Earn national recognition for your district’s or organization’s school communications efforts!

**2021 NSPRA National School Communication Awards**

**Gold Medallion Award**
ENTRY DEADLINE MARCH 22, 2021
For superior programs and campaigns grounded in strategic communication best practices

**Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards**
ENTRY DEADLINE APRIL 5, 2021
For outstanding print and digital work in school communications

**Golden Achievement Award**
ENTRY DEADLINE APRIL 19, 2021
For outstanding, strategic work in all aspects of school PR, communications, marketing and engagement

NEW THIS YEAR!
COVID-19 COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

Enter through NSPRA’s online submission system [www.nspra.org/award-apply](http://www.nspra.org/award-apply)
Gold Medallion Awards

The National School Public Relations Association’s Gold Medallion Award is the top national competition recognizing superior educational public relations programs.

Entries may come from public and private schools; community or vocational/technical colleges; state/national education groups; and any agency, consultant or business in partnership with any of the above education agencies. A Gold Medallion will be given for each winning entry selected by competition judges. Judges may award more than one Gold Medallion in a category or none at all. Winners will be recognized nationally and presented with their Gold Medallions at the NSPRA 2021 National Seminar, July 11-14 in New Orleans, Louisiana, www.nspra.org/national-seminar

Award Criteria

- A planned presentation is necessary, submitted electronically, organized in the logical order of Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (RIPE).
- Read the rules carefully below. If you fail to follow the rules, the judges will subtract points in judging your entry.
- Your entry will be judged on concept clarity, good writing and evidence of objective project/program evaluation. Judges are experienced, accredited public relations professionals.

Award Rules

All Gold Medallion Award entries must be submitted electronically via the online NSPRA awards system at www.nspra.org/award-apply. Compile all application materials into a single PDF document. Multiple support materials will not be accepted. Include specific entry form information as indicated on the cover page of the PDF document.

Programs/projects/campaigns must have been underway or completed between March 2020 and the contest deadline of March 22, 2021. Note: For submitted Bond/Finance Campaign entries, all results need to be completed by the deadline to be eligible for an award this calendar year.

Award Entry Guidelines

The total entry is limited to no more than 26 pages and must include:

- Cover page with entry form information — Include entrant’s name and title, district/organization name, address, phone, email, title of entry, entry category, number of communication staff, size/type of district/organization.
- Synopsis of the program/project/campaign that provides a clear, concise overview (maximum 350 words).
- Summary (not to exceed 6 pages) of the program/project/campaign — The summary should include links to any key support materials (document PDFs, websites, videos, social media, etc.).
- Additional support material demonstrating the RIPE strategic planning process steps outlined below may be included in the PDF document, but may not exceed the 26-page total. Samples or brief synopses of support materials are sufficient (e.g., no need to include complete survey results or reports). Organize the summary carefully around the four-step PR planning process and clearly describe each component.

The judges will evaluate on a point scale and are looking for strategic quality, not mass quantity, of examples/materials.

- Research — Provide a careful analysis of the need for the program/project/campaign. Include stated goals and measurable objectives.
- Planning — Describe planning and development of the program, campaign or activity, including how target audiences were identified, the specific roles of key leaders and their related responsibilities, and how communication vehicles were selected/created. Outline the specific budget and resources that were determined and set.
- Implementation — Outline the specific timelines (start and end dates, key target dates, etc.); describe the strategies, tactics and activities carried out; provide examples of the quality of written and graphic materials; and demonstrate how key messaging supported goals.
- Evaluation — Explain how the assessment component was included and implemented. Clearly state the indicators of success and include demonstrative evidence of effectiveness of strategies and messaging. Explain how improvements/changes/revisions/additions and next steps were identified and incorporated into future planning.

All entries become part of NSPRA’s resource files. All materials submitted may be reproduced, displayed, referenced or summarized in any NSPRA publication, website or resource.

Gold Medallion entrants may request a summary of judges’ comments by emailing awards@nspra.org no later than July 30. Summaries will be provided in late August/September.

