

2014 Leadership Through Communication Award

In Recognition of Exemplary Communication Strategies



Honoring Superintendents and their Public Relations/Communications Professionals

Your School District Could Receive a \$10,000 Award!

Submissions Are Due August 30, 2013

A partnership between AASA, NSPRA and Blackboard Connect

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AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

NSPRA
National School Public Relations Association



2014 Leadership Through Communication Award In Recognition of Exemplary Communication Strategies

Sponsored in partnership by:

- Blackboard Connect
- National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)
- American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

The Key Components of Successful School Systems: Leadership, Teamwork and Effective Communication

The 2014 *Leadership Through Communication Award* recognizes the teamwork and exemplary leadership of outstanding superintendents and their communications professionals for demonstrated commitment to the enhancement of communication and relationships between their school systems and the families and communities they serve. The award honors those who recognize that communication is a critical component of leadership and incorporate strategic communication into their planning goals and objectives as well as their daily operations.

One school district will be selected for recognition.

The recognized school district will receive a \$10,000 award, provided by Blackboard Connect, to be used for student scholarships or communication activities that benefit students and schools.

Eligibility Requirements

- The award is designed to specifically recognize the communication efforts and teamwork of a superintendent and district public relations/communications professional. K-12 public school district superintendents and their public relations/communications professionals are eligible to apply for the award.
- Applicants must currently be employed by a U.S. or Canadian K-12 public school system.
- School districts are not required to use the services of Blackboard Connect as a prerequisite for application, and no purchase is necessary.

Please note: Award recipients are expected to attend the AASA National Conference on Education in Nashville, Tennessee February 13-15, 2014 to participate in the special awards ceremony and present a session at the conference based on their communication accomplishments. They are also expected to be recognized at a general session of the NSPRA National Seminar in Baltimore, Maryland, July 13-16, 2014 and present a skill session.

The award includes conference registration, airfare and two nights lodging for the superintendent and public relations/communications professional to both the AASA Conference and the NSPRA Seminar. Airfare is round trip coach in North America. Air travel and lodging are to be arranged by NSPRA and/or AASA. In addition, the recognized district will serve as a content resource for two Blackboard Connect professional development opportunities.

Application Deadline: August 30, 2013

Two finalists will be selected to receive site visits from a team of judges. Following the site visits, the *2014 Leadership Through Communication Award* recipient will be selected and notified no later than November 22, 2013.

Additional Dates to Remember

- **February 13-15, 2014** Award presented at AASA National Conference on Education in Nashville, Tennessee. Session presentation by honorees.
- **July 13-16, 2014** Recognition and session presentation by honorees at NSPRA National Seminar in Baltimore, Maryland.

Award Criteria

Judges will consider the following criteria as part of the judging process:

- The school system has a strategic plan integrating a communications component into decision-making processes and includes a budget line for communications.
- The school system supports a culture empowering all employees as ambassadors for the school system and provides them with communications training to support them in this role.
- School system administrators at all levels are held accountable for effective communication.
- The school system has a comprehensive crisis communications management plan that is reviewed annually and updated regularly.
- The public relations/communications professional is a member of or works closely with the superintendent's cabinet and provides strategic counsel on communication and public relations.
- The school system uses a variety of communication vehicles and strategies such as, but not limited to: print and electronic publications; local news media; web sites and social networking tools; voice/Internet notification systems; public engagement activities; and face-to-face communication to reach all stakeholders.
- The superintendent and public relations/communications professional model good communication techniques for staff.
- The school system's communication infrastructure can be used collaboratively to benefit the entire community.
- The school system can demonstrate measurable results attributable to the overall communication program (i.e., increased parent involvement; increased voter turnout; improved student attendance; improved staff job satisfaction, etc.).



Procedures

- Only one application may be submitted per school system. Any school system may apply, or an initial application may be submitted by others on behalf of the district. If submitted by others, the application packet must be signed by the superintendent prior to submission.

Deadline: Applications must be received on or before August 30, 2013.

Applications must be submitted electronically to Leadership Through Communication Award at awards@nspra.org.

- Independent panels invited by NSPRA and AASA will judge the entries and determine the award recipients. Entries will be screened to two finalists who will receive site visits from a judging team. The selected district will be notified no later than November 22, 2013 and an announcement will be made in NSPRA and AASA publications.
- The award will first be presented at the 2014 AASA National Conference on Education in Nashville, Tennessee, Feb. 13-15, 2014. A second presentation will be made at the 2014 NSPRA National Seminar in Baltimore, Maryland, July 13-16, 2014.

