



# SUNSPRA

Sunshine State School  
Public Relations Association



***"Thursday Thoughts" – 11.14.16 (for 11.10.16)***

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

## **AWARDS time**

Under separate emails the last few weeks, I sent nomination information on this year's Outstanding Superintendent Communicator and Margie Davidson Leading Light Awards. Nominations close today at 5PM (Monday). Special thanks to Judd Aungst and

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for once again returning as our exclusive sponsor for these prestigious honors. Winners will be announced soon. Awards will be handed out Thursday, December 1, during the lunch-time general session at FSBA's Joint Conference in Tampa Bay.

## **IT'S TIME – TO RENEW YOUR SUNSPRA MEMBERSHIP**

Last membership year, SUNSPRA met the objective of increasing membership by 10 percent... except we actually increased 22 percent! It's time to renew YOUR membership, so please complete your renewal process with the fillable pdf form. SUNSPRA is only as strong as its membership – and we are growing significantly, already in this new school year! ***I encourage you to renew today!*** Thanks to those of you who have renewed so far... hoping our other members renew to keep SUNSPRA a strong chapter!

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

### **Despite new law, school transfers may be limited**

Unhappy with the "world of mess" school her son was assigned to attend, Morna Atkins was thrilled when he won a spot in a magnet program at another campus. But the Orlando mother, who sent her son to private school for a time, too, doesn't think parents unhappy with their local school should have to pay tuition bills or rely on the luck of a magnet program's lottery draw to find something better.

### **6 big ways Trump presidency could change schools**

Donald Trump has provided only scant details on his education agenda but the ideas he has pitched make one thing certain: the president-elect's vision for American schools is very different from that of his predecessor.

### **A race to pay the teachers**

The Hillsborough County School District and its teachers have reached a tentative pay deal that rewards long-serving teachers, who have reached the top of the pay scale, with a \$200 bonus. All teachers would also get cost of living raises of \$200, which would be built into the pay scale. The raises are retroactive to July 1. And, for about a third of the teachers, there will be a scheduled \$4,000 raise, also retroactive.

### Parents say bullying stats don't match reality

Even as schools across the country have ramped up efforts to fight bullying in recent years, parents, such as Almeida, say it persists. Some experts suggest that schools vastly understate the amount of bullying that occurs on their campuses.

### Alabama District Requires Criminal Background Check for All Visitors

A school district in Alabama is requiring all visitors who participate in school day activities to pass a background check — and pay \$15 to get it. Pelham City Schools has required such checks for field trips and classroom volunteers since 2014, but recently expanded the policy to include family members or others visiting for lunch or other daytime activities. While exemptions are made for widely attended events like PTO meetings and assemblies, the change has resulted in a backlash from some parents. But officials say that the process was implemented in an effort to ensure safety, citing an “open door” policy that allows many daytime visitors. The background check was implemented over the traditional driver license scan to include other dangerous or violent incidents that could pose harm to children. Meanwhile, the district is listening to the community and is open to amending the policy, and considering all options that effectively provide safe schools.

### Election Day Fears Prompt School-Based Polling Changes

The contentious nature of this year’s presidential race has impacted the traditional role of schools as voting sites, prompting many to move polling places off campus or cancel classes on Election Day. In doing so, some cite a fear of confrontations or even violence that could threaten the safety of students. While the extent of the concern is difficult to assess given how centralized the voting process is across the country, the Associated Press reports relocated polls and canceled classes at schools in at least seven states. Although sharing the concern, the National Association of Secretaries of State does not advocate having armed guards or police stationed at the polls because their presence could intimidate voters.

### Rising Expectations Turn Kindergarten Into New First Grade

There’s no question that today’s kindergarten is becoming more rigorous, and some Minnesota educators recently explained how the trend is playing out in their schools. They described students learning to read, and taking part in arts and science lessons. Across the state, and the country for that matter, kindergarten has morphed from learning-while-playing into a grade that emphasizes reading earlier and counting higher. The new expectations, the teachers said, have them trying to balance mounting standards for young learners while trying to keep activities developmentally appropriate. Play often falls by the wayside. A study from the University of Virginia confirms their impressions that, as one teacher put it, “Kindergarten is the new first grade, period.” A colleague

### Many Schools Still Getting Less State Support Than Before Recession

Although the Great Recession ended seven years ago, it’s still not over for many of the nation’s schools. A new study from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities finds that general formula funding in nearly two dozen states will be lower this school year than it was when the recession began nearly a decade ago. In eight of those states, the cuts are about 10 percent or more. And while most states raised per-pupil funding in the last year, those increases weren’t enough to offset earlier cuts. While every state and district has a different story to tell about the residual effects of the recession, the basic theme is that many schools have had to cut corners, enlarge classes and make do with fewer staff members. As a result experts say the quality of education has been diluted, resulting in lower test scores and bruised local economies.

