

NSPRA Chapter Report Form

Prior to each Board meeting, the NSPRA Regional Vice Presidents are asked to prepare reports that provide an update on issues or activities in their regions. This includes asking each chapter in the region to provide a report on their activities as well as highlights of any issues impacting education in their states. This helps NSPRA stay apprised of chapter activities, success and challenges.

Chapter presidents are asked to complete this form and submit it to your Regional Vice President prior to each NSPRA Executive Board meeting – held in November, March and July. The deadlines for submitting your report are included in the [Chapter Deadlines](#) list on the website under the NSPRA Info tab/Chapters/Updates for Chapter Leaders.

Please provide a brief update on the following:

1. **Chapter well-being** – A state-of-the-chapter summary (i.e., active or dormant; growing or declining membership; regular meetings; fiscally thriving; what’s working, what isn’t, etc.).

Blue Ribbon Awards

The North Carolina School Public Relations Association (NCSPPRA) began the 2019 calendar year with its annual Blue Ribbon Awards ceremony and brunch. Held on February 1 at the O. Henry Hotel in Greensboro, the ceremony honored members from 31 school districts for their efforts in creating effective school communications and public relations in 2018. A total of 295 gold, silver, and bronze awards were presented in eight competition categories: digital media engagement, electronic media, excellence in writing, image/graphic design, marketing, photography, publications (print and electronic), and special events/programs. Additionally, a “Best of the Best” award was given in each of the competition categories to identify the best entry. Four years ago, we revamped the Blue Ribbon Awards program to include updated and new categories; the gold, silver, and bronze award levels; and the “Best of the Best” awards. Again this year, submissions exceeded 300, which is up significantly from the 171 entries we received the year before we changed the contest format. These changes have increased interest in the awards program, created some friendly competition among school districts, and generated additional revenue for NCSPPRA. Members of the Georgia School Public Relations Association judged the contest.

During the Blue Ribbon Awards ceremony, NCSPPRA presented its most prestigious award – the Barry Gaskins Service Award for outstanding contributions to school public relations – to Jeff Nash, executive director of community relations for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. Jeff is a former NCSPPRA President, former Southeast Regional Vice President for NSPRA, and continues his leadership for NCSPPRA as the Presidential Appointee on the Board of Directors. Click here for more information: <https://www.ncsppra.org/domain/12>.

This year, our NCSPPRA Superintendent Liaison W. Jeffrey Booker of Gaston County Schools sent a congratulatory letter to the Superintendent of each award-winning school district. In the letter, he stressed the importance and value of having the district’s public relations professional involved in NCSPPRA, and he encouraged the Superintendent to consider joining for the 2019-2020 year.

Membership

Our current membership is 113, which is 26 fewer people than last year. Membership includes 53 school districts, one education-related organization, a charter school, and a retiree. Six “new” school districts have joined NCSPPRA – these districts were not members in 2017-2018. The Board of Directors had a discussion in January about the decrease in membership and identified the following reasons: a number of school districts that were affected by Hurricane Florence last fall did not renew; a few districts have eliminated the

school public relations position or the position is vacant; and the change in our membership structure that eliminated the institutional membership option. Despite the drop in the number of members, our revenue from membership is slightly higher this year than last year (approximately +\$400) because of the change in our membership structure.

The Board of Directors is already working on ways to increase membership for 2019-2020, including a promotional campaign and soliciting memberships earlier (in July). We also believe that our new online membership registration, which we are introducing this year, will make the process easier.

Finance

The Association remains financially sound with revenue that exceeds \$24,000. We expect our annual commitment from Blackboard to be paid in the first quarter, which will increase revenue significantly. Our annual Blue Ribbon Awards program continues to produce a profit, and we will host our fall conference this November, which was a revenue-generator in 2017. (NCSPRA hosts the conference in odd years, and the South Carolina chapter of NSPRA hosts in even years.)

Board of Directors

All officer and Board of Directors positions are filled with very little turnover from last year to this year. We welcomed two new Board members, who won election to the Board last spring. All other members remained in place for 2018-2019. The Board of Directors conducts in-person meetings (at least one each quarter) and has an annual summer planning retreat. The Board met in September and January (the scheduled December meeting was canceled because of snow) and has a meeting scheduled for February 28. The Board will meet on May 10 in conjunction with the NCSPRA Leadership Academy program. The summer planning retreat is scheduled for June 24-25 in Wilmington.

2. Chapter projects/collaboration efforts – An overview of projects and collaborations: new, ongoing or completed.

Our chapter projects focus on providing quality professional development, fellowship, and networking/collaboration opportunities for members. Our upcoming, ongoing, and completed projects are listed below.

