

AGENDA



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury VT & Virtual Connection**

ACSD District Vision and Mission

OUR VISION

Our vision is for all ACSD students to reach their full learning potential, have a sense of belonging in our schools, and enrich our community and the communities where they live in the future.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion for learning and growth among our students.

Please click the link below to join the webinar: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83543711942>

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum
- B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff
- C. Approve the Agenda
- D. Public Comment -Agenda Items
- E. Approve the Minutes of April 30, 2024
- F. Committee Discussion:
 - 1. Board Update Letter for Spring 2024
 - 2. Review of Committee Documents '22
 - 3. Ideas for Public Engagement
- G. Public Comment - Any Topic
- H. Adjournment

***Public Comment Guidelines:**

Public comments are encouraged and welcome at each regular board meeting during the period designated for public comment. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. Citizens will be called to make their statement by the board chair. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.

MINUTES



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In-Person Attendance

Laura Harthan; Tricia Allen

Remote Attendance

Ellie Romp; Joanna Doria; Mary Heather Noble

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 4:34 pm.

B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Emily Blistein, ACSD Director of Communications also present as a committee member.

C. Public Comment - Agenda Items

No public comment.

D. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of April 9, 2024

Laura Harthan abstained from voting.

Motion to approve the minutes of April 9, 2024.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

E. Committee Discussion

1. Board Opportunities for Teacher Appreciation Week

Emily Blistein shared some ideas for Board involvement in Teacher Appreciation week, May 6-10. She explained that since she has been in her position, she has tried to include staff in the teacher appreciation efforts, and has worked to make it coincide with the Teacher & Staff of the Year nominations. She usually solicits appreciations from the ACSD community during this time, so that: 1) she can share it with teachers/staff and their supervisors, and 2) use the frequencies of expressed appreciations to help identify individuals to nominate for the

Teacher & Staff of the Year awards. Last year Emily received 220 teacher/staff appreciations, and she was able to identify the top 7-10 people who have been authentically identified by the ACSD community as making a difference.

Different ACSD schools also have parent groups who organize teacher & staff appreciation efforts, but some school's efforts are more organized & robust than others. She thought it would be good for the admin and school board to offer some gestures of appreciation as well. Some ideas:

- Expressing gratitude with food: delivery of breakfast treats or desserts
- Thank you cards with handwritten notes of gratitude
- Ad in the newspaper with expression of gratitude

The Committee discussed the different options. Everyone liked the ideas, but the Committee would need to get full board agreement about spending money on an advertisement or catered food gift. The Committee also agrees that the gestures should be uniformly expressed across the District and include all 9 schools (and if food is included, make sure the amount of food is appropriate for the number of teachers/staff). The group discussed having board members contribute their own funds toward food treats (or donating baked goods), and the process for seeking approval/agreement on the other options.

To do:

Tricia Allen will reach out to PAHCC Glass Onion Cafe to see how much it would cost to create simple goodie platters for each school. Mary Heather Noble will email Barb Wilson about whether/how to get Board approval & feedback on the ideas in a timely manner. The goal would be to have an ad ready for the 5/9 issue of the Addison Independent. If the tasks can't be completed in time for the May 6-10 Teacher Appreciation Week, the Committee agreed to request adding teacher appreciation to the agenda for the 5/13 Board meeting so it can consider doing something later in the month.

Emily Blistein also noted that Board members can also help share ACSD's teacher appreciation posts on their social media. Joanna Doria also suggested incorporating Emily's collected teacher appreciations into a future Board meeting so that they can be publicly acknowledged there as well. Laura Harthan added that it would be nice to see teacher appreciations be a regular part of Board meetings.

2. Board Update letter for Spring 2024

Tricia Allen turned the Committee's attention to the draft Board Update letter that Mary Heather Noble prepared for Spring 2024. Mary Heather explained that she followed the same format as the last letter sent in December 2023, and asked committee members to let her or Tricia know if there is information that she forgot to include. She explained the process she has followed in the past to get Board review/approval before distribution.

Tricia asked members to provide any edits/comments to her. She will make revisions as needed and will check in with Committee Chairs to make sure their respective summaries are accurate. She will then have Barb Wilson review before asking Emily Blistein to distribute.