HOW THE GOLD MEDALLION SUBMISSION PROCESS WORKS

As a NSPRA member, you can use your username and password from the NSPRA website to access the awards submission page. The username will be your member email. (Can’t remember your password? Reset it at www.nspra.org/user/password.) Nonmembers will have the option to create a new profile.

Once logged in, fill out your awards submission profile. Under category, select “Gold Medallion” and then upload your application materials as a PDF. Once you click Save and Finalize, you’ll be able to check out and pay via credit card or PayPal.

Once the entry is entered into the content database, you’ll receive a confirmation code after the checkout process is completed, which you can print or screenshot, as well as an email confirmation.

Winners will be notified by June 2021.

Deadline: Entries must be submitted on the NSPRA awards system by March 22, 2021.
Do I really have a chance?
Yes, your great work has a good chance of winning an award. The Gold Medallion program is the most competitive; you compete against all other submissions in your category. In the Golden Achievement program, you only compete against yourself based on whether you meet the criteria for that award. Normally, a high percentage of Golden Achievement submissions are granted the award as long as they meet the program’s criteria. In the Publications and Digital Media program, your entry is judged only against those from similar organizations.

How many awards are given out? Last year, 415 awards were given in the Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards contest, eight Gold Medallions were awarded, and 49 Golden Achievement Awards were granted. For a full listing of last year’s winners, go to www.nspra.org/awards/national-school-communication-awards.

What are some common features of winning submissions for the Gold Medallion and Golden Achievement programs?
First, complete the profile at the start of your submission and double check everything is correct. Another major thread, especially in the Gold Medallion program, is the evaluation section where you prove in some statistical way that the program was a success. Just noting that people liked a campaign will not convince most judges that it is a winner. Demonstrate what happened in your school community — the outcomes — because of the campaign or program. The Golden Achievement program targets special projects or ongoing tactics, but it, too, must conclude with an evaluation component to prove that your submission was successful.

How can I effectively compete with larger school districts and their bigger budgets?
All award programs normally have winners from smaller school districts or individual schools. In the Publications and Digital Media Excellence program, separate categories balance out some of the "big budget" concerns. In the Gold Medallion and Golden Achievement programs, you must prove how successful the efforts were — no matter your size.

FAQ (and how to brag)

Fee: $175 per entry for NSPRA members; $235 per entry for non-members. In the online NSPRA awards system, you can pay by credit card or by PayPal when you finalize and submit your entry. Payment must accompany all entries. Purchase orders or vouchers cannot be accepted.

Deadline: Entries must be submitted via the online NSPRA awards system by March 22, 2021.

Winners’ will be notified by June 2021.

Gold Medallion Categories
Gold Medallion entries will be considered based on these categories in NSPRA’s online awards system:
- Bond/Finance Campaign
- Comprehensive, Strategic, Year-Round Communication Programs
- COVID-19 Communication — NEW!
- Crisis Communication
- Marketing Communication
- Public Engagement/Parental Involvement
- Special Communication Projects/Campaigns

Before preparing your entry, please review the 2020 winning entries at www.nspra.org/awards/gold-medallion-winners for comparison.

*Judges may select more than one winner or no winners in a category.

Easy-To-Use E-Submission Process
All entries must be submitted digitally through NSPRA’s online submission system. Members can use their NSPRA username and password, while non-members can create a new profile.
Submit your applications at www.nspra.org/award-apply.
Find detailed how-to guides and rules at bit.ly/nspraawards. Previous winning entries may not be reentered.

Do I really have a chance?
Yes, your great work has a good chance of winning an award. The Gold Medallion program is the most competitive; you compete against all other submissions in your category. In the Golden Achievement program, you only compete against yourself based on whether you meet the criteria for that award. Normally, a high percentage of Golden Achievement submissions are granted the award as long as they meet the program’s criteria. In the Publications and Digital Media program, your entry is judged only against those from similar organizations.

