

Communications Committee Meeting Minutes - November 6, 2015

Attendees: Deirdre Burns, Deirdre d'Albertis, Laura Schulkind, Joe Phelan, Steve Jensen

RCSD Website

The committee continued reviewing updates to the website. The Food Services pages should be created within the next couple of weeks with input from Larry Anthony. The "Lunch Menus" tab will be changed to "Food Service" to reflect the variety of information included in this topic.

We reviewed additional enhancements to the Teacher Portal section of the site. A new reservation section has been added for teachers to reserve computer labs, tech carts, and tech integration support. Previously, this had to be coordinated through the BOCES Moodle, but it has been brought under our local umbrella. This will be a valuable way to gain a better understanding of teacher need. Steve will try to determine how to gauge whether or not teachers are being hampered by not having access to equipment. In terms of planning, this will give us a greater understanding of capacity and how we are meeting the needs of our teachers.

There is now a comprehensive list of photo opt-outs in the portal so that teachers and support staff can access the information across all 3 schools.

For school cancellations, there will be a new "crawler" on the home page to announce closing/delay schedules. The use of the crawler will also be incorporated on the Guidance page for time-sensitive information.

Ed Schindler, our webmaster, has met with the faculty of all 3 schools to gather input about how the site is working for them. He has been watching the site usage. The greatest number of "hits" have been with the home page, but second to that are teacher web pages. In an effort to assist teachers with using their pages, Ed has created a series of "how-to videos" which can be accessed in the portal. For those teachers who are still not using their web pages, Steve will engage in some personal outreach to determine the best ways to support them. For instance, early elementary teachers may be more interested in posting social/emotional information for parents to access rather than homework assignments, etc. Professional development will be customized to the needs of the grade level.

Steve also showed us some of the Homework Helper videos created by Tom Blass for his students. These are videos a la Khan Academy and are a wonderful resource for students.

One of the images on the home page is dedicated to our District Goals. Though it is difficult to illustrate advocacy or budget development, we will make an effort to gather images that will show committees working together to support the work of the District. The committee will spend some time searching for information to include on the website to help inform our community about the work being done.

The parent letter outlining the changes to the website will go out soon. The "Ask the District" has not gotten as much use as we had hoped. The committee feared that it was too far down the page for people to notice. Steve will re-arrange the items in the right column as necessary. It was noted that the new student email addresses are only being used sporadically depending on the teacher's mode of communication with students. With Office 365, all students have access to the online versions of the Office suite (Word, Excel, Powerpoint, etc.). This information will be shared with students who may not otherwise have this software available at home. Joe is still awaiting policy advice from legal counsel regarding acceptable communications between staff and students.

Advocacy Goal

The committee ran short on time to discuss our Advocacy goal but will be meeting next week to draft a statement for the Common Core Task Force to be approved by the full Board at our November 24 meeting. We are hoping for member input at our November 10 meeting regarding topics we would like to address to the task force. Julie Marlette from NYSSBA will be attending the December 3 DC School Boards Meeting to address the topic of advocacy for any member who wishes to attend.

Respectfully Submitted by Laura Schulkind