Voice is not responsible for more than one incorrect insertion of an advertisement. The publisher can assume no liability for typographical error on the incorrect portion of the ad. Publisher can assume no liability for typographical error on the incorrect portion of the ad.

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EDITORIAL CORRECTION POLICY

The Adair County Community Voice reserves the right to report the corrections for any errors reported in the newsroom, and to correct the error in a corrected as soon as possible.

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Face value 28-11.4 in.

Truth will prevail.

“Their is no shortage,” he said. “I think it is useless. I don’t care what they say. I will not do a story on any crime that has been committed, I would rather talk to the officer that was there that day, or to the officer that was there the other day. Sometimes public relations officials already know all of the information, but the officer on the scene can give me a better picture of what happened because he was actually there. Some organizations have a policy where they won’t talk to the media without going through a public relations person first.

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