

GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2022 @ 5:00 P.M.
HYBRID (Remote <ZOOM> / In-Person)

Members Present: Liz Porter, Matthew Shulman, Kim Shepardson Watson (ex officio)
Also Present: Phil Piazza, Rebecca Beyus

Kim Shepardson Watson called the meeting to order at 5:01 P.M.

1. Review Minutes from June 27, 2022, Special Communications Committee Meeting

Following review, a motion was made by Mr. Shulman to accept the draft minutes as present and seconded by Ms. Shepardson. The motion passed 2-0-1 with Ms. Porter abstaining as she'd been excused from the June 27th meeting.

2. Committee Priorities and Goal Setting for the '22-'23 Schol Year

➤ Review and discussion of the 2022 Communications Survey data.

The survey had been conducted to learn what communication channels were being used by students' families in order to refine and harmonize interactive communications between the GSD and parents/guardians.

- Ms. Beyus reported that she'd re-examined the survey data to discern if results from any single school's parent cohort might have skewed the global findings. She determined that this was not the case and that survey results are now ready to be shared with all school principals.
- Ms. Shepardson Watson and Dr. Piazza noted that multiple school-to-parent communication "apps" are in use across the district (e.g. - REMIND; DOJO; SCHOOL MESSENGER) and sometimes within the same school.
 - To assure the ease of "app" use (including language barriers), Dr. Piazza will discuss potential for "app" uniformity, at least within individual schools.
 - Discussions will also include the possibility of "app" use training for parents, perhaps during parent-teacher nights.
- Ms. Beyus also note the differences in format on different school webpages. While such differences are to be encouraged to maintain the 'flavor' of each school's focus, she will explore ways to harmonize website layout so parents with multiple children enrolled in different schools will have an easier time navigating across individual schools' platforms.

➤ Communications Committee Priorities for the '22-'23 School Year

A] Sharing potential Ideas:

- Mr. Shulman noted that it's been about 8 months since the GSD's Facebook page went "live" and asked if it would be useful to assess accomplishments and challenges as well as hear about any user feedback. Ms. Beyus said she'd report back at our next meeting.
- Mr. Shulman summarized various topics the Committee brought up over the last school year for Committee consideration in setting priorities consistent with our mission of facilitating interactive communications with students, parents, and the broader Groton community. These included (in no hierarchical order):
 - Sharing a redacted version of Board Notes to inform the public about GSD activities;
 - Utilizing "Open Houses" (and, possibly, parent/teacher evening events) as venues to showcase educational programming as well as our facilities, as well as to glean public feedback;

- Respond to several PTO leaders' queries about district PTO collaboration by facilitating some form of inter-school PTO communications;
- Holding periodic focus groups or other structured community meetings on topics of concern to parents and the District;
- Referring to Ms. Amy McKenna's presentation to the Curriculum Committee as an example, considering the production of 5-10 minute segments that highlight and inform the public of the breadth of GSD's teaching and learning environment and the quality of our faculty, academic support staff and operations support staff.
 - Dr. Piazza noted GMS and CB produced district website videos and wondered if we might not engage students in some production efforts.
 - Mr. Shulman suggested such efforts might also answer some of the questions raised by our Council and RTM.
- Noting that "Mentoring" had been referred by the Board to this Committee some months ago, action of developing the communication component of this initiative might be a priority.

3 – Next Steps:

- Following the above discussions, consensus (hierarchy not yet determined) emerged to:
 - Explore, define, and implement common methods of communications both within schools and between schools and families with the goals of our communications being quicker, of better quality, and with more variety;
 - Increase family engagement;
 - Increase public outreach.

The Committee agreed to individually consider how each of these priorities might be operationalized. These will be discussed at our next meeting with the intended outcome being the forming of specific objectives to achieve each priority.

- Ms. Shepardson Watson will set a date and advise committee members of our September meeting date.

4 – Kim Shepardson Watson adjourned the meeting at 5:58 P.M.