- **Fall Conference:** The South Carolina chapter of NSPRA hosted our fall conference October 10-12, 2018 in Myrtle Beach. It was an outstanding program complete with excellent sessions, networking opportunities, and fellowship. NCSPRA will host the 2019 fall conference November 6-8 in Wilmington.
- **'Final Four' Professional Development Series:** This year's Final Four is scheduled for Friday, March 1 at the Carowinds theme park in Charlotte. The theme is "The Twists and Turns, the Ups and Downs of School PR." The one-day program features four sessions; the topics are crisis communication, state legislative update, student recruitment/marketing, and theme park public relations. Click the link for more information: <https://www.ncspra.org/domain/39>
- **Professional Development with NCCAT:** For the second year, we are partnering with NCCAT (North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching) to sponsor a two-day professional development retreat on the NCCAT campus in Cullowhee (adjacent to Western Carolina University), May 9-10. The program is in development now. Last year, 31 school PR professional participated in the retreat, which was intended for our colleagues with 1-3 years of experience in the profession. This year's program will be for a general audience of school PR professionals.

▪ **Website/Social Media:** We are doing well with our efforts to update the NCSPPRA website (www.ncsprpra.org) on a regular basis. Our most recent updates provide information about the ‘Final Four’ professional development workshop and a recap of the Blue Ribbon Awards ceremony. We continue to work on efforts to provide a “members only” resources area either on our website or through the new online registration portal that is being implemented this year. Additionally, we are trying to engage members more on social media.

▪ **Scholarships for the NSPPRA National Seminar:** We are seeking applicants for the Bonnie Reidy Mentor Legacy Scholarship, which is given to a member with less than three years of experience in school PR, and the Nora Carr Presidential Scholarship, which is given to a member who has not attended the NSPPRA National Seminar in the past three years. The scholarships cover registration to attend this year’s National Seminar in Washington, D.C. The scholarship application process will be announced during the ‘Final Four’ on March 1.

▪ **Election for Officers/Board Members:** In April, we will conduct our annual election. This year, we have three Board of Directors positions open in addition to the four officer positions, which are one-year terms. We expect our nominating committee to recommend members for the officer positions who will continue to provide stability in our leadership.

3. Professional development programs/activities – An overview of current professional development efforts.

Please see the second question for information about our professional development activities. Overall, our goal is to provide as many professional development and engagement opportunities as possible for our members. Our Board has discussed offering a professional development webinar/conference call in June to provide additional support and engagement for members. In early January, we conducted a survey to seek feedback from members about topics/sessions they would like to see as part of our professional development offerings. This information will be used as we plan the NCSPPRA Leadership Academy and fall conference agendas.

4. Major chapter issues or concerns – What is the chapter currently struggling with?

We do not have major issues or concerns facing the Association. Our leadership is excellent, our financial situation is strong, and we are providing quality professional development for our members.

5. Issues or areas that could use NSPPRA regional or national support – Identify specific issues or concerns with suggestions for how NSPPRA can provide support.

We appreciate NSPPRA’s efforts to help us promote “traditional public schools” as the best choice for students and parents as we continue to feel the effects of increased competition as a result of the “school choice” movement.

6. State or local issues that NSPPRA should keep an eye on – Provide a brief synopsis of each issue that is impacting communication efforts, schools and education that might have future national implications.

In North Carolina, school districts are concerned about the following issues:

- the continued increase in competition from charter schools, online schools, for-profit schools, private schools, home schools, and the state’s opportunity scholarships (vouchers) program;
- the continued narrative associated with school safety (that is often negative);

- news coverage of traditional public schools that tends to be negative; and
- the state legislature-enacted law that reduces class size for grades K-3. While a good idea in theory, the law has created issues associated with the need for additional classroom space and how to pay for more personnel and resources.

The North Carolina General Assembly has begun its “long session,” which includes determining the state budget for the next two years. This often is an arduous process with plenty of political intensity. It is important to note that the General Assembly (Republican controlled) no longer has a supermajority that can override the Democratic Governor’s veto. Enough Democrats in the N.C. House and N.C. Senate were elected in November to break the supermajority that has been in place in state politics since 2010. It will be interesting to see what laws will be enacted that relate to public education now that the political landscape in Raleigh is a little more balanced than in years prior.

7. Additional items of note – A summary of other chapter-related items not covered in the other categories.

None to report.

This report respectfully submitted by Todd Hagans
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