



# SUNSPRA

Sunshine State School  
Public Relations Association

**“Thursday Thoughts” – 5.19.16**

**Kevin Christian, APR, CPRC, SUNSPRA President**

We are gearing up for our June 15 SUNSPRA Medallion Awards presentation in Orlando. This year’s awards are exclusively sponsored by School Messenger. Are you on the guest list? If you submitted a SUNSPRA Medallion Award entry, hopefully you’ll be among those accepting accolades and conference attention that day! Remember, all winners get to attend sessions free that day!



SCHOOLMESSENGER®

More specific details will soon follow, but we start with lunch, sponsored by Peachjar, in the hotel restaurant, then head to the awards presentations, with follow-up comments from School Messenger immediately following the awards. It’s going to be a great day for school PR in the Sunshine State!



Remember, NSPRA hands out its awards this summer, too. I’d love to know which SUNSPRA districts and members won awards – so let me know in a friendly email when you receive notification! We want to celebrate with you and recognize you among our membership!

And if you’re familiar with FPRA, that awards season is in early August. No doubt SUNSPRA members entered that fierce competition, too... I know at least one person who did!

I continue looking for a **social media expert** to share insight with my principals and assistant principals. The opportunity is for two identical sessions to be presented July 22 here in Ocala/Marion County. Times are 9:55am-10:55am and 11:05am-12:05pm. As a district, Marion County Public Schools utilizes Twitter for social messaging. Individual schools use multiple platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Vine, and others. If you’re interested in presenting, please [contact me](#) ASAP.

## **TIPS: [Avoid multisyllabic pileups](#)**

Long words are stuffy and hard to read

Pulitzer Prize-winning humorist Dave Barry spent eight years teaching businesspeople how to write better. As he told *Time* magazine:

“I’d lecture a bunch of chemists or engineers about the importance of not saying ‘It would be appreciated if you would contact the undersigned by telephone at your earliest possible convenience,’ and instead saying ‘Please call me as soon as you can.’ That was revealed wisdom to these people.”



**Small wonder** "Short words are best, and old words when short are the best of all," said Winston Churchill. [Image by Jill Catley](#)

Take a tip from Barry: Avoid multisyllabic exhibitions of verbosity. Use short words.

## What's wrong with long words?

Why avoid long words? Because they ...

[Read full article >](#)

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## ANNOUNCING

Palm Beach Public Schools gets a brand new communications director come June 1. Our own Amity Chandler heads there from Lee County. Amity brings tons of knowledge and a wealth of experience with her. We're glad she's staying in the SUNSPRA school PR family, too!

## NSPRA Chicago '16 – July 17-20

Who is heading to Chicago this summer for NSPRA '16? Please let me know! SUNSPRA always enjoys strong representation at this national conference... not to mention great food and social time.

## LEGISLATIVE / HEADLINE RECAPS

### Negron sees Bright Futures as key in plans

Preparing to make public universities a priority during the next two years, incoming Senate President Joe Negron said more and better scholarships will help take Florida's higher-education system to the next level... Negron is particularly interested in raising the top award for the merit-based Bright Futures scholarships, which were slashed as a result of the recession.

[Read Full Story](#)

### School Board votes for raises, but only if employees pay more for health care

In front of a sea of red - a crowd of more than 1,000 teachers wearing the same color shirt - the School Board voted Wednesday night in favor of the district changing what employees pay for health insurance next year to free up money for raises. [Read Full Story](#)

### Parents push for return to letter grades at Palm Beach County elementary schools

At Palm Beach County elementary schools, no student ever earns an A. No one gets an F, either. The district's 108 elementary schools got rid of letter grades in favor of a standards-based system, in which students are given "performance codes." The new report cards are meant to give a clearer picture of how well students are mastering learning standards. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Haitian Flag Day celebrations at Immokalee High result in students sent home**