3. Superintendent Transition

The committee discussed the recent change to the Superintendent Transition plan, and the Board's decision to move Dr. Baker's start date from July 1 to June 1, 2024. Emily Blistein

said that the information has been updated on the Superintendent page of the website, and that she is including it in the District newsletter to be sent later today. She noted that Dr. Williams has also shared his internal communication with all staff.

Mary Heather Noble mentioned the article in the Addison Independent (digital issue, not yet in print) and wondered if there were any other places that the information should be posted or shared. Front Porch Forum? Emily explained that the District Newsletter will also be posted on FPF, so the announcement will be included there as well.

The committee agreed that no further communications seemed necessary.

4. Committee Work Plan

Tricia Allen reviewed the basic work plan for the Committee over the course of the year, noting the regular cyclical communications associated with quarterly board updates, budget planning, etc. She emphasized the work of improving the Board's Communications & Engagement efforts, including both how public comment is received during regular board meetings and other two-way engagement efforts. She asked if public comment procedures would be on the agenda for the June 1 Board retreat.

Mary Heather Noble responded that the retreat will have much time devoted to Strategic Plan Implementation and board work to support that, as well as Board efforts to comply with the new Board Governance Standards that were presented at the last Board meeting. She said that the Board's self-survey will help refine which specific things the Board chooses to work on, but would not be surprised to see communication/public engagement on that list. Mary Heather also noted that it is totally appropriate for the committee to examine/investigate recommendations for this even if the full Board doesn't get to it at the retreat. It could always be requested as an agenda item for a full Board meeting.

Tricia Allen directed committee members to provide their ideas & opportunities for improvement to current communication & engagement efforts so she can compile and develop a comprehensive document to share with the full Board at the retreat when asked. Mary Heather suggested having committee members also look at a few other districts to see how they handle public comment and other engagement efforts. Laura Harthan expressed her desire to see the current public comment procedure changed -- she believes it should be handled similarly to how the Middlebury Selectboard handles public comment, in that the public is offered an opportunity to speak at the end of each agenda item.

F. Public Comment - Any Topic

No public comment.

G. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Mary Heather Noble Status: Passed

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DRAFT



School Board News -- Spring 2024

From Barb Wilson
ACSD Board Chairperson

Happy Spring from the ACSD Board! Since our winter newsletter, the Board has been engaged in the following activities:

- In January, the Board adopted the [FY25 Budget](#) for the 2024-25 academic year and began efforts to communicate the impact of Act 127 and other budget drivers on the FY25 budget to the ACSD community. The Communication & Engagement Committee solicited the community for questions about the proposed FY25 budget and hosted a virtual Q&A Session to provide additional information. Individual board members also staffed FY25 Budget information tables at various ACSD events to answer additional questions on the proposed budget. The Board and administration worked hard to address last-minute changes in state funding legislation, ultimately maintaining its original budget proposal. We are especially grateful to the ACSD community for its support of the FY25 budget on Town Meeting Day. THANK YOU!!
- Throughout the last few months, the Board has been working with incoming Superintendent [Dr. Wendy Baker](#) on her transition into her permanent role. Dr. Baker has visited all ACSD schools and has begun working with the administration on implementing the Board's approved [Strategic Plan](#). Given her current availability and Interim Superintendent Tim Williams's desire to spend time with his family in Pennsylvania, the **Board has elected to move Dr. Baker's official start date from July 1, 2024 to June 1, 2024**. We are excited to officially place Dr. Baker at the helm of ACSD's operations and can't thank Dr. Williams enough for postponing his retirement to help ACSD secure new permanent leadership.
- In March we welcomed new Board member Laura Harthan of Middlebury and returning Board members Barb Wilson of Shoreham and Mary Heather Noble of Middlebury. Board members were assigned to committees and new Board officers were elected as follows: Barb Wilson, Board Chair; Suzanne Buck, Vice Chair; Mary Heather Noble, Secretary. Additional information about Board members, their committee assignments and committee chairs can be found [here](#).