How many awards are given out? Last year, 415 awards were given in the Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards contest, eight Gold Medallions were awarded, and 49 Golden Achievement Awards were granted. For a full listing of last year’s winners, go to www.nspra.org/awards/national-school-communication-awards.

What are some common features of winning submissions for the Gold Medallion and Golden Achievement programs? First, complete the profile at the start of your submission and double check everything is correct.

Another major thread, especially in the Gold Medallion program, is the evaluation section where you prove in some statistical way that the program was a success. Just noting that people liked a campaign will not convince most judges that it is a winner. Demonstrate what happened in your school community — the outcomes — because of the campaign or program.

The Golden Achievement program targets special projects or ongoing tactics, but it, too, must conclude with an evaluation component to prove that your submission was successful.

How can I effectively compete with larger school districts and their bigger budgets?
All award programs normally have winners from smaller school districts or individual schools. In the Publications and Digital Media Excellence program, separate categories balance out some of the "big budget" concerns. In the Gold Medallion and Golden Achievement programs, you must prove how successful the efforts were — no matter your size.
Prizes are awarded according to publication or digital media type, and organization type and size. Your entries are judged only against those from similar organizations.

Winning contest entrants receive a notification letter. The top award in each category is the Award of Excellence. Winners of this award will receive a handsome plaque. Winners of Merit and Honorable Mention Awards receive certificates suitable for framing.

Award of Excellence winners will be displayed at the NSPRA 2021 National Seminar in New Orleans. All winners will be recognized on NSPRA’s website.

Award Criteria
Publication entries, including e-newsletters, will be judged on content, quality of writing, effective audience targeting, graphic layout and overall design (exception: Excellence in Writing entries).

Digital media entries will be judged for content, professional quality, effective audience targeting and use of accessibility best practices. Programs for radio and television must be broadcast quality.

Award Rules
Upload summary sheets for the blog, video, podcast and social media categories for the Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards. The other categories do not need a summary sheet.

- Publication and digital media entries compete against others in the same category and organizational classification.
- Submit as many entries in as many categories as you wish. Video productions and radio entries must be provided as links (YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Google drive, etc.). One linked video may be submitted per entry fee paid.
- Newsletter/newspaper/electronic newsletter entries must include two different issues (i.e., two different months, quarters, etc.) to qualify as an entry. Blogs require a minimum of three different samples.
- Branding/image packages must include three or more separate printed pieces to qualify as an entry.
- Student-written and/or -produced publications and digital media are not eligible.
- Enter only materials produced since March 2020. Previous entries may not be re-entered.
- Enter an item only in one category (exception: Excellence in Writing entries).
- All material submitted becomes NSPRA’s property and may be reproduced, displayed, referenced or summarized in NSPRA publications or resources.
- Any entry submission shall constitute entrant’s representation that all material is original and/or free from unauthorized use of copy, design, art and/or photographs from other sources.
- Fee per entry: $85 for members, $125 for non-members. In NSPRA’s online awards system, you can pay by credit card or PayPal when you finalize and submit your entry. Payment must accompany all entries. Purchase orders or vouchers cannot be accepted.
- Submit your application at www.nspra.org/award-apply by April 5, 2021.
- Winners will be notified by June 2021.

Learn more at bit.ly/nspraawards.
Submit a separate submission for each entry.

Questions? Call 301-519-0496 or contact Tommy Jones at tjones@nspra.org.

CATegories
(more details available at bit.ly/nspraawards)

- Annual report
- Audio/podcast
- Blogs
- Branding/image package
- Calendar
- Electronic newsletter
- Excellence in writing
- Finance publication
- Handbook
- Infographic
- Internet/Intranet website
- Magazine
- Marketing publication
- Marketing material
- Print newsletter/newspaper
- Social media
- Special purpose publication
- Video (produced in-house or with an outside contractor)
NSPRA’s Golden Achievement Award recognizes exemplary work in your school public relations efforts, regardless of your district’s size or budget.

All public and private schools and organizations are eligible for Golden Achievement Awards. Each winner will receive a certificate suitable for framing, a letter of commendation for the district or agency, and recognition on NSPRA’s website.

