

## Communications Meeting

January 11, 2016

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

### Minutes

#### 1. Web site use.

- The Committee looked at meta-data related to use of teacher web pages. Since 1/1/16, one third of teachers made one or more updates to their web page. The committee was encouraged that this brief window of time showed robust use.
- The afternoon of the February 12 Superintendent's Conference Day will focus on technology, with a series of workshops that staff will sign up for. Ed Schindler will be available for a drop in "lab" - offering hands-on help in a variety of areas, including starting or improving a web page. Other workshop areas may include: Google Apps for Education, ipad implementation, creating youtube tutorials, Mac basics.
- Reflecting on the two years since coming to RCSD in the new position of Director of Technology and Communication, Steve noted that where infusion of technology was a focus of our first steps, we now need to continue to build capacity. He noted the importance of striking a balance between providing training and encouraging staff to learn by doing, often the best way to get comfortable with using technology and discovering its possibilities.
- Further discussion veered into the intersection of technology and curriculum and the various platforms teachers use, i.e., Google Apps, Canvas, Microsoft, etc. One way of thinking is to enforce/encourage standardization of platforms across the district. While there may be benefits to this approach, perhaps in large districts, Steve believes that exposure to diverse tools gives students the benefit of familiarity with different technology environments and gives teachers the freedom to work to their strengths and particular needs.
- The above notwithstanding, Steve and Marvin have discussed the need for K-12 curriculum documents to be located in a dynamic, collaborative environment that teachers can work with. Right now curriculum documents are in fragmented and static locations. As well, grading systems could be placed in standard, secure locations. This may also open up opportunities for teachers to become comfortable with students and parents having access to assignments and grades on line. Thus, they believe that while diversity of educational platforms across classrooms is beneficial, standardization for K-12 curricular documents and grading systems is optimal.
- In a separate discussion, Laura raised the question of whether the Board could/should have a password protected, secure location for documents. In particular, she noted that, while BOE meeting documents are posted, they are difficult to search. Joe wants to be sure there is adequate security for confidential documents. There is interest on the committee in creating separate, searchable locations for public and confidential board materials. It was noted that some years ago, the Board looked into BoardDocs, but it was determined that paper packets meet the needs of board members and are low cost. A more recent ad hoc committee was to look at the issue, but such committee has been largely moribund.

- It was noted that a member of our community, Kathy Cassens, has generously agreed to let the district use her photos. An acknowledgement will be attached to any photo we use of hers or any other member of the community.
- No questions or comments have been submitted to the “Ask the District” button on the web site.

## 2. Advocacy.

- Joe sent off the letter signed by him and Mark to Governor Cuomo and various public officials regarding public school funding.
- The committee discussed outreach to parents to encourage them also to contact public officials, particularly after the Governor’s State of the State address when we may have more information on where state aid might be heading. We could have an item on the web site that provides parents with a sample letter (Joe’s or one that omits jargon with which parents may be unfamiliar) and legislator addresses.
- The committee agreed that we should hold our next Coffee with the Board in late January with the topic being budget development, if that is agreeable to the rest of the board.
- The committee agreed we should meet with community partners (RSF and PTSO) in later February to discuss the budget and consider meeting, as well, with our collective bargaining associations.

Next meeting: Friday, February 19, 2016

Submitted by Deirdre Burns