Highlights of [Board Committee](#) work since the Winter 2023-24 Board Update include the following:

- The **Communications and Engagement Committee** created voter education materials and supported communication efforts for the ACSD FY25 Budget. The Committee is currently focused on improving community engagement efforts in accordance with the State's new School Board Governance Standards.
- With the assistance of the **Facilities Committee**, the Board hired the Breadloaf Corporation to complete ESSER-funded HVAC Improvements to Mary Hogan School which will be completed over the summer. The Committee continues its oversight of urgent ACSD facility needs and is currently examining facilities planning through an equity lens, in line with the Board's approved Strategic Plan.

ACSD Board

Telephone: 802-382-1700 ♦ Website: www.acsdvt.org/schoolboard



- The **Policy and Governance Committee** is continuing its work on a new Wellness Policy required by federal and state education agencies. It is also developing a policy concerning the public use of district buildings, and is going to revisit our policy on the public comment period. The committee plans to work closely with the new superintendent to clarify our policy goals as we implement the strategic plan. ACSD Policies are ideally reviewed and amended on a three year cycle. New policies are determined by state requirements or at the direction of the ACSD School Board. The complete list of ACSD policies and procedures can be found [here](#).
- The **Finance Committee** worked with the administration during January and February to assess and respond to last-minute changes to the State's education funding legislation and continues to monitor additional legislative activity. It will facilitate the audit process and begin work on the budget calendar for the District's FY26 budget.
- The **Negotiations Committee** is actively negotiating new teacher and support staff contracts, which are set to expire this academic year.

As always, we welcome community input and participation. Currently scheduled meetings are listed below – but please check our [Board and Committee Meetings page](#) frequently, as new Committee meeting dates are continuously added to the calendar.

Sincerely,

Barb Wilson, Chairperson, ACSD Board
bwilson@acsdvt.org

Upcoming Meetings

Board and Committee meeting dates, locations, materials, and virtual links can be found on the [ACSD Calendar](#).

April 30, 2024	4:30 p.m.	Communications & Engagement Committee Meeting
May 6, 2024	8:30 a.m.	Finance Committee Meeting
May 7, 2024	4:15 p.m.	Policy Committee Meeting
May 13, 2024	6:30 p.m.	ACSD Board Meeting
May 15, 2024	8:30 a.m.	Facilities Committee Meeting
May 21, 2024	4:30 p.m.	Communications & Engagement Committee Meeting
June 1, 2024	2:30 p.m.	ACSD Board Retreat
June 3, 2024	8:30 a.m.	Finance Committee Meeting
June 5, 2024	4:15 p.m.	Policy Committee Meeting
June 10, 2024	6:30 p.m.	ACSD Board Meeting
June 18, 2024	4:30 p.m.	Communications & Engagement Committee Meeting

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June 19, 2024

8:30 a.m.

Facilities Committee Meeting

June 24, 2024

6:30 p.m.

ACSD Board Meeting

ACSD Board

Telephone: 802-382-1700 ♦ Website: www.acsdvt.org/schoolboard

**ACSD BOARD COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE
COMMUNICATION PLAN
WORKING DRAFT -- 1/19/22**

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Adopt practice of using ACSD email accounts for all Board-related communications, being mindful of inadvertently establishing full Board and/or Committee quorums in group emails and email chains.
2. Set Board member expectations re: checking ACSD email and responding to Boardpaq invitations so Committee Chairs can determine quorums for meeting planning.
3. Avoid group work on shared Google documents that might conflict with Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Adopt System for Responding to Public Comments -- (see attached draft Procedure Document).
2. Communicate Routine Board News to establish positive & predictable contact with *all* ACSD Stakeholders.
 - a. Modes:
 - i. Electronic: post on ACSD Board website, use existing ACSD outlets (district newsletters & social media), Front Porch Forum, library & other member town e-newsletters, other civic group e-newsletters (?)
 - ii. Paper copies: Central Office & school offices, libraries, member town offices
 - iii. Consider providing some copies in Spanish/other languages
 - iv. Consider regular column/update ad in Addison Independent (additional expense)
 - b. Frequency: quarterly
 - c. Content: Brief committee updates, upcoming meetings & events, opportunities for input, links & references to contacts and additional information
3. Conduct Topic-Specific Community Engagement Activities to Foster Two-Way Conversations Around Board Issues.

