



National School Public Relations Association



Section II: Special Focus Area

Category B: 50% or More NSPRA Membership

Area 3: Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Efforts

Building Value for School PR by Building Statewide Partnerships

Prepared by INSPRA Board Members:

Kara Beach, 2016-2017 South Regional Director

Cathy Kedjidjian, 2016-2017 INSPRA President

Becky Koltz, 2016-2017 Communications VP

Goal: Increase INSPRA's standing as the key resource statewide for school districts seeking guidance and expert advice on school communication, community engagement and public relations issues.

This program goal is directly related to both of NSPRA's primary goals:

Goal 1. NSPRA will be the professional organization that is indispensable to school public relations professionals and other education leaders.

Goal 2. NSPRA will be the recognized leader and authority on school public relations.

Over the past several years, the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association has worked to build a strong and valuable partnership with the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). INSPRA has a long history of contributing articles to the *IASB Journal's* Practical PR column. The columns allow board of education members statewide to learn key lessons in school communications from professionals; they also allow INSPRA to gain recognition as the key resource for guidance on school PR. Recent columns include:

- [Quarantine '17 \(May/June 2017\)](#)
- [Worth the effort: Getting behind your district's strategic plan \(January/February 2017\)](#)
- [Partner up for engagement \(September/October 2016\)](#)
- [PERA Playbook: Lessons from collaborative process \(July/August 2016\)](#)

In addition, INSPRA members have been key presenters at the Joint Annual Conference, also called "Triple I" because the conference is co-sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Boards, the Illinois Association of School Administrators, and the Illinois Association of School Business Officials. This conference attracts close to 10,000 school board members, administrators and other educational professionals each November in Chicago. The IASB's overview of the 2016 conference indicates that more than 82 percent of the state's 852 public school districts were represented at the conference. Some of the presentations are "INSPRA-sponsored," while others are by members who are presenting with their districts. Topics as presentations led by INSPRA members in the last two years have included: communicating a 1:1 rollout; building a new school communications program; social media; building cross-district and community partnerships.

As was evidenced in Chicago for the NSPRA National Seminar, school leaders and communicators crave professional development and guidance from expert school public

relations practitioners. Two of the three “INSPRA-sponsored” sessions at the 2016 conference were assigned to rooms with seating for 80 and both sessions were scheduled opposite 30 other topics. Attendees voted with their feet; one session attracted approximately 60 attendees while the other hit capacity with attendees spilling out into the hallway in order to hear the presentation. The third INSPRA-sponsored session was a round-table format to encourage more dialogue. The panel, in the less desirable first time slot Sunday morning, was one of nine offered and attracted a full table. This response from attendees - affiliated with various facets of school management across the state - solidifies INSPRA as a leader in school communications and positions our chapter as a vital resource to provide support to our school partners, like IASB.

In 2016, INSPRA wanted to increase its role at the Joint Conference beyond leading presentations and large-group discussions in order to build a stronger partnership with the IASB. Evolving our presence at the Joint Annual Conference would allow us to reach a broader audience of educational professionals across the state and further become a key resource for any issues related to school communications. [INSPRA’s proposal to IASB to host “PR Problems? InsPRa Solutions!”](#) was eagerly accepted. The promotion, shared via social media and through email, stated:

Have a communications concern? A PR problem? Members of the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA) are available on a drop-in basis throughout the conference to consult with board members, superintendents and other school officials on their specific PR issues, or to discuss general trends in school communications. INSPRA professionals will hold individual or small-group sessions on topics such as website best practices, social media, crisis communications, communicating difficult topics, school branding – or whatever communication or community relations challenge you’re facing. Drop in for a quick answer, or stay awhile to network and learn!

The booth was located in the “IASB Homeroom,” a centerpoint of activity at the conference, as described in [the IASB recap of the conference](#) (which mentions INSPRA’s booth). [INSPRA recruited members to man the booth in shifts throughout the conference](#); all shifts filled quickly, so the chapter added additional volunteer slots.

Though the booth was positioned in the back of the room (not a prime traffic area), Board members, administrators, administrative assistants, and other school PR professionals made their way to the booth for advice or conversation. One unexpected benefit was that INSPRA members could direct visitors to INSPRA panels and presentations at the conference. Additionally, INSPRA members shared their contact information with panel attendees and INSPRA booth visitors in order to continue dialogue and provide support after the weekend concluded.

Here is the full schedule for the 2016 conference, including “PR Problems? InsPRa Solutions” hours and the number of presentations by INSPRA members:

Friday, November 18, 2016: INSPRA Booth open 8:30am - 3:30pm

- 2:00pm - 3:00pm: 13 panel presentations - 0 by INSPRA members

Saturday, November 19, 2016: INSPRA Booth open 8:30am - 3:00pm

- 10:30am - 11:30am: 30 panel presentations - 2 by INSPRA members
- 1:30pm - 2:30pm: 30 panel presentations - 2 by INSPRA members
- 1:30pm - 3:15 pm: 33 panel presentations - 1 by INSPRA members
- 3:00pm - 4:00pm: 27 panel presentations - 2 by INSPRA members

Sunday, November 20, 2016

- 8:30am - 9:30am: 9 panel presentations - 1 by INSPRA members

The INSPRA booth was highlighted in the photo gallery in the January/February 2017 issue of the *IASB Journal*:

