

# The “Mark of Distinction” Recognition Program for NSPRA Chapters

## Entry Form

(Please include this information with each individual entry)

Chapter Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter President: \_\_\_\_\_

*President’s contact information*

District/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Right to Use Materials Statement

On behalf of the Chapter, I agree that NSPRA has the right to use any materials, project/program examples, etc., submitted in this entry in Association print/online publications, on the website, and as “best practice” resources for NSPRA chapters.

Signature of Chapter President: Stephen King

### Application Process Checklist

- Each entry includes this cover form and the Entry Specifics form.
- A single PDF that includes links to related supplemental materials and examples is attached.** (If entering in more than one category, a single PDF for each category entry is attached or sent individually).
- Chapter president has signed the “right to use materials” statement on the entry form.
- Entry is delivered no later than May 15** and sent to [awards@nspra.org](mailto:awards@nspra.org), subject line “Mark of Distinction.”

## Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_
- 

\_\_\_\_\_ **Section II: Special Focus Areas**

\_\_\_\_\_ Category A – chapter has less than 50% NSPRA membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Category B – chapter has 50% or more NSPRA membership

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 2021*

*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 182 members (May 2021).

## 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, 2020 deadline
- Submitted a current chapter membership contact list by the Oct. 30, 2020, deadline
- Submitted the names of the newly elected chapter officers following 2021 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 2020-21 fiscal year was the fourth 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 in NYSSBA's OnBoard publication (which is printed and mailed to all school districts in the state). This year, we hosted a virtual awards ceremony on Facebook to honor our winners. Showcasing this work allows NYSPRA to not only strengthen 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 2020 NYSPRA Communications Contest ran from July to October 2020. The 340 entries were judged by 41 communications professionals from across the country. Of those entries, 106 entries (31.3 percent) entries received awards. The contest is organized by NYSPRA's paid contest coordinator.

## Communicator of the Year Award

Nominations for the fifth annual NYSPRA “Communicator of the Year” award were received in July 2020. 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 2020-21, the award was given to Jean Palmer, Supervisor of Communications and Printing Services at Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES. This announcement was made in October 2020.

## NYSPRA Virtual Panel Discussions

In an effort to connect members at a time when isolation was commonplace, and increase the number of professional development opportunities available to members, NYSPRA launched a series of virtual panel discussions in 2020-21 encompassing a number of timely and relevant subject areas.

The panels included:

- Opportunities & Challenges Brought on by COVID-19 School Closures (58 registrants)
- Planning for Re-opening: The Role of School PR (67 registrants)
- Lift the Curtain: A Look at Retirement Planning for School PR Professionals (34 registrants)

Based on additional positive feedback from attendees and the regional networking opportunities that these sessions allowed for, this is a venture NYSPRA would like to do again in the future.

## NYSPRA Speaker Series

The 2021 NYSPRA Conference would have been held in March 2021 in Syracuse, NY. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines, the NYSPRA Executive Board decided to cancel the conference and pivoted to a virtual speaker series that was spread throughout the winter and spring of 2021. The NYSPRA Speaker Series featured an all-star presenter lineup and a variety of topics that reflected the current nature work School PR professionals are undertaking in districts. In total 84 individuals registered for the NYSPRA Speaker series.

The topics included:

- How Communicators are Leading the Way in the COVID Pandemic (Presenter: Rick J. Kaufman, APR)
- Nobody Knows My Name: Making Visible All Members of School Communities (Presenter: Shawn Joseph and Lisa Grillo)
- Supporting LGBTQ Students & Families Through School Communications (Presenter: Lyndon Cudlitz)
- Consumer Branding: What School Districts Can Learn from Corporate Giants (Presenter: Melissa Smith)

Additionally, in April, NYSPPRA also offered an APR Prep Workshop for those who were interested in pursuing their Accreditation in Public Relations. Ten members registered for the workshop. Former NYSPPRA president and current Past President, Adrienne Leon, APR, and a panel of APR colleagues reviewed the APR process, answered questions and helped to conduct mock panel presentations, test-taking strategies and more.

### Social Media and Email Engagement

The NYSPPRA 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 NYSPPRA member management software. This is a quick and direct way for the board to send important information to members. Between May 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021, 19 emails were sent to members on a variety of topics, including the annual conference and annual board elections.

NYSPPRA 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, 2021, that group has 96 members. While NYSPPRA does have a public Facebook page, boasting 368 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 2021, we have 1,599 followers (up from 1,547 in May 2020).

### Supporting Documentation

- NYSPPRA Website: <https://www.nyspra.org/>
- NYSPPRA Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/NYSPPRA>
  - 2021 NYSPPRA Speaker Series: <https://www.nyspra.org/2021-Virtual-Professional-Development>
    - [APR Prep Workshop](#)
  - 2020-21 Virtual Panel Discussions
    - [Opportunities & Challenges Brought on by COVID-19 School Closures](#)
    - [Planning for Re-opening: The Role of School PR](#)
      - [Panelist Alex Wolff](#)
      - [Panelist Carla Pereira](#)
      - [Panelist Matt Smith](#)
      - [Panelist Candy Reimer](#)
  - [Lift the Curtain: A Look at Retirement Planning for School PR Professionals](#)
- 2021 Communications Contest, Call for Entries announcement: <https://www.nyspra.org/news/9017836>
- Call for Presentations, Email to members: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p\\_K0twDyL12eoYcZ4H4mx1\\_6hSL51yh/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p_K0twDyL12eoYcZ4H4mx1_6hSL51yh/view?usp=sharing)
- Communicator of the Year, Email to members: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/18\\_4lzi8yZCxCw7X5EZIJYg-tTG1pLqh4/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18_4lzi8yZCxCw7X5EZIJYg-tTG1pLqh4/view?usp=sharing)

- 2020 Contest Award Winners:

[https://www.nyspra.org/resources/Documents/20\\_awardwinners\\_final\\_2.pdf](https://www.nyspra.org/resources/Documents/20_awardwinners_final_2.pdf)

- 2020 Contest Award Winner Video:

<https://fb.watch/5ukv5VeKPR/>