Champions for Children™

**Bop to the Top!**
**Every child is a possibility and every challenge, an opportunity.**

By Shari Prest, Ark Associates

**Rediscover the joy**
It’s the time of year when you feel the familiar tingle of anticipation and the burst of hope that you did when preparing for your first class of students—when you saw every child as a possibility and every challenge as an opportunity. Now you prepare not only for children, but also for staff members, mandates, expectations, and systems. The potential is greater and the risks more apparent. Public education and educational leaders in Minnesota are at the crossroads of soaring and survival. This is the start of something new.*

Last year, Disney Studios® produced a small made-for-TV movie, *High School Musical.* That movie and the live production of the same name quickly became national phenomenons among a generation of our kids and beyond, surpassing the wildest expectations of creators and promoters.

What does this simple story about a group of high school students have to do with educational leadership? Everything! It is about discovering who we are and who we can become. The movie provides something people have been missing: the joy…the sheer energy of dreaming, exploring, risking, and discovering. At a time when our media is dominated by images of violence, our courts by lawsuits, our world by scarcity, and our politics by negativity, the human spirit needs a vision of something greater. We need leaders who can communicate the hope and joy and possibility of the future. In the words of one *High School Musical* song, “[we’re] soarin’, flyin’, there’s not a star in heaven that we can’t reach if we’re tryin’, so we’re breakin’ free…”*

**Soaring leaders**
- Clarify the vision in language that inspires loyalty. To be number one you’ve got to raise the bar. Get to the place to be all that we can be. Now’s the time.*
- Focus on potential and possibilities to ignite hope within the school district and community. Our dreams have no limitations. That’s what it’s all about. *
- Capitalize on the value of diverse perspectives. Everyone is special in their own way. We make each other strong.*
- Develop a process through which challenges are transformed into opportunities. All things change when you don't expect them to. No one knows what the future's gonna do. Anything can happen when you take a chance.*
• Identify and commit to strategic priorities to engage the community and staff in the
important work of supporting and educating children. We’re all here and speaking out in
one voice…We’ve arrived because we stuck together. Champions one and all.*
  — Personalize communications and build new relationships.
  — Keep stakeholders informed and updated through various and creative means.
  — Punctuate the vision with stories and data.
  — Train all staff to be public relations representatives for the school/district.
  — Utilize the Champions for Children™ public relations resources at the MASA,
    MASSP, or MESPA Web sites for your communications.
  — Document, analyze, and evaluate your communication strategies.
• Remember to celebrate. Here and now its time for celebration—to finally figure it out—
that all our dreams have no limitations. That’s what it’s all about. *

The beginning of the new academic year is a good time to recommit that “We'll keep
stepping up and we just won't stop…bop to the top.”*

* Excerpts extracted from the lyrics of Disney Studios© High School Musical songs.

Please use your influence to educate our communities about the needs and state
of public education. Public relations is a crucial component leading to the success
of school leaders and their school communities. Champions for Children™ is a
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