Tips for a Successful Application: Characteristics of Past Award Recipient Programs and Applications

Interested applicants have asked for some of the characteristics of the programs of past award recipients as well as additional insight into completing the application process. Some information gleaned from award-winning applications are:

- Demonstrate how the communication function is tied to the goals and objectives of the school district. Emphasize how communication assisted the district in solving or preventing problems and/or how it created new opportunities for the entire school community. The communication function is viewed as a management function.
- Follow the four-step process as required by the application. When site visits are made by the judges to the finalists, they are looking to ensure the descriptions in the application materials reflect what they observe of district operations and the leadership team's management style. Judges also consider the testimony of parents, staff and community and look to verify that the district's efforts are valued and perceived as making a difference.
- Award winners demonstrate a true partnership of the communications professional and the superintendent. Both professionals work as a team in developing effective communication strategy, tactics, and solutions for the district.
- Follow the application directions as directed. Applicants are rejected each year because they did not follow the directions as specified.
- Measurable results are demonstrated and attributable to the overall communication program. Some examples of results are improved staff job satisfaction, increased voter turnout on finance elections, improved student attendance, participation in parent and community engagement programs, etc.
- The school district has a plan of action for its communication program, and a budget for its implementation.
- The system's commitment to communication is practiced and encouraged at every level and responsive, two-way communication is a priority.



2014 Leadership Through Communication Award Application Form

Name of School System: _____

Superintendent: _____

Public Relations/Communications Professional: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone numbers: (Supt. office) _____ (Communications office) _____

E-mails: (Supt.) _____ (Communication pro) _____

District web site address: _____

District Profile

Urban Suburban Rural Exurban

Geographic size (square miles): _____

K-12 Unified K-8 Elementary Union High School Other

Student Enrollment: _____

Number of Schools: _____

Number of Employees: _____

Number of Municipalities within District Boundaries: _____

Nominated by (if different than applicant):

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Signature of Superintendent of nominated school district: _____



Application Guidelines

Communication activities related to this award shall have been implemented between July 1, 2010 and July 31, 2013.

The award application shall include the following in a single Word or PDF document:

- **A completed application form.**
- **An introductory letter** (maximum of two pages) explaining why the school system deserves to be considered for the award, based on how it meets the awards criteria listed on page 3.
- **An executive summary** (not to exceed four pages) that explains how the superintendent and public relations/communications professional work together to ensure an effective communication program that:
 - Supports the school system’s overall, year-round communication and relationship-building efforts; and/or
 - Supported the school system’s efforts to respond to a specific issue (such as, but not limited to: a crisis situation; special initiative such as a finance election; public engagement effort; community project; etc.).

The executive summary should include web links to supporting publications or examples (i.e., newsletters, communication plans, information brochures, web sites, blogs, etc.) that illustrate the communication efforts described. **Please do not send the actual supporting documents or items.**

The summary should address the following areas:

- **Assessment** – describe the need, problem or initiative and measurable communication goals.
 - **Planning** – identify target audiences, responsible staff, costs, obstacles overcome and how communication strategies/vehicles were determined.
 - **Communication** – describe how the plan was implemented, who was involved, the timelines, and how communication strategies/vehicles were effectively used.
 - **Evaluation** – cite evidence of how the outcomes of the communication effort met the needs and goals identified and what changes, if any, have been made to improve future communication efforts.
- **A brief vita** (for both the superintendent and public relations/communications professional) outlining career highlights and professional achievements.
 - **Optional:** The application may include **up to four letters of recommendation** from persons or organizations not employed directly by the school system (i.e., parent groups, business/civic leaders, education leaders of other school systems or associations — excluding NSPRA and AASA — and individual community members and patrons).

Note: All entries become part of the NSPRA Resource Files. The entry must follow the guidelines described above to be considered by the judges.



Deadline for applications: August 30, 2013

HOW TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted electronically.

- Compile all application materials into a single complete document (please do not attach multiple components of the entry or send individual components, such as letters of support, in separate e-mails).
- Send with subject tag "Leadership Through Communication Award" to awards@nspra.org

Questions?

Contact nspra@nspra.org or call (301) 519-0496.

About Blackboard Connect

Blackboard Connect™ gives you the ability to reach your community in minutes – whether it is a time-sensitive situation, event outreach, or attendance notification. School districts across the country are harnessing the power of Blackboard Connect to help ensure safety and security, to increase parental involvement, to enhance student achievement, and to improve staff efficiencies. With our latest technology, including Blackboard Connect 5, Connect for Teachers™ and ConnectTxt™, you have all the right tools to build a more connected district.



About AASA

AASA, the School Superintendents Association, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA members range from chief executive officers, superintendents and senior level school administrators to cabinet members, professors and aspiring school system leaders. AASA members are the chief education advocates for children. AASA members advance the goals of public education and champion children's causes in their districts and nationwide. As school system leaders, AASA members set the pace for academic achievement. They help shape policy, oversee its implementation and represent school districts to the public at large.



About National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)

The **National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)**, founded in 1935, is a non-profit professional association recognized as "the leader in school communications." The association provides school public relations and communication training and services to education leaders throughout North America and the U.S. Department of Defense Dependent schools worldwide.



THE THUMB IS MIGHTIER.



Introducing a new way to help fight bullying, abusive behavior, crime, and mental health issues. TipTxt is a two-way communication service that allows K-12 schools to provide an easy-to-use SMS reporting tool for students, parents and staff to notify officials of safety issues.

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To learn more go to blackboard.com/tiptxtK12