- a. Topics may range from community-building efforts to high-profile issues and important Board decisions (e.g., Budget & Facilities Master Planning)
- b. The Communications & Engagement Committee can create a topic-specific engagement strategy, using a variety of methods to engage target audiences.

Examples:

- i. Community forums with formal presentations & facilitated conversations
- ii. Informal Q&A sessions at PTO meetings, libraries, & other civic group meetings (in-person or virtual)
- iii. Virtual Town Halls
- iv. Porch conversations
- v. Q&A booth/table at other community events
- vi. MCTV interviews or E-chat videos to address FAQs
- vii. School-specific media -- e.g., Tiger TV

Draft Procedure Document for Responding to Public Comments

Last updated January 19, 2022

Intent:

As expressed in its Governance Commitment (Policy A1), the ACSD School Board Vision requires the Board to engage with each other, administrators, teachers and staff, parents, students, and community members in ways that promote its mission of supporting all students to reach their full academic potential and be prepared for success as engaged citizens.

The purpose of this Procedure Document is to establish a system to enable consistent ACSD Board responses to questions, comments, and complaints raised from any member of the ACSD community.

General Procedure:

Board members will observe and honor the distinction between the role of the Board and that of the Superintendent, and will refer questions, comments, and concerns to appropriate staff members of the ACSD, in accordance with Policy A2 -- Key Responsibilities of Board Members, which states in part:

“The Board’s responsibility is to ensure leadership success without micromanaging. School board member interactions with school personnel shall respect appropriate reporting relationships. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent, not members of the Board, to direct the administration and coordination of educational programs in the district. When presented with citizen concerns, board members [shall] refer them to appropriate levels of authority in accordance with our policies and procedures for complaints.”

Individual members of the Board are welcome to respond to questions and concerns as needed, with the understanding and acknowledgment that they are not speaking on behalf of the full Board unless they have been specifically authorized to do so, per Policy A5 -- Code of Conduct, which states in part:

“...Board members’ interaction with public, press, or other entities shall recognize the inability of any individual board member to speak for the Board except as explicitly stated in board decisions.”

Board members must also respect and keep confidential all personnel issues and all issues of a sensitive nature, in accordance with Policy A5.

Comments Received Via Email:

Incoming emails from ACSD stakeholders may be acknowledged by the Board Chair (or their designee) and then distributed to appropriate members of the Board for additional action or response as needed. Incoming emails with questions or comments pertaining to ACSD operations and under the purview of the ACSD administration shall be forwarded to the ACSD Superintendent.

When appropriate, board members responding to email communications from ACSD stakeholders about the work of the Board are encouraged to copy their responses to committee chairs and/or Board and District leadership as needed, to keep them apprised of communications concerning relevant topics under their purview.

Board members who receive email communications they believe require the attention of the full Board shall forward the email to other Board members for further consideration (e.g., public comments on a matter before the full Board).

Comments Received During Public Comment Period of Board and Committee Meetings:

Comments and questions presented by stakeholders during the public comment period of Committee meetings and Board meetings will be recorded in the meeting minutes, and will be actively taken into consideration by the Committee and full Board, respectively. Comments and questions expressed in the “chat” feature of remote Zoom meetings are considered to fall beyond the scope of official public comment, and will not be included in meeting minutes.

Comments Received During Other ACSD Public Engagement Events:

Comments and questions presented by stakeholders during other topic-specific, Board-sponsored public engagement events such as community forums, porch conversations, etc. will be compiled by the Communications & Engagement Committee and reported to the full Board for its consideration in a subsequent Board meeting. Responses to questions may also be summarized and addressed in follow-up public communications, including Board updates and newsletters, as well as FAQs documents available on the ACSD website.

