

Communications Committee Meeting
December 11, 2014

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

I. Update on Website Redesign

Steve talked about the various meetings he and Ed Schindler have been holding with various stakeholders around redesign of the website.

Following on a very productive day of conversation with faculty members, they met with **secretarial staff from each school**, reviewing the advantages of a more customized site and learning what features are particularly desirable (for instance, making forms for students, teachers, and staff readily available online; sharing information with new students/families in a “user friendly” way; centralizing permission for use of photographic images). Using the site to register interest in particular professional development sessions prior to a Superintendent’s Conference Day is another example Steve offered of a new function that could be added. Administrative assistants have been able to share ideas and best practices throughout this process, drawing on their expertise to inform the work of our technology and communications director.

One concern raised is with how “official information” should be disseminated with a **Q&A link on the front page**. The committee looked at such Q&A features on other districts’ sites (i.e. Red Hook, Poughkeepsie, Shenendehowa) to identify what we would like to see in a Rhinebeck Q&A page. Some districts use the “grapevine” link to quell rumors, educate the public, discuss “hot button” issues, informally survey families, or all of the above. Members of the committee favor the idea of a measured and considered response to questions from the public, all of which ideally would be linked to an e-mail address (rather than submitted anonymously). All agreed that our communication policy should be explicit and displayed prominently on the Q&A page of the site.

Also touched on briefly: how to “**crowd-source” photos for public events in the district** as well as archive such images after they are posted?

Steve and Ed still plan to meet with members of the Guidance Office staff as well as a few other people who were not able to participate in earlier planning sessions. Joe suggested that they engage parents in meaningful dialogue around the design of the site through BLPTs and PTSO.

The site will be populated with “real” content very soon to facilitate ongoing feedback with all stakeholders.

II. “Efforts to publicly acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of students and staff.” BoE Goal #3

The committee wondered whether Board meetings were the best venue to acknowledge the depth of experience provided by the District. Certainly monthly Principal Reports and Academic and Athletic Awards ceremonies are public presentations and ceremonies, but how can we illustrate student and staff successes for those who don't attend these events? What other ways should we acknowledge the work done by our students and staff?

How would the website be used to greatest effect? Could Principals Reports be made available online? We discussed the possibility of posting podcasts, still photographs and/or brief write-ups of student work to a dedicated area on the site. Deirdre B suggested such a page could be entitled "What public education looks like," and Joe offered that this would be an opportunity to engage teachers, club advisors and students to submit items. As an aside, Joe reported that teachers are becoming engaged with providing classroom photos of projects they are working on. As Joe Tweets about "kids at work," parents are enthusiastically reaching out to their teachers to learn more about classroom projects.

The committee would like feedback from their Board colleagues as to their opinions of encouraging presentations to the Board vs. alternative methods of public acknowledgement. As always, the question of "operationalizing" these ideas is of utmost concern. Who will be charged with curating such submissions to provide useful and timely information?

January Agenda

- Website update
- Further discussions of BoE Goal #3

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre d'Albertis and Laura Schulkind