

Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: New York School Public Relations Association (NYSPRA)

Please complete and include the information below for each individual entry

 Section I: Membership Building

- Current number of chapter members _____
- NSPRA-provided membership baseline number as of June 1 _____
- Number of chapter members who belong to NSPRA as of April 30 _____

 X **Section II: Special Focus Areas**

 X Category A – chapter has less than 50% NSPRA membership

 Category B – chapter has 50% or more NSPRA membership

 X 1. Professional Development/PR Skill Building

 2. Special PR/Communication Program, Project or Campaign

 One-time project/program (completed within a single year)

 Continuing annual project/program (repeats each year; demonstrate new/improved/revised components)

 Multi-year project/program (one-time only with defined start and end dates)

 Multi-year phased project/program (components implemented in clearly defined phases each year)

 3. Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Effort

New York School Public Relations Association
NSPRA Mark of Distinction
Recognition Application

Submitted: May 2019

Section II: Special Focus Areas
Professional Development/P.R. Skill-Building



The New York School Public Relations Association (NYSPRA) executive board is committed to providing value to its members year-round through professional development and recognition activities, as well as through frequent communication with and among members. Our goal is to maintain a strong professional organization that strengthens the public relations profession and provides value to members across the state who are looking to continually build their skillsets. In working to meet this goal, we hope to further grow our association and expand the opportunities we offer our members.

Our association has grown from 145 members (June 2016) to 228 members (March 2019).

Requirements and criteria:

NYSPRA is in good standing with the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and meets the following requirements:

- Maintains a minimum of 10 NSPRA members
- Met at least once during the last fiscal year
- Submitted the required Annual Chapter Cash Flow Report by the Oct. 30, 2018 deadline
- Submitted a current chapter membership contact list by the Oct. 30, 2018 deadline
- Submitted the names of the newly elected chapter officers following our 2019 election
- Adheres to all chapter bylaws

NYSPRA's mission, goals and objectives align with those of NSPRA. We are committed to building and maintaining trust and credibility for our education systems and, thereby, strengthening our schools for the betterment of all children and families. We seek to be recognized as leaders in all areas of public relations, especially as they relate to education.

The 2018-19 fiscal year was the second of NYSPRA's five-year strategic plan. During this time, we have remained committed to our key focus areas of: growing the profession and career development, increasing awareness of our value, providing resources and examples of best practices for members, continually listening to members, and providing members with networking opportunities.

We offer the following as evidence of these efforts:

Annual Communications Contest

Our annual Communications Contest offers members an opportunity to submit their best work from the previous year. Work can be submitted in 14 different categories, ranging from annual reports and writing to strategic campaigns and websites. The award-winning work is showcased on NYSPRA's website and at the NYSPRA annual conference, as well as at the New York State School Board Association's (NYSSBA) annual convention and in NYSSBA's *OnBoard* publication (which is printed and mailed to all school districts in the state). Showcasing this work allows NYSPRA to not only build its brand, but also allows our members to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their abilities and how they support schools across the state. Members are able to see a variety of best practices exhibited in the winning materials, and school board members always appreciate the recognition of having their district's work displayed on a statewide level.

The 2018 NYSPRA Communications Contest ran from July to October 2018. The 511 entries (up from 439 in 2017) were judged by 50 communications professionals from across the country (up from 42 in 2017). Of those entries, 194 entries received awards. The contest is organized by NYSPRA's paid contest coordinator.

Communicator of the Year Award

Nominations for the third annual NYSPRA "Communicator of the Year" award were received in July 2018. The award allows the executive board to recognize a school communications professional from New York for their demonstrated commitment to the profession and to the schools, students and families they serve. Like the annual Communications Contest, this award features best practices within the school public relations profession and provides members with a new opportunity to be recognized for the important work that they do. It also serves to build the NYSPRA brand as recognized leaders in the realm of school public relations.

This award is judged by past and current presidents of NSPRA's state chapters throughout the country. In 2018-19, the award was given to Angela Marshall, public information officer at Nassau BOCES. This announcement was made in October 2018 and Ms. Marshall was recognized with a plaque at the NYSPRA annual conference in March 2019.

Planning for Northeast Regional Communications Summit

In an effort to increase the number of professional development opportunities available to members, the NYSPRA executive board has explored different ways to offer workshops outside of the NYSPRA annual conference. Because of the size of New York state, it isn't always possible for members to attend the annual conference due to geography.

This year, NYSPRA has partnered with NJSPRA, PenSPRA and ConnSPRA, as well as the NSPRA regional vice-president, to plan an event that members of all four organizations can take advantage of: the Northeast Regional Communications Summit.

By partnering with other state chapters, the costs and logistics of holding the upcoming event are shared, and this increases the chances of having a successful summit.

While the two-day event will not occur until October 2019, much of the planning work has been conducted in the 2018-19 fiscal year. This work included four web-based meetings and one in-person meeting at Southern Westchester BOCES in Harrison, NY, where the event will take place. The summit will feature a crisis communications workshop delivered on the first day, followed by a school branding workshop on the second day. As of April 30, 2019, much of the planning work has been completed for the event including: securing the conference space and guest speakers (contracts are signed), finalizing logistics (such as the program costs and schedule), setting a preliminary budget (including funds for food), and finalizing a sponsorship package. The event was highlighted at NYSPRA's annual conference in March 2019. The target attendance for the summit is 75 people.

The NYSPRA executive board is thrilled to soon offer this new professional development opportunity to members and their school administrators in the coming 2019-20 fiscal year.

Annual Conference

The 2019 NYSPRA Conference was held in Syracuse, NY, on March 24 and 25. The two-day conference was unequivocally the largest and most successful in NYSPRA's history. It hosted 110 registrants (up from 64 in 2018) and 17 professional development sessions (up from 7 in 2018). The conference featured Superintendent Susan Enfield of Washington's Highline Public Schools as the keynote speaker, who presented on the topic of "Communicating and Leading for Equity."

The annual conference is the largest professional development opportunity that NYSPRA offers to its members, so maximizing members' time at the conference is a priority. Feedback from previous conferences made the executive board aware that some members prefer "skill sessions," while others want to learn more about public relations theory and crisis communications.

For the 2019 conference, the executive board was delighted to offer conference sessions on a variety of topics, with the goal of meeting the needs of all members. For the second year, we encouraged members to submit presentation proposals to the NYSPRA executive board. The conference schedule was determined based on these proposals. Members commented that they were honored to be selected as conference presenters – and, for many, it was their first time presenting at a statewide conference. The result is that NYSPRA is not only providing value to members through the content of the conference sessions, but also through the career growth that comes with preparing and presenting a workshop.

This year was the first that NYSPRA welcomed school superintendents in attendance at its conference (the event is typically only attended by communications professionals). In addition to Dr. Enfield, the conference was attended by three school superintendents – one appeared as a presenter and another was a recent NSPRA award winner.

An exit survey was administered to members at the conclusion of the conference – both via hard copy and online – to gather feedback and input from members. Overall, the conference was rated favorably by attendees. A full survey report will be shared at the first NYSPRA board meeting of the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Social Media and Email Engagement

The NYSPRA executive board and communications coordinator regularly use email, Twitter and Facebook to communicate with members. Emails are typically sent using the email "newsletter" feature, which is part of the NYSPRA member management software. This is a quick and direct way for the board to send important information to members. Between May 1, 2018, and April 30, 2019, 17 emails were sent to members on a variety of topics, including the annual conference and annual board elections.

NYSPRA also uses a closed Facebook group to communicate with members. This space serves to facilitate conversations between members and is a valuable resource for those who seek advice or suggestions from their colleagues across the state. As of April 12, 2019, that group has 89 members (up from 85 members last year).

While NYSPRA does have a public Facebook page, the executive board and paid communications coordinator largely focus their social media efforts on Twitter. Our approach is to advertise our events, as well as retweet and share information from our members across the state. We regularly use the

#SchoolPR hashtag and also have a hashtag for our annual conferences. Our Twitter followers are continually growing – as of April 2019, we have 1,387 followers (up from 859 in June 2017).

Membership Drive

NYSPRA has held a membership drive twice in the last three years (June 2016 and June 2018). We mail a brochure with a membership form to inform non-members about the organization and to encourage people to join.

Each school district in New York receives two copies of our brochure – one addressed to the superintendent and one addressed to the communications professional. Each BOCES district superintendent also receives a copy, as well as each BOCES communications director.

Additionally, we send this brochure to school districts/BOCES that already have a membership since our annual contest is tied to our membership renewals. In this way, the mailing is a trigger for others to learn about NYSPRA and to renew their membership even if they are not participating in the contest.

As mentioned earlier, our association has grown from 145 members in June 2016 (when we initiated our first membership drive) to 228 members in March 2019.

Supporting Documentation

- NYSPRA Website: <https://www.nyspra.org/>
- NYSPRA Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/NYSPRA>
- 2019 Annual Conference Program: <https://bit.ly/2lufxGe>
- 2019 Annual Conference Postcard: <http://bit.ly/2GiQGfQ>
- Northeast Regional Communications Summit Save-the-Date: <https://bit.ly/2lglC8V>
- Annual Communications Contest, Email to members: <https://bit.ly/2Z6k9bk>
- 2018 Communications Contest, Call for Entries publication: <https://bit.ly/2KyU9Cv>
- Call for Presentations, Email to members: <https://bit.ly/2P86ADR>
- Communicator of the Year, Email to members: <https://bit.ly/2lulMZG>
- 2018 Membership Drive Brochure: <http://bit.ly/2Xok6GI>
- 2018 Contest Award Winners: <https://bit.ly/2X5Ug9U>
- 2018 Display at New York State School Boards Association Conference: <http://bit.ly/2GnOmeK>