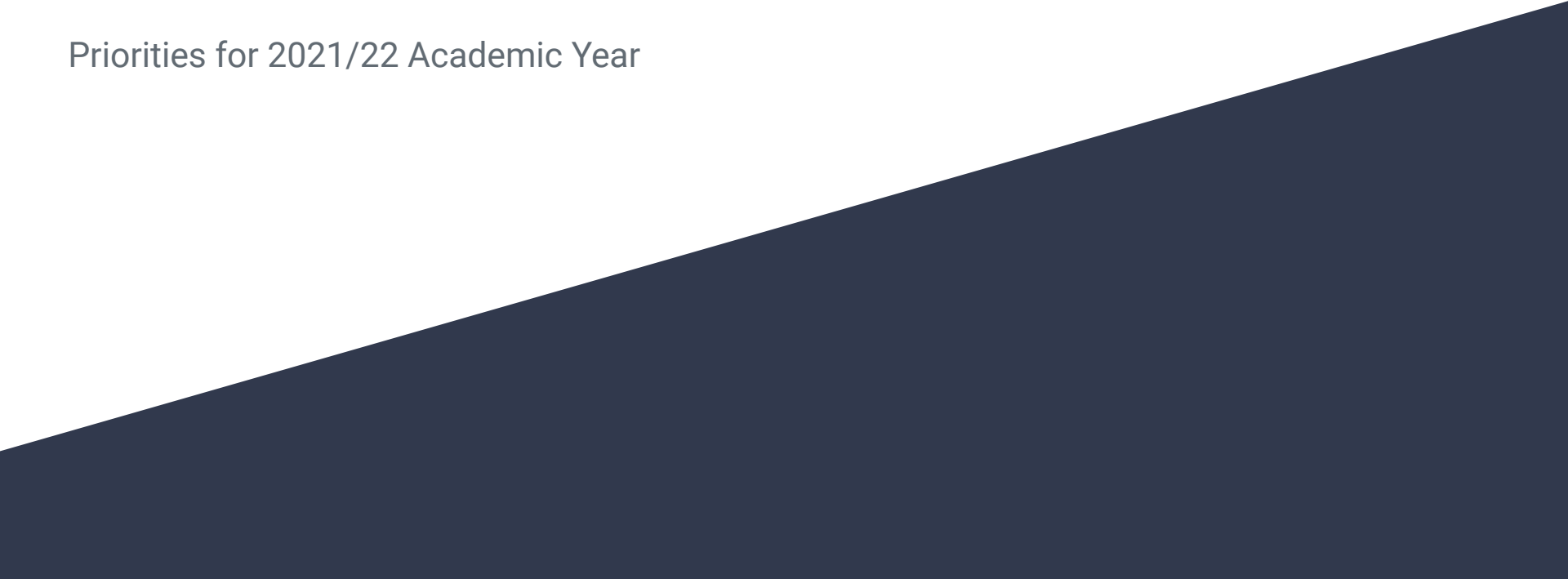
Complaints:

Board members receiving a complaint from a stakeholder pertaining to the conduct of an ACSD student or staff member shall forward such communications to the appropriate ACSD school leadership in accordance with ACSD policies and procedures.

Because the Board functions as a quasi-judicial body, Board members should not involve themselves in responding to, or addressing the complaint.

ACSD Communications & Engagement Committee

Priorities for 2021/22 Academic Year

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Keep in mind...

The Communications & Engagement Committee used to be the Planning & Engagement Committee -- which was specifically charged by the Board to develop a Facilities Master Plan and to design a community engagement process for that project in 2018.

So this committee's communication focus has historically been centered on the Facilities Master Planning process, per the Board's direction.

NOTE: We have chosen to look at Board communication more broadly, with the understanding that much of the committee's effort this year will also be focused on communication & engagement around the Facilities Master Plan.

Current Scope of the C&E Committee's Work

"The Communications & Engagement Committee is responsible for developing and implementing public engagement systems that support the Board's vision that all students will reach their full academic potential and be prepared for success as engaged citizens.

This work involves crafting and issuing communications to the ACSD community regarding the Board's actions and events through newsletters, local news outlets, and direct correspondence. The committee is also charged with inviting public comments and questions on Board activities, and engaging the ACSD community in public meetings for larger Board decisions, including budgeting, facilities planning, and other broad topics. The Communications & Engagement Committee works closely with Central Office staff to maintain public record of all Board and Committee meetings, and to ensure public access to data and information that inform Board decisions."

