

NSPRA 2019

**Mark of Distinction
Award Application**

Coalition-Building

Collaborative Communication Efforts

submitted by



Michigan School
Public Relations
Association

due May 15, 2019

Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA)

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 _____

 X **Section II: Special Focus Areas**

 X 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)

 X 3. Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Effort

2019 National School Public Relations Association Mark of Distinction Award Application

This year, the [Michigan School Public Relations Association](#) (MSPRA) is submitting two entries, one under Section II: Special Focus Areas: Professional Development/PR Skill-Building and one under **Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Efforts**.

Section II: Special Focus Areas

Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Efforts

MSPRA initiated an effort and joined with another organization to provide communication resources on Communicating about Drinking Water Issues.

Summary of the Initiative

Communicating About School Drinking Water Issues

In the summer of 2018, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) began a statewide initiative to test drinking water from all community and school water supplies for a group of man-made chemicals called per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances, collectively known as PFAS. (PFAS are chemicals found in fire-fighting foams, stain repellents, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and many other household products.) At that time, MDEQ was testing school water supplies that “*rely on wells*” and was publishing those test results on the state's PFAS Response [website](#).

On August 17, 2018, within 4 hours of each other, two different MSPRA members sent emails to MSPRA leaders wondering about helping our members and schools communicate around testing for PFAs in Michigan’s drinking water. Should PFAS or other chemicals be found in school drinking water, these concerned members and MSPRA leaders agreed that it would be important for schools and school leaders to have the tools they need to share those test results with their constituents (staff, parents and community members). As part of that initial email exchange, contact was also made with the Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (MASA). As part of his response, he said:

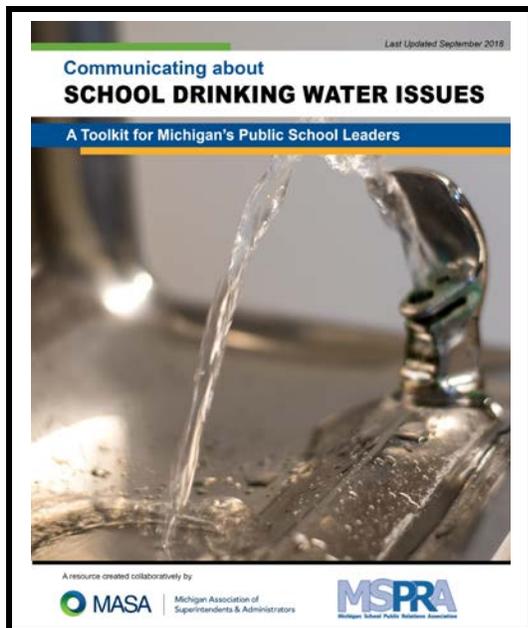
Thank you so very much for bringing this issue to the surface. I/MASA has not received any questions or concerns from any superintendents about this issue up until this point. ... I have also copied [MASA’s Communication Director] on the email just so that she will be in the loop....

Thanks again for letting us know about this one and ... please keep in touch if we can be of any assistance with this important matter.

*Chris Wigent
Executive Director
Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators*

That first burst of emails, led to six conference calls with representatives from MSPRA and MASA, culminating in a toolkit to provide communication support entitled *Communicating about School Drinking Water Issues*—a collaboration between MSPRA and MASA.

Using the RPIE process communication model, collaborators initially worked with the Kent County Health Department and then linked to state and national sources to ensure toolkit users were connected to technically accurate information. The toolkit also encouraged districts to check with their legal counsel. [We are communication experts not water or legal experts.]



Throughout its pages, the toolkit encourages proactive communication by providing message points, news releases along with sample letters and comments solicited from superintendents who had recently communicated about their district's water testing. Users are referred to the Frequently Asked Questions or the News and Education page of the [PFAS Response Website](#), the [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality](#) (MDEQ) (recently renamed the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy](#) (EGLE) by Michigan's newly-elected governor), the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#) (MDHHS), the local health department or other involved parties.

The toolkit was distributed to MSPRA and MASA members on September 28, 2018.

On the same day, after sending the document to MSPRA members, our President, Karen Heath, sent it to Mellissa Braham at NSPRA. The related email thread appears below.