At least six Immokalee High students were sent home Wednesday after, district officials say, they were asked by the school administrators to take off shirts bearing the Haitian flag and refused. For years, students at the school have marked Haitian Flag Day - the day the Haitian flag was adopted in 1803 - by celebrating on campus during the school day with displays of the flag, national coat of arms and motto. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Florida Board of Education to consider computer science standards**

Florida hasn't gone so far as to consider computer coding a foreign language just yet. But state leaders have advanced to the point where they acknowledged the need for academic standards in teaching computer science. On Friday, the State Board of Education will consider adoption of those standards, which have been a year in the making. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Teachers say Miami-Dade has stiffed them \$30 million in pay**

Florida law requires highly effective teachers to be rewarded with more pay. A group of Miami-Dade teachers says the state's largest school district is violating state law when it comes to their pay — stiffing teachers out of \$30 million. In the depths of the recession, school districts like Miami-Dade jumped on millions of dollars in grants offered by the U.S. Department of Education. In return for \$17 million, the district agreed to evaluate and pay teachers based partly on test scores. Miami-Dade was the first school district in Florida to dole out performance pay.

## **TRANSGENDER BATHROOM COVERAGE**

### **Transgender bathroom debate comes to Florida**

A conservative lawmaker in Florida who is running for Nassau County schools superintendent wants state Attorney General Pam Bondi to issue an official opinion on what she believes to be the "constitutional encroachment" of the Obama administration's new guidance to public schools over transgender students' bathroom access. Republican leaders in Florida have been reluctant to comment so far on the new guidelines. Both Bondi and Republican Gov. Rick Scott last week said they were "reviewing" it. State Rep. Janet Adkins, R-Fernandina Beach, called the president's new policy a "clear violation" of states' rights under the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

### **Duval Schools sued over gender-identity bathroom policy**

A new lawsuit filed Tuesday seeks to stop Duval County Public Schools from allowing students to use the bathrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identities. The suit seeks declaratory and injunctive relief against the district for "adopting and establishing a policy of allowing students an unfettered right to use the bathroom or changing facility of their choice based on 'gender identity.'" The Obama administration on Friday released a directive that requires public schools to permit transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identities even if their education records or identity documents indicate a different sex.

### **Clay superintendent to fight Obama order on transgender bathrooms in schools**

Charlie Van Zant Jr., Clay County superintendent, announced Monday that his school district will not follow the Obama administration's directive to allow transgender students to use whatever bathroom they feel comfortable with. Van Zant said in a video posted on YouTube that biologically male and female students will be required to use their respective bathrooms.

[Read Full Story](#)

### **Some Tampa Bay schools were addressing transgender issues before the Obama bathroom edict**

School superintendents across Florida and the nation got a stern warning from the Obama administration on Friday to respect the rights of transgender students, or face the loss of federal funds. [Read Full Story](#)

### **ACLU challenges Marion County transgender bathroom policy**

The state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union on Thursday filed a federal complaint

challenging a new Marion County Public Schools policy that requires students to use bathrooms that correlate to their gender at birth. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Atheist group warns Florida schools to follow Pledge of Allegiance law**

For more than 70 years, Florida public school students have had the option of opting out of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with a parent's note, but teachers could still require students to stand and place their hands above their hearts. A recently passed state law will be implemented July 1 giving students the right to not participate in the ritual altogether. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Charter school group overcomes obstacles to win contract in Pasco County**

A charter school firm that has tried to make inroads into Pasco County for five years could soon win a five-year contract to operate in the area. The School Board is set to consider the agreement for Pasco Charter Academy on Tuesday, seven months after the board denied its latest request for a charter.

[Read Full Story](#)

## **AND FINALLY...**

If you need to escape your own world and look at a different perspective, try this:

<http://dceaglecam.eagles.org/>

It will give you a birds' eye view of life up high!

*Until next time, keep shining the light on school PR in Florida!*

*Kevin*

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