(taken from "Board Committees" pages on ACSD website)

Classifying the C&E Committee's Work:

Three Main "Buckets"

1. **Informing the Public** (ACSD students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers)
 - ◆ Board purpose, governance structure & goals
 - ◆ Board membership & contact info
 - ◆ Invitations to public participation opportunities
 - ◆ Draft budgets & other info prior to elections
 - ◆ Board actions and data/info that support Board decisions
 - ◆ Access & links to public records

Classifying the C&E Committee's Work

Three Main "Buckets"

2. Inviting & Managing Input from the Public

- ◆ Public Comment
- ◆ Creating systems for responding to questions, comments & complaints
- ◆ Compiling public comments from community forums & summarizing for Board consideration
- ◆ Maintaining FAQ sheets for current projects

Classifying the C&E Committee's Work

Three Main "Buckets"

3. Active Community Engagement

- ◆ Creating spaces for informal dialogues:
 - Porch conversations
 - Attending parent group meetings
- ◆ Visiting schools
- ◆ Attending school events & other community events

Our Current Methods

1. Informing the Public

- ◆ Website
- ◆ Email
- ◆ Board newsletter/updates
- ◆ Direct mailings/flyers
- ◆ Addison Independent articles
- ◆ (Recordings of) Board Meetings & Public Forums
- ◆ E-Chat videos

Strengths:

- Website is easy to change/maintain
- Emails are fast and easy to repeat for reminders
- Newspaper has wide readership
- E-chat videos are short and informative

Weaknesses:

- Board communications mostly target parents already in ACSD sphere
- Duplicative -- potential confusion between Board and District newsletters
- Not reaching non-computer users
- Board newsletter/updates lack predictable rhythm
- Doesn't utilize existing popular modes of communication (Town newsletters, FPF, etc.)

Our Current Methods

2. Inviting & Managing Input from the Public

- ◆ Website links to Board member emails
- ◆ Emailed responses from Superintendent and/or Board & Committee Chairs
- ◆ Public Comment Sessions at Board Meetings
- ◆ FAQ sheets on Board website
- ◆ Hosting Community Forums, collecting surveys & summarizing comments in Report of the Board

Strengths:

- Potential for fast, personalized responses
- Individual questions can be bundled & summarized into published FAQs for larger audience
- Community forums provide face-to-face interaction

Weaknesses:

- Need a clear process for responding to emails
- Public comment requires people to get childcare & attend Board meetings, with no immediate feedback
- Public forums take a lot of time & work to organize
- The same people show up to multiple forums

Our Current Methods

3. Active Community Engagement

- ◆ Attending parent group meetings
- ◆ Porch conversations
- ◆ Visiting schools and attending school & community events
- ◆ Other efforts?

Strengths:

- Informal setting fosters more intimate discussions
- Conversational Q&A style, rather than lecture with presentation of information

Weaknesses:

- Difficult to cultivate conversation across town boundaries
- Sustainability? Challenges Board member bandwidth, especially with controversial issues

Some Thoughts on Priorities for the C&E Committee

- **Finalize system for responding to public comments & questions.** (Our draft needs the Policy Committee's input.)
- **Provide regular (quarterly? monthly?) Board summaries in existing District communications.** We should provide regular updates on our work, but should not duplicate what Central Office is doing.
- **Diversify communications.** We have great info on our Board website, but it seems most folks aren't reading it. What are other creative ways to deliver content? Addy Indy inserts? Library presentations? Excerpts in social media?

Some Thoughts on Priorities for the C&E Committee

- **Target non-parent ACSD stakeholders, too.** We are not reaching the full ACSD audience. What are other methods to engage non-parent community members? Library sessions? Rotary Club sessions? Do we want to do a community survey?
- **Increase Community Engagement and Q&A sessions.** The public comment format is clunky, and people want Q&A opportunities. Consider more porch conversations, informal Q&As hosted by parent groups, other community orgs. Include short Q&A blocks in some Board meetings.
- **Utilize existing communication avenues in our member towns.** We need to meet folks where they are, rather than simply expecting them to seek out & navigate the website. Consider using FPF, Town Newsletters, etc.