*To: mbraham@nspra.org
Cc: Tom Scheidel <tscheidel@alleganaesa.org>, Gerri Allen <gallen48@juno.com>, Kristin Tank <ktank@muskegonisd.org>
Sent: Fri, Sep 28, 2018 04:28 PM*

*Mellissa-
As promised, attached is the School Drinking Water Toolkit that I had mentioned during our call last week. It was issued statewide this afternoon in collaboration with the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators (MASA).*

*Please feel free to share the kit! Have a great weekend!
Karen*

*From: "Rich Bagin" <ed@nspra.org>
To: "Gerri Allen" <gallen48@juno.com>
Cc: "mellissa " <mbraham@nspra.org>
Subject: FW: MSPRA's School Drinking Water Toolkit
Date: Fri, 28 Sep 2018 16:51:19 -0400*

Wow ...you guys are great; let me or Mellissa know when and if we can share it with all our members. This is the kind of resource that you and I know is so helpful for our members. Relevant, timely and practical.

Congrats to all your folks.

*Rich
Rich Bagin, APR
Executive Director
National School Public Relations Association
15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855
Phone: 301-519-0496 / Fax: 301-519-0494
e-mail: rbagin@nspra.org
Web site: www.nspra.org
blog: schoolpr.wordpress.com*

*On Sep 28, 2018, at 5:21 PM, Gerri Allen <gallen48@juno.com> wrote:
Hi Rich,
It's definitely an emerging issue.*

When our President, Karen Heath, sent it to Melissa earlier today, she said "feel free to share the kit." So, consider that your green light to share it with NSPRA members.

Have a great weekend.

*Gerri Allen
MAISA Communication Consultant;
MSPRA Executive Director*

*"To love what you do and feel that it matters--what could be more fun?"
--Katharine Graham, Washington Post*

Documentation and evidence of collaborative efforts and activities

- **The overall effort had statewide and national reach/impact.**
 - The document was jointly released on September 28, 2018 by the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) and the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (MASA) to their members.
 - It was also shared with NSPRA on September 28, 2018.
- **The chapter/collaboration partner goals and objectives for the activity were to:**
 - Pool partners' collective knowledge, resources, time and effort to provide guidance.
 - Meet an existing and anticipated need of members across both associations.
- **Timeline and calendar of related events/activities**
 - All of the activity took place between August 17, 2018 and September 28, 2018.
 - August 17, 2018: Initial email exchange
 - August 29, 2018: Conference call
 - September 07, 2018: Conference call
 - September 14, 2018: Conference call
 - September 17, 2018: Conference call
 - September 19, 2018: Draft review #1
 - September 20, 2018: Draft review #2
 - September 24, 2018: Draft review #3
 - September 25, 2018: Conference call
 - September 28, 2018: Conference call
 - September 28, 2018: Toolkit release
- **MSPRA's role as a coalition/collaborative partner**

MSPRA initiated contact with its superintendent association "communication partner" about this emerging issue.

For the past several years, MSPRA has invited its communication partners (the communicators from the state associations for the superintendents, intermediate superintendents, school boards, school business officials, secondary school principals, and the Michigan Department of Education) to meet with the MSPRA Board for a complimentary lunch at the Board's annual retreat (which is held in the building that houses most of them). The exchange includes mutual communication concerns and professional development offerings and any major initiatives each has planned for the year. This once/year face-to-face meeting has helped reinforce our mutual communication emphasis, kept the lines of communication open, and provided a natural connection for our communication about the drinking water issue.

- **Communication plan related to coalition/collaboration efforts**

Our goal was to develop a useful, accurate (consulted with health department officials and superintendents who had experienced the process) document that could be shared in a timely fashion with all our members to help them address current or anticipated drinking water issues. Most of our interaction was handled either by email or conference calls. We used Google Docs as our collaborative platform.

- **Documentation of all related materials and endorsements**
 - The [final document](#) is posted on MSPRA’s website.
 - It was shared statewide (via MSPRA and MASA) and nationally (via NSPRA).

- **Identification of target audiences and explanation of desired outcomes**

Our target audiences were identified as our association members. Our desired outcome was a document that would serve as a useful guide to communicating about drinking water issues.

- **Documentation of measurable outcomes, effectiveness and success of the collaboration**

We were able to provide a useful (members used it), official (listed partners approved it), document in a timely manner to all of our associations’ members (joint release on September 28, 2018). It took approximately six weeks from issue identification to toolkit release.

- **This collaborative effort specifically relates to these NSPRA Goals**

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

 1. NSPRA members will have the skills they need to plan and implement an effective public relations program.
 2. NSPRA members will be recognized and valued as trusted advisors and members of school/district leadership teams.

