



# SUNSPRA

Sunshine State School  
Public Relations Association



## “Thursday Thoughts” – 6.16 & 23.16

Kevin Christian, APR, CPRC, SUNSPRA President

WOW! We had a blast in Orlando last week at SUNSPRA’s 2016 Medallion Awards, exclusively sponsored by School Messenger®. Ten Medallion Awards went to districts showing the best



## SCHOOLMESSENGER®

PR publications, tools, programs and projects in Florida. Watch for pictures of recipients accepting their awards soon. Just prior to the awards ceremony at the Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld, nearly 20 people joined together for a tasty lunch experience, sponsored by Peachjar. Those attending also received goodies upon check-in thanks to Blackboard®.



At the after-awards party, award winners shared their secrets of success – with lots of smiles accompanying each response. A champagne toast (thanks, Nancy Gallardo & School Messenger®) topped the afternoon session and concluded the awards events.

**Blackboard®**

SUNSPRA members can soon access this year’s winning entries under the “Members” tab at [www.sunspira.org](http://www.sunspira.org). Meantime, here’s a recap of the awards, including **BEST OF SHOW** honors for three different entities:

- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “k12 connect” Broadcast TV program – Marion County Public Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Attendance Matters” Themed Campaign – Marion County Public Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “#LCSFirstDay” Parent / Community Involvement – Leon County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Casey’s AR Reading Heroes” Recognition Program – Castle Creek Elementary, Orange County Public Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Real Talk Podcasts” PR Tools / Other – Duval County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Adult Education” Branding Campaign – Brevard County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “After School Programs” Overall Image Campaign – Brevard County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Citrus Schools Community Connection” Special Purpose Publication – Citrus County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “Sarasota County Schools New Logo ReBrand” Campaign – Sarasota County Schools
- 1<sup>st</sup> place - “2015-16 Florida Virtual School Course Catalog” Special Purpose Publication – Florida Virtual School

- **BEST OF SHOW** (school-based) – “Casey’s AR Reading Heroes” Recognition Program – Castle Creek Elementary, Orange County Public Schools
- **BEST OF SHOW** (Programs & Projects) - “After School Programs” Overall Image Campaign – Brevard County Schools
- **BEST OF SHOW** (Publications & PR Tools) – “k12 connect” Broadcast TV program – Marion County Public Schools

SUNSPRA is all about sharing knowledge and perspective. On Wednesday, I had the privilege of introducing Greg Turchetta (Collier) and Dylan Thomas (Orange) and co-presenting with them about “Making Your Own Newsroom: Sharing Your Own Success Stories.” Response was huge to this presentation, with 77 people signed up weeks beforehand. Thanks, Greg & Dylan, for sharing acute social media skills with school administrators at the FASA Conference.



### **APR Could Mean More Pay**

If you’ve never heard me talk about accreditation, then pay attention to the next few paragraphs. If you have heard me discuss APR, indulge me and glean from the next few statements.

[What is accreditation](#), and [why is it important](#) at all? Universal accreditation is an international process fewer than 20 percent of PR professionals aspire to and reach. Think of the APR credential (Accredited in Public Relations) as an advanced degree without two years of expensive tuition. Earning accreditation is your advantage when it comes to your next career move. The “APR” credential after your name indicates your subscription to professional, ethical, principled communications and personal standards in your chosen PR position. Based on the “RPIE” formula, accreditation repositions your mindset to clearly focus on Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation in every PR project you undertake.

The APR process involves three steps: a written professional profile, an oral presentation to a panel of your APR peers, and a computerized test with clear objectives in mind. Rest assured, earning your APR is no simple matter. You won’t “coast through” the process regardless of how long you’ve been in the profession. It does take time, effort, and investment. But it all pays off when you finish and understand the importance of RPIE, professional and ethical standards, and other components. Quite

honestly, adding those three letters to your name is icing on the cake because you will look at your work in such a refined light.

