

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

*Submitted: May 2020*

*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 236 members (May 2020).

## 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, 2019 deadline
- Submitted a current chapter membership contact list by the Oct. 30, 2019, deadline
- Submitted the names of the newly elected chapter officers following 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 2019-20 fiscal year was the third 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 school P.R. professionals 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 2019 NYSPRA Communications Contest ran from July to October 2019. The 513 entries (up from 511 in 2018) were judged by 50 communications professionals from across the country. Of those entries, 179 entries received awards. The contest is organized by NYSPRA's paid contest coordinator.

### Communicator of the Year Award

Nominations for the fourth annual NYSPRA "Communicator of the Year" award were received in July 2019. The award allows the executive board to recognize a school communications professional from New York for his/her demonstrated commitment to the profession and to the schools, students and families he/she serves. Like the annual Communications Contest, this award features best practices within the school P.R. 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 P.R. This award is judged by past and current presidents of NSPRA's state chapters throughout the country.

In 2019-20, the award was given to Rebekah Mott, Manager of Communications and Print Shop at Saint Lawrence-Lewis BOCES. This announcement was made in October 2019.

### Northeast Regional Communications Summit Held

In an effort to increase the number of professional development opportunities available to members, the NYSPRA partnered with NJSPRA, PenSPRA and ConnSPRA, as well as the NSPRA regional vice-president, to hold a Northeast Regional Communications Summit. The two-day conference was held October 15-16, 2019 at the Southern Westchester BOCES in Harrison, NY and had 73 attendees.

The summit featured a crisis communications workshop delivered on the first day by Rick Kaufman, APR, and a school branding workshop on the second day by Dr. Joe Sanfelippo.

Over 93 percent of attendees said they would consider attending a similar regional summit in the future. Based on additional positive feedback from attendees and the regional networking opportunities that this summit allowed for, this is a venture NYSPRA would like to do again in the future.

### Annual Conference

The 2020 NYSPRA Conference was scheduled to be held March 15-17 in Syracuse, NY. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, the NYSPRA Executive Board had to cancel the conference. However, the presenter lineup and the variety of topics they would have delivered to our members led the board to believe this would have been our best conference to date.

The conference was slated to be headlined by NSPRA president, Kelly Avants, APR and LGBTQ educational advocate, Lyndon Cudlitz. The board selected a balance of conference sessions ranging from digital communication advances to education policy, such as New York State Education Law 2d, a much-discussed policy as it relates to communication around the state. For many of our presenters, it would have been their first time presenting at a statewide conference. NYSPRA prides itself on 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.

For the first time, NYSPRA was planning to offer a half-day APR Prep Workshop for those members who were interested in pursuing their Accreditation in Public Relations. 13 members were registered for the workshop before the conference was canceled. NYSPRA president, Adrienne Leon, APR, and a panel of

APR colleagues were scheduled to be on-hand to review the APR process, answer questions and help to conduct mock panel presentations, test-taking strategies and more. NYSPRA looks forward to offering this unique opportunity again at the 2021 conference.

While it's disappointing to have canceled the annual conference this year, the NYSPRA executive board looks forward to providing our members with a next-level experience in 2021.

### 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, 2019, and April 30, 2020, 15 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 May 14, 2020, that group has 86 members. While NYSPRA does have a public Facebook page, boasting 318 Likes, 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 engage with our fellow members and their school districts 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 May 2020, we have 1,547 followers (up from 1,387 in May 2019).

### Supporting Documentation

- NYSPRA Website: <https://www.nyspra.org/>
- NYSPRA Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/NYSPRA>
- 2020 Annual Conference Program: <https://bit.ly/2Lt4mhi>
- 2020 Annual Conference Postcard: <https://bit.ly/2Wxasne>
- Northeast Regional Communications Summit Program: <https://bit.ly/3dSL8Op>
- 2019 Communications Contest, Call for Entries publication: <https://bit.ly/2WCdMxv>
- Call for Presentations, Email to members: <https://bit.ly/3cvZcgm>
- Communicator of the Year, Email to members: <https://bit.ly/3fL1b2m>
- 2019 Contest Award Winners: <https://bit.ly/2WzitYL>
- 2019 Display at New York State School Boards Association Conference: <https://bit.ly/3dO40hj>