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

 1. NSPRA (staff and members) will be visible throughout the educational community.
 2. NSPRA will be the primary source of expert information and knowledge on school public relations.
 3. School communication professionals, superintendents and other education leaders will understand the positive impact of an effective public relations program on student achievement and on a district’s mission.
 5. NSPRA will have beneficial relationships with other organizations.
 6. NSPRA will advocate for effective public relations in education organizations.

- **This collaborative effort specifically relates to these NSPRA Beliefs**

NSPRA believes public relations:

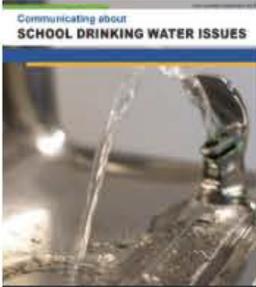
 - Is a crucial leadership function essential to the success of education.
 - Is rooted in integrity, transparency, accuracy and ethical behavior, and always serves the public’s interest.
 - Serves as the conscience of the organization.
 - Strives to build consensus and reach common ground.
 - Provides counsel and services to all segments of the staff and community.
 - Is the shared responsibility of everyone in education.
 - Develops trust through two-way communication and meaningful relationships with all audiences.
 - Brings schools and communities together to support success for all students.
 - Serves the public accountability function for the school district.
 - Builds understanding and consensus around diversity and equity conditions facing public school communities.

- Creates a culture of transparency and trust that positively impacts student achievement.
- **Reactions to the resulting toolkit**
On October 15, 2018 this email was sent to all NSPRA members from Rich Bagin, APR:

Michigan State Chapter Takes Lead in Statewide School Drinking Water Toolkit
 From: "NSPRA" <info@nspra.org> Add to Contacts | Invite Sender | Block Sender
 To: Gerri Allen <gallen48@juno.com>
 Sent: Mon, Oct 15, 2018 03:30 PM



MSPRA's School Drinking Water Toolkit



MASA MSPRA

NSPRA tips its hat to the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) and the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators (MASA) for their collaborative work entitled *Communicating About School Drinking Water Issues*.

It is great to see these two leadership associations tackle this emerging issue that we find percolating in many states throughout our country.

This toolkit follows the communication four-step process and gives plenty of examples to adapt to local situations.

We are grateful for permission to distribute to NSPRA members, but we are more impressed to see how powerful and productive this type of collaboration can be for all school leaders. We see this work as a role model of what other states can do to focus on the need for substantive communication to assist in building support and understanding for emerging issues in their states.

Sincerely,



Rich Bagin, APR
Executive Director

Connect With Us

This email is sent from:
National School Public Relations Association
 15948 Derwood Road
Rockville, MD 20855
 United States

To opt out of future member messages from NSPRA, [click here](#).

On October 16, 2018, this email was sent to all superintendents in an eastern county in Michigan.

Subject: Water quality resource

Superintendents,

The RESA Communications Office is a member of MSPRA (the Michigan School Public Relations Association) and has access to communications documents and expertise that may be useful for communicating sensitive or otherwise important information to your parents and the community.

MSPRA has compiled a toolkit that may be useful to districts facing questions about the quality of drinking water in their buildings. This toolkit focuses on PFAS contamination, which is in the news lately, but the concepts apply to all such issues, including lead:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1slBpv3JcYI2-HRD-PDbPiTaoFXWcTeCU/view>

For further information related to questions about drinking water or other communication with the media, contact the RESA Communications Office at (810) 455-4030. Or email kriewall.garth@sccresa.org or steinborn.lisa@sccresa.org.

Kevin D. Miller, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Office: 810.455.4035 | Fax: 810.364.7474

miller.kevin@sccresa.org / www.sccresa.org



- **Further evaluation**

Although released last fall, the toolkit remains relevant, as unfortunately, more of the country is dealing with PFAS and drinking water issues.

For instance, on March 1, 2019 the story was: [U.S. Senate to consider new bill classifying PFAs as hazardous substances](#) and on May 6, 2019 the headline read: [Mapping the PFAs Contamination Crisis: New Data Show 610 Sites in 43 States](#).

-end-

[Note: If any of the links in this document are broken, or if you have difficulty accessing them, please contact Gerri Allen at gallen48@juno.com. MSPRA-maintained links will remain live until at least 07/31/19. Thank you.]

*Thank you for the consideration and
opportunity to submit this*

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