



Georgia School Public Relations Association

**National School Public Relations Association
(NSPRA)**

**Mark of Distinction Submission
2021**

*Category: Special Focus Area
Professional Development/PR Skill-Building*

Submitted by Anisa Sullivan Jimenez, APR
GSPRA President
April 2021

Situational Analysis:

One of the Georgia School Public Relations Associations (GSPRA) highlights each year is to hold an in-person conference for networking and professional development. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, an in-person conference was not possible for the 2020-21 school year.

However, it remained essential that GSPRA find a way to support its members with networking and professional development. This was especially important as all systems were dealing with a nationwide pandemic for which there was no playbook.

In the 181 school districts in Georgia, there is great variance in communications. In some small, rural system, communications is a shared responsibility. In many systems, the communications function is handled by a one-person shop. Other school districts have an entire department. While districts are varied in size, demographics, student achievement, level of community support and many other factors, best practices in communications remains consistent.

Therefore, to best support all members, professional development had to have value for all types of systems and communications divisions. With this in mind, GSPRA kicked off its inaugural webinar series in June 2020. Webinars were generally held monthly and featured state and national speakers. Topics were varied and sessions were well-attended.

Purpose:

The purpose of the monthly webinar series was as follows:

- To foster connectedness within GSPRA
- To offer members support in COVID communications, diversity and inclusion, and a variety of other pertinent topics
- To provide regular opportunities for professional development
- To maintain – and increase – networking opportunities through monthly Zoom webinars

Research:

When the new GSPRA president began in June 2020, school systems were still deciding whether to offer in-person, virtual or hybrid learning opportunities for the fall. It was clear that GSPRA would not be able to hold a Fall in-person conference due to COVID-19.

Therefore, informal research was conducted and revealed the following:

- Members self-reported that district travel was paused indefinitely.
- Emails being sent on the GSPRA listserv demonstrated that members needed support in pandemic communications.
- Media analysis of news and trends found that COVID-19 and race relations were vital topics for communications practitioners and must be addressed early-on in the webinar series.
- As the series progressed, future topics were discussed in GSPRA Board meetings.

Goal:

GSPRA has historically provided professional development for members on a variety of topics pertinent to the communication professional. The organization's mission is to advocate for public education and to provide expertise, resources and support, empowering school systems to communicate effectively and build strong relationships.

It is in support of this mission that the GSPRA Board ***provide ongoing professional development for members in a virtual setting so that they can continue to best support their systems and maintain connectivity with fellow School PR practitioners.***

Objective:

To provide monthly webinars to GSPRA members to cover a variety of topics

Planning:

- During monthly Board meetings, the GSPRA President would pitch webinar topic ideas to Board members for discussion.
- The Board decided that webinars should not exceed one hour in length.
- Zoom would be the platform since that was not reliant on systems being Google or Microsoft-based systems.

- GSPRA members would receive a \$25 honorarium. Non-GSPRA members (state and national experts) would receive a \$50 honorarium for presenting for 30 minutes or \$100 for 60 minutes.

Implementation:

Monthly Topics

- **June 2020 – COVID Conversations (Open Discussion)**
- **July 2020 – Diversity and Inclusion**

Jennifer Caracciolo, Director of Public Information and Communications - Forsyth County Schools

Sylvia McGee, Former Deputy Superintendent and Social Worker - Bibb County School District

- **August 2020 – COVID Conversations (Open Discussion)**
- **September 2020 – Preparing for Your APR and School Reopening Best Practices**
Anisa Sullivan Jimenez, APR, Director of Communications - Oconee County Schools
Callen Moore, Public Relations Officer - Walton County School District
Moderated by Yolanda Stephen, APR, Director of Public Relations - Troup County School System

- **October/November 2020 – Update from the Georgia Department of Education and Best Practices for Creating In-House Videos**
Meghan Frick, Director of Communications - Georgia Department of Education
Chris Triplett, Video Production Specialist - Georgia School Boards Association

- **Holiday 2020 – Wellbeing for the School Communications Professional**
Kristin Magette, APR, Marketing Writer - Willdan
Shawn McKillop, APR, Manager of Communications and Community Engagement - Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

- **January 2021 – Annual Meeting and Virtual Awards Ceremony for Publications Contest and Professional Awards**

- **February 2021 – Best in Category Winners Present their Award-Winning Publications**