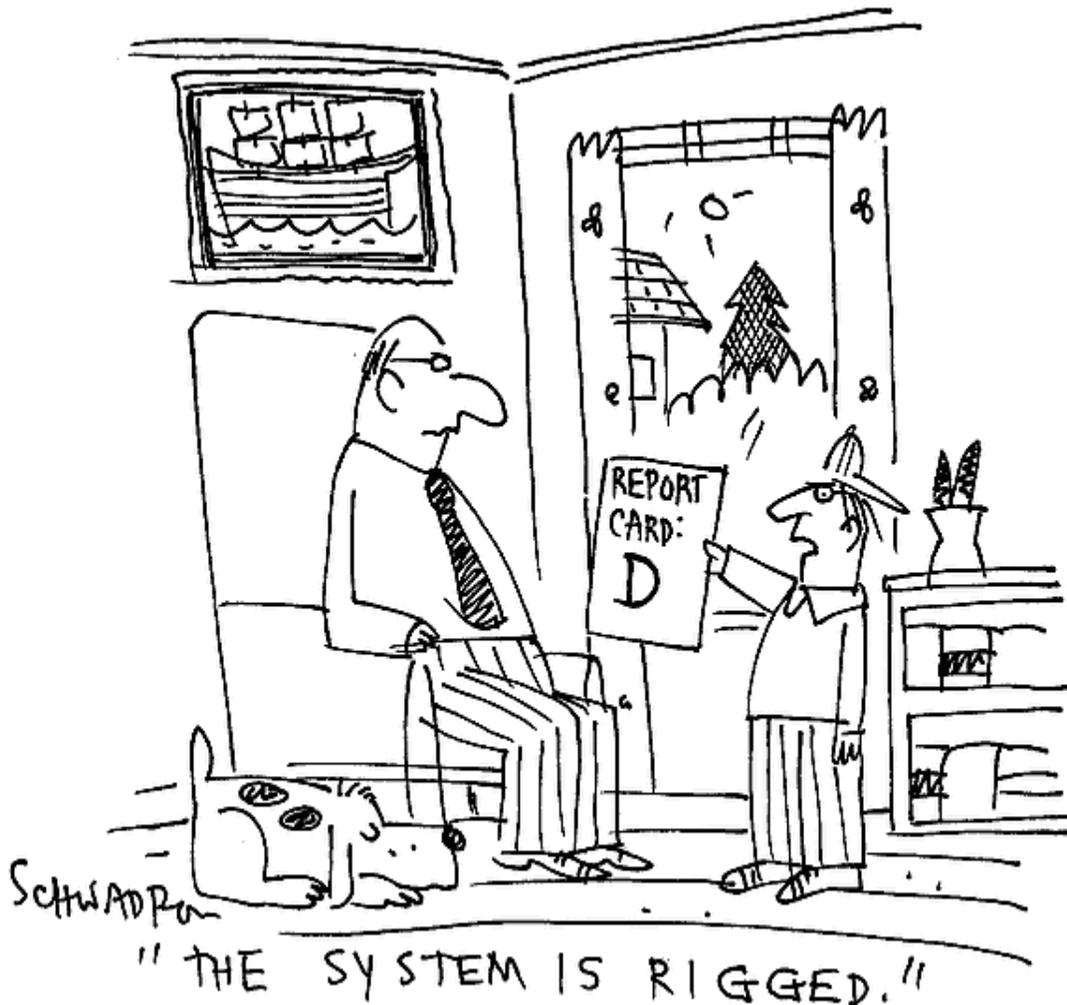
## NSPRA Resource — NIF Issues Advisory and Deliberation on Infectious Disease Outbreaks

The Zika virus is the latest infectious disease to raise concerns about how to respond to international outbreaks of potentially deadly diseases that have no vaccine. Hundreds of American travelers have become infected by Zika, leaving many wondering how to keep their kids and communities safe. For school administrators and parents in the Southern and Central United States, this is especially concerning and remains at the forefront of their concerns.

The [National Issues Forum](#), in collaboration with the [Kettering Foundation](#), has developed a new issue advisory and deliberation guide titled [Infectious Disease Outbreaks: How Should We Keep Our Communities Safe?](#) Communities and school districts can use the guide to open the dialogue about the Zika virus. The guide presents three options for deliberation along with the drawbacks related to each. It is designed to engage stakeholders in thoughtful discussions and considerations about infectious diseases such as Zika.



### AND FINALLY...



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

*Kevin*

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