

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES NOVEMBER 14, 2014

Attendance: Laura Schulkind, Deirdre Burns, Deirdre d'Albertis, Joe Phelan, Stephen Jensen.

Public Education Matters! Deirdre d'A and Joe reported on "Public Education Matters! Leadership, Leverage, and Learning: A Vision for Reclaiming the Promise of Our Public Schools," a panel discussion featured at the Westchester-Putnam School Boards-Superintendents Joint Dinner in Tarrytown on November 13th (see attached document). One strong message of the evening was the importance of advocacy and communication on the part of boards of education: the message that public schools matter to the future of an equitable and democratic society came through clearly during the evening's conversation.

District Twitter Feed: Joe reported that RCSD now has 96 followers, a healthy increase over the last few weeks. Followers will be the first to know about school delays and closings this winter—another great incentive to sign up to follow Rhinebeck school updates via Twitter.

Communications Survey: Members of the committee discussed the Johns Hopkins National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) as a possible partner for a communications survey of parents and teachers in the district. It was decided that the commitment required for this comprehensive, multi-year program with Hopkins was overly involved. Deirdre B. suggested that the district consider commissioning a more modest survey tool. What the group is inclined to do now is partner with a researcher from a local institution (Marist, New Paltz, Bard, or Vassar) to craft, administer, and analyze such a communication/engagement survey. The goal would be to learn from the experience and insight of parents, students, teachers, administrators and staff members of the district. Joe will follow up with contacts at area colleges and universities. Deirdre B observed that it makes sense to get our new website up and running before conducting the communications survey—all were in agreement.

Website Update: Steve reported on the productive dialogue underway with different stakeholders within the school community as he and Ed Schindler continue to build the new district website. He is at work on arranging student e-mail addresses for pupils in grades 6-12 to facilitate communication between home and school (he hopes to have them established in a month or so). Teacher groups have been extremely helpful in providing Steve with feedback on various features of site architecture. Many teachers are eager for enhancement tools: Steve is committed to providing a "sandbox" to help each faculty member optimize his or her use of the redesigned site. He plans to meet with administrative staff soon to promote/share best practices around use of the district site (for instance, centralizing a permission/release database for use of "crowd sourced" photos). He looks forward to working on specific needs of different offices (the MS/HS Library, Guidance). The new site should be ready to go "live" in the new year. Deirdre

B. asked about the impact of this work on budgeting. Steve reminded members of the committee of the \$7000 savings garnered when the district's discontinued its contract with School World (funds now freed up to support consulting work needed to launch the new site). On a final note, Steve has purchased a camera for the yearbook staff, allowing for easier access to high quality photographic images available for use with a variety of platforms.

Agenda for our next meeting:

--Relative to our communication goal for the year, this group will talk concretely about how to celebrate outstanding accomplishments within the district. Laura has directed us to the "success summaries" of the Pittsford District website. Making time at our meetings—and finding a congenial format-- to acknowledge progress and achievement will be our aim.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d'Albertis