Best in Category Winners:

Bibb County School District
Image/Identity Package

Cherokee County School District
Crisis Communication
Newsletter/Newsmagazine
Handbook

Dublin City Schools
Photography

Forsyth County Schools
Website

Gwinnett County Public Schools
Excellence in Writing
Special Purpose Publication
Videography/Electronic Media

Houston County School District
Calendar
Marketing Campaign
Social Media
Special Event

Oconee County Schools
Annual Report

- **March 2021 – NCSPPRA/GSPRA/SCNSPPRA Spring Professional Development Series**
- **April 2021 – NCSPPRA/GSPRA/SCNSPPRA Spring Professional Development Series Tips and Best Practices from NSPPRA's President**
Lesley Bruinton, APR, Director of Public Relations - Tuscaloosa City Schools

Promotional graphics (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, GSPRA Website, Direct Email to GSPRAnS)



COVID CONVERSATIONS
TUESDAY, JUNE 30 AT 3 P.M.

Monthly Webinar:
Diversity & Inclusion

THURSDAY
JULY 16
3 P.M.

Featuring:
Jennifer Caracciolo
Director of Public Information and
Communications - Forsyth County
Schools

Sylvia McGee
Former Deputy Superintendent and
Social Worker - Bibb County School
District

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**SAVE
THE
DATE**



COVID CONVERSATIONS: COMMUNICATING CASES

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 AT 4 P.M.

Monthly Webinar:
School Reopening
Best Practices &
Preparing For Your
APR

**THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 17
3:30 P.M.**

Featuring:
Anisa Sullivan Jimenez,
APR
Director of Communications -
Oconee County Schools

Callen Moore
Public Relations Officer -
Walton County School District

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Monthly Webinar:
Update from the
Georgia Department
of Education & Best
Practices for
Creating In-House
Videos

**THURSDAY
OCTOBER 29
3:30 P.M.**

Featuring:
Meghan Frick
Director of Communications -
Georgia Department of Education

Chris Triplett
Video Production Specialist -
Georgia School Boards Association



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(Inclement weather closed schools on this date)

Monthly Webinar:
Update from the
Georgia Department
of Education & Best
Practices for
Creating In-House
Videos

**MONDAY
NOVEMBER 9
3:30 P.M.**

Featuring:
Meghan Frick
Director of Communications -
Georgia Department of Education

Chris Triplett
Video Production Specialist -
Georgia School Boards Association



**NEW
DATE**

Monthly Webinar:
**Wellness for the
School
Communications
Professional**

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 10
3:30 P.M.**

Featuring:
Kristin Magette, APR
Willdan
Marketing Writer

Shawn McKillop, APR
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Manager of Communications & Community
Engagement



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Let's Celebrate!



**GSPRA VIRTUAL AWARDS CEREMONY
1/28/21 | 3:30-5:00 P.M.**

Monthly Webinar:
**GSPRA Best in
 Category Winners**
 Present Their Award-
 Winning Submissions

**THURSDAY
 FEBRUARY 25
 NOON**

Featuring:
 Bibb County School District
 Cherokee County School District
 Dublin City Schools
 Forsyth County Schools
 Gwinnett County Public Schools
 Houston County School District
 Oconee County Schools

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| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Friday, March 5 | Session One 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon | |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon | Top public education issues and how they impact school communicators Presented by: Lauren Fox, Ph.D. Senior Director of Policy, Public School Forum (NC) Dr. Dana Rickman President, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education | |
| Friday, March 12 | Session One 10:30 -11:15 a.m. | Session Two 11:15 – 12:00 noon |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon | Marketing public schools in the face of declining enrollments Presented by: Forthright Advising | Supercharging your Social Media Presented by: Lisa Perry Digital Media Strategist & Owner of Perry Productions (Concord, NC) |
| Friday, March 19 | Session One 10:30 -11:15 a.m. | Session Two 11:15 – 12:00 noon |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon | Boosting staff morale through effective internal communications Presented by: NCSPPRA & SC/NSPRA | Measuring Racial Equity: A Groundwater Approach Presented by: Deena Hayes-Greene Co-founder of Racial Equity Institute & Chair of Guilford County Board of Education (NC) |
| Friday, March 26 | Session One 10:30 -11:15 a.m. | Session Two 11:15 – 12:00 noon |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 | One District: Best Practices for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Systems Presented by: Anisa Sullivan Jimenez Director of Communications, Oconee County Schools (Watkinsville, GA) Callen Moore Public Relations Officer, Walton County School District (Monroe, GA) | The Human Grid: Turning public education into a movement Presented by: Geno Church Director of Community Strategy and Design for <i>We Must Be Bold</i> (Greenville, SC) |

Monthly Webinar:
NSPRA's President
shares best practices
and tips you can
implement today!

