

## **Are You Ready for Accreditation in Public Relations?**

That is probably one question that can be answered in as many ways as there are people who sit for the exam. Even among some NSPRA members who received APR pins at the San Francisco Seminar this past summer, the question elicits different insights and suggestions.

Joe Ferdani, APR, communications manager in the Adams 12 Five Star Schools in Thornton, Colo., said, “The biggest hurdle I found in getting my APR was getting over the stage of thinking about it and just doing it. My advice – take the plunge ... Along the journey, you learn so much about yourself; your strengths and areas you’d like to improve in.”

“I knew I was ready for the exam when I found myself automatically framing every project and case study in a RACE mind set,” said Leslie Robinette, APR, coordinator of district communications for North Clackamas Schools, in Milwaukie, Ore.

Terri McHugh, APR, community relations director of the Schaumburg Community Consolidated School District 54 in Schaumburg, Ill., believes taking advantage of the many NSPRA professional development opportunities was preparation enough to pass the accreditation exam – until the studying began. “At that point I learned how much I have to learn,” McHugh said.

Cathy Orta, APR, communications coordinator of the Rockwood School District in Wildwood, Mo., took the plunge after a revelation. She said: “In my school district, the focus is on continuous improvement of performance. It became apparent that I should share that vision.”

“In my case, I had always thought I’d go for it at some point in my career, but having a study partner willing to make the leap with me, was key. Throughout our studies we shared information and insights, kept each other focused and even provided one another the necessary pep talk from time to time.”

“Essentially, the APR process became as important, if not more so, than the exam itself. With some wonderful input from my APR coach and my study partner, I found that organizing the Readiness Review questionnaire and the case study forced me to integrate what I had learned from readings, the study guide and my real-world experiences in a consistent, cohesive manner. Regardless of the result on my final exam, that is something that will remain with me forever.”

“The APR journey helped remind me of the core principles of our profession – its values, ethics and beliefs. Completing the APR process provided support that made me realize that public relations is also a way of life-it’s who I am and it’s what I do.”

No matter the road that takes you there, the APR process is well worth the trip. More than just a test of knowledge, it’s a true pursuit of lifelong learning.

So, now, what are you waiting for?

*(It is recommended that candidates pursue APR after having earned a bachelor's degree in a related field and have at least five years of experience in the practice or teaching of public relations.)*

– Susan Dieck, APR, Public Information Specialist, Carmel CSD, Patterson, N.Y.,  
member, NSPRA Accreditation Committee.