Research conducted by the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) finds Accredited practitioners earn on average more than those without certification. Just how much depends on job title and experience, of course.

I will continue promoting APR and its importance. I'm happy to share any insight, answer questions, or offer advice on how to advance in the process. If you wait until you have time, I promise --- you'll never have time! I tried that excuse time and time again... but finally made time in 2012 to complete accreditation.

If you're really ambitious and earn your APR, you can take it one step further to earn the highest credential possible in our profession in this country --- CPRC, or Certified Public Relations Counselor. Offered by another PR organization, I'm happy to have a conversation with you off-line about this subjective-based endeavour with APR as a pre-requisite.

### **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. I know of 2 people going as of now... Blackboard is strengthening its presence this year by offering the following to NSPRA conference attendees:

- Blackboard Welcome Party
- Underground Night Club featuring the Tuxedo Band - Monday, July 18<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm-11pm, register here: <http://offers.schoolwires.com/nspra-party-rsvp-0>
- Two Blackboard Professional Development Sessions:
  - Skill Session Tuesday, July 19<sup>th</sup> 8am-9am
  - Sponsor Session Tuesday, July 19<sup>th</sup> 9:15am-10:15am
- Bb Day July 21, 2016 8am – 12pm

### **LEGISLATIVE / HEADLINE RECAPS**

#### **The high cost of a graduation rate**

In only four years, Leon County's high school graduation rate jumped nearly 20 percent. But it didn't necessarily happen because students were suddenly doing better in school. And it came at a price - more than \$2 million. [Read Full Story](#)

#### **School speech pathologist wins challenge on incentive bonus**

A Sarasota County speech pathologist will receive more than \$8,000 after an administrative hearing judge concluded that she qualified as a teacher and was eligible for the state's controversial Best and Brightest Scholarship. [Read Full Story](#)

#### **NAACP calls for increase in diversity among Collier school district principals**

Of Collier County's 48 principals of traditional public schools, one is black. Calls for the Collier County School District to be proactive about creating a racially and ethnically diverse pool of principals intensified this month, when district officials filled three principal vacancies.

[Read Full Story](#)

#### **Perhaps Jeb Bush will be the person who makes Florida into a state that excels in K-12 math, science and computing**

Jeb Bush returned to the education policy arena this week with an opinion piece in the National Review in which he called for the nation to "massively disrupt our education system" with expanded school choice, online courses in hard-to-staff subjects like AP Calculus, and changes in the way teachers are evaluated and compensated. [Read Full Story](#)

### **Audits show some charter schools' cash struggles**

An analysis of the audited financial statements filed with the state indicates that at least 12 Duval charter schools spent more than they made in fiscal 2015. That's called deficit spending. These chinks in charter school finances don't necessarily predict a bankruptcy or closure, said Linda Norman-Teck, executive director of the Florida Charter School Alliance. They're only a snapshot of finances and are likely a symptom of charter schools getting less money per student than district schools, she said.

### **Legislators allowed students to go to school across county lines; now come the details**

In the waning hours of their 2016 session, Florida lawmakers approved a bill expanding families' school options across county lines. Education choice advocates trumpeted the move as a bold step to let students attend any public school in the state. They equated it with Florida's broad charter school and tax credit scholarship programs.

### **Florida facing teacher shortage**

In Walton, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties, school officials are turning to year round recruiting and hiring and other innovative ways to attract the brightest and the best. According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), for the 2015 to 2016 school year, there was a critical shortage of teachers in English, exceptional student education (ESE), reading, foreign languages, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), science and math.

### **AND FINALLY...**

If you're a Michael Jackson fan, [this video](#) is absolutely amazing! As a fellow pianist, I am so intrigued and impressed with the talent, dexterity and concentration of this 13-year-old musician. Enjoy!

Again, congratulations to our 2016 SUNSPRA Medallion Award winners listed at the top of this issue!

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

*Kevin*

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