THURSDAY
APRIL 15
NOON

Special Guest:
Lesley Bruinton, APR

Director of Public Relations
Tuscaloosa City Schools

National School Public Relations
Association (NSPRA) President



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Website (gspra.org – Members' Area)

Members had access to all of the webinar presentations.

The screenshot shows the GSPRA website's Members' Area. The header includes the GSPRA logo and the text "Georgia School Public Relations Association". Navigation tabs include Home, About GSPRA, Awards, Conference/Events, and Members' Area. A search icon is visible in the top right. The main content area is titled "2020-21 GSPRA Webinar Series" and includes an "Edit Page" button. The text explains that due to COVID-19, the annual fall conference was canceled, but professional development opportunities were provided via Zoom. A list of webinar topics follows, including COVID conversations, diversity and inclusion, and various best practices. A "Best in Category Winners" section lists award-winning publications from various school districts. The footer contains navigation icons for About GSPRA, Awards, Events, Conference, Region Map, and Connect, along with contact information for GSPRA.

Georgia School Public Relations Association | Members' Area | Conference/Webinar Sessions | 2020-21 GSPRA Webinar Series

CONFERENCE/WEBINAR SESSIONS

- 2020-21 GSPRA Webinar Series
- 2020 Charging Station Webinar
- 2019 GSPRA Fall Conference Sessions
- Past GSPRA Conferences

2020-21 GSPRA Webinar Series

Professional development and networking opportunities are the greatest benefit to GSPRA membership. Due to COVID-19, GSPRA's annual fall in-person conference was canceled. However, professional development opportunities were provided on a monthly basis via Zoom. Having regular professional development and networking opportunities provided GSPRAs with more opportunities - than ever - to connect.

Webinar Topics

- June 2020 – COVID Conversations (Open Discussion)**
- July 2020 – Diversity and Inclusion**
Jennifer Caracciolo, Director of Public Information and Communications - Forsyth County Schools
Sylvia McGee, Former Deputy Superintendent and Social Worker - Bibb County School District
- August 2020 – COVID Conversations (Open Discussion)**
- September 2020 – Preparing for Your APR and School Reopening Best Practices**
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Moderated by Yolanda Stephen, APR, Director of Public Relations - Troup County School System
- October/November 2020 – Update from the Georgia Department of Education and Best Practices for Creating In-House Videos**
Meghan Frick, Director of Communications - Georgia Department of Education
Chris Triplett, Video Production Specialist - Georgia School Boards Association
- Holiday 2020 – Wellbeing for the School Communications Professional**
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Best in Category Winners:
Bibb County School District
Image/Identity Package
Cherokee County School District
Crisis Communication
Newsletter/Newsmagazine
Handbook
Dublin City Schools
Photography
Forsyth County Schools
Website
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Excellence in Writing
Special Purpose Publication
Videography/Electronic Media
Houston County School District
Calendar
Marketing Campaign
Social Media
Special Event
Oconee County Schools
Annual Report
- March 2021 – NCSPPA/GSPRA/SCNSPPA Spring Professional Development Series GSPRA Session - OneDistrict: Communications for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Systems**
Anisa Sullivan Jimenez, APR, Director of Communications - Oconee County Schools
Callen Moore, Public Relations Officer - Walton County School District
- April 2021 – Tips and Best Practices from NSPPA's President**
Lesley Brunton, APR, Director of Public Relations - Tuscaloosa City Schools

ABOUT GSPRA | AWARDS | EVENTS | CONFERENCE | REGION MAP | CONNECT

Georgia School Public Relations Association, GSPRA, VIEW MAP | CONTACT US | WEBSITE FEEDBACK | P: 470-553-0938

Evaluation:

GSPRA members had the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey on the 2020-21 webinar series from April 15-28, 2021. Fourteen members responded. The questions and results are below.

The scale used was:

How valuable did you find the session(s)?

1 2 3 4 5

Not Valuable At All Very Valuable

Therefore, “5” was the highest rating possible and “1” was the lowest. Survey respondents were able to only rate the sessions for which they attended.

The survey also provided a link to all webinar presentations as follows:



GSPRA 2020-21 Webinar Evaluation

Please visit gspra.org/webinarseries (in the Members Area) for session info. Thanks in advance for your feedback! Evaluations are due Wed., April 28, 2021.

Questions:

Session 1 and Session 3: COVID Conversations (June and August 2020)

Open Discussion

Did you attend Session 1 or Session 3? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find the session(s)?

Not Valuable At All 1 2 3 4 5 Very Valuable

Session 2: Diversity and Inclusion (June 2020)

Jennifer Caracciolo, Director of Public Information and Communications - Forsyth County Schools
Sylvia McGee, Former Deputy Superintendent and Social Worker - Bibb County School District

Did you attend Session 2? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find the session?

Not Valuable At All 1 2 3 4 5 Very Valuable

Session 4: Preparing for Your APR and School Reopening Best Practices (September 2020)

Anisa Sullivan Jimenez, APR, Director of Communications - Oconee County Schools
Callen Moore, Public Relations Officer - Walton County School District
Moderated by Yolanda Stephen, APR, Director of Public Relations - Troup County School System

Did you attend Session 4? *

- Yes
- No

How valuable did you find the session?

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Not Valuable At All | <input type="radio"/> | Very Valuable |

Session 5: Update from the Georgia Department of Education and Best Practices for Creating In-House Videos (October/November 2020)

Meghan Frick, Director of Communications - Georgia Department of Education
Chris Triplett, Video Production Specialist - Georgia School Boards Association

Did you attend Session 5? *

- Yes
- No

How valuable did you find the session?

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Not Valuable At All | <input type="radio"/> | Very Valuable |

Session 6: Wellbeing for the School Communications Professional (December 2020)

Kristin Magette, APR, Marketing Writer - Willdan

Shawn McKillop, APR, Manager of Communications and Community Engagement - Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Did you attend Session 6? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find the session?

Not Valuable At All 1 2 3 4 5 Very Valuable

Session 7: Best in Category Winners Present their Award-Winning Publications (February 2021)

Best in Category Winners

Did you attend Session 7? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find the session?

Not Valuable At All 1 2 3 4 5 Very Valuable

Session 8: NCSPPRA/GSPRA/SCNSPPRA Spring Professional Development Series (SPDS) (March 2021)

Four-week series

Did you attend any of the SPDS webinars? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find SPDS?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Valuable At All Very Valuable

Session 9: Tips and Best Practices from NSPPRA's President (April 2021)

Lesley Bruinton, APR, Director of Public Relations - Tuscaloosa City Schools

Did you attend Session 9? *

Yes

No

How valuable did you find the session?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Valuable At All Very Valuable

Would you like to see future webinars occur? *

Yes

No

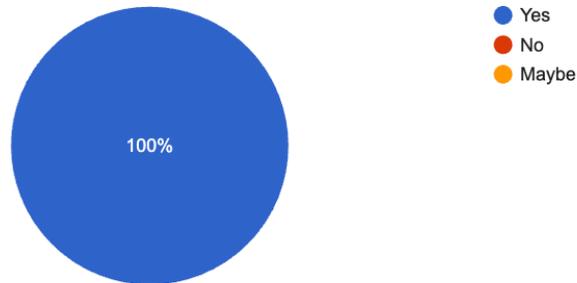
Maybe

Do you have any additional feedback you'd like to share?

Your answer _____

Would you like to see future webinars occur?

14 responses



The survey results demonstrated 100% agreement that webinars should continue. Based on individual webinar survey results, 77% of responses were positive, 18% were neutral and 5% were negative overall. Members were also able to provide open-ended responses. Feedback received provided ways to improve future webinar offerings (such as recording webinars and holding webinars at different times of day) and this data was provided to the president-elect for planning purposes.

Surveys with the highest ratings provided clear take-aways for participants and matched the title of the webinar. For continuous improvement purposes, this survey provides valuable feedback for future planning in what was a very successful first-year webinar series that brought increased professional development offerings for GSPRA members. Anecdotally, members have commented that because of regular virtual offerings, they felt more connected to their fellow GSPRAs than ever before.