



To: Rebecca Hershberg, Mindy Walker

Cc: Brooke Bass

From: Ken Slentz, Superintendent

Date: ~~October 22, 2025~~ REVISED ~~November 17, 2025~~ REVISED December 8, 2025

Re: District Goal #4 - *Increase satisfaction with family engagement with school activities and initiatives* – project plan

Background:

Effective family engagement and clear, consistent communication are essential components of a thriving school community. When families are informed, connected, and actively involved in their child’s education, student outcomes improve, trust between home and school deepens, and the overall school climate becomes more positive and inclusive.

Recognizing the importance of these connections, the district is launching a comprehensive initiative to strengthen family engagement and enhance communication practices across all schools. This project aims to create a more coordinated, accessible, and equitable approach to how we share information, invite participation, and build partnerships with families.

Through this plan, the district seeks to:

- Improve the clarity, consistency, and timeliness of communications with families;
- Expand opportunities for families to engage meaningfully in their child’s learning and school community;
- Ensure that communication strategies reflect the diverse languages, cultures, and needs of our families; and
- Leverage technology and data to support ongoing, two-way communication between home and school.

To accomplish this, the Board of Education’s School and Community Relations Committee has developed this project plan, which outlines the goals, strategies, and timelines that will guide our work. Ultimately, our purpose is to strengthen the home-school connection so that every family feels informed, valued, and empowered to support their child’s success.

The Project Charges:

1. To develop a survey for families that will generate meaningful data that will guide improvements in family engagement and communications.
2. To develop a method for the administration of the survey that yields a high response rate (50%+).
3. To review strategic plans from other districts, findings from research, and data from the survey to develop a draft strategic engagement and communications action plan that includes success metrics.
4. To review the draft plan with the full board and make agreed-upon adjustments.
5. To host a community forum to review the strategic plan and success metrics.
6. To enact the strategic plan and monitor the associated success metrics.

✓ Task 1: Establish an ad hoc committee for the development of a family engagement survey

- **Action:** Recruit parents from each of the three schools (to the extent possible) who have a known skill set in communications and survey design to assist the SCR committee in the development of a family engagement survey.
- **Timeline:** By October 31, 2025

✓ Task 2: *Convene