The Golden Achievement Award is designed as a major recognition program for outstanding work, regardless of the number of entries we receive. Each entry will be judged against contest criteria – not against other entries.

Award Criteria
Each entry must be summarized on one page and be based on the RPIE process steps. There must be clear evidence of each step:

- **Research** – Evidence of careful analysis of need for program, campaign or activity and stated program or activity goals
- **Planning** – Evidence of thoughtful planning to address need for the program, campaign or activity
- **Implementation** – Evidence that activities, including communication, were carried out as planned
- **Evaluation** – Evidence that an evaluation component was included in plan development and carried out. Must measure success in achieving desired outcomes and show evidence of objective evaluation of the communication techniques used.

Please do not submit more than 5 pages of supplemental material for your entry.

Award Rules
Entries must have been under way or completed between April 2020 and entry deadline of April 19, 2021.

- **Fee per entry**: $85 for members, $125 for non-members. In NSPRA’s online awards system, you can pay by credit card or PayPal when you finalize and submit your entry. Payment must accompany all entries. Purchase orders or vouchers cannot be accepted.
- Submit a separate application for each entry at www.nspra.org/award-apply.
- Each entry will be judged against contest criteria – not against other entries. Judges will select as many winners as meet criteria.
- Winners will be notified by June 2021.

**How All Award Entries are Judged**
NSPRA uses independent, experienced public relations professionals to evaluate entries in the Gold Medallion, Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards, and Golden Achievement Awards competitions.

- Judges have no pre-set limit on the number of awards that may be given in each category. They may also opt to issue no awards in a category if no entries are deemed worthy of recognition.
- Individual judging assessments for the Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards and the Golden Achievement Awards are confidential and will not be released.
- Gold Medallion entrants may request a summary of their judges’ comments by contacting awards@nspra.org no later than July 30. Comments will be provided in late August/September.

NSPRA’s Online Awards Submission System
All entries must be submitted digitally through NSPRA’s online submission system www.nspra.org/award-apply.

- As a NSPRA member, you can use your username and password from the NSPRA website to access the awards submission page. The username will be your member email. (Can’t remember your password? Reset it at www.nspra.org/user/password.) Nonmembers will have the option to create a new profile.
- Upload submissions as PDFs.
- Videos can be submitted as a MP4 file. If the file size is larger than 25MB, please provide a link to the video from a hosting service such as Vimeo or YouTube.
- If your entry is incomplete, you can save it and return to it later.
- Once entries are finished, adding them to your cart puts them on your list of entries but doesn’t submit them. You can still make changes to an entry or add additional entries at that point. Once you click Save and Finalize, and then checkout to submit your payment, your entries are finalized, so be sure that everything you want is included in the cart.

Find how-to guides and rules for submitting entries at bit.ly/nspraaawards.
Three outstanding ways to earn national recognition for your district and school communication efforts:

Gold Medallion Award
ENTRY DEADLINE
MARCH 22, 2021
For superior educational public relations programs

Publications and Digital Media Awards
ENTRY DEADLINE
MARCH 30, 2020
For outstanding work in all types and forms of educational communications: print, digital, video, audio, websites and more

Golden Achievement Award
ENTRY DEADLINE
APRIL 19, 2021
For outstanding, strategic work in all aspects of school PR, communications, marketing and engagement

NEW THIS YEAR!
COVID-19 COMMUNICATION CATEGORY

Enter through NSPRA’s online submission system www.nspra.org/award-apply

NSPRA uses independent outside judges to evaluate entries in the Gold Medallion Awards, Publications and Digital Media Awards and Golden Achievement Awards.

- Judges have no pre-set limit on the number or types of awards that may be given in each category. They may also opt to issue no awards in a category if no entries are deemed worthy of recognition.
- Individual judging assessments for Publications and Digital Media Awards and Golden Achievement Awards are confidential and will not be released.
- Gold Medallion entrants may request a summary of the judges’ comments by emailing awards@nspra.org no later than July 30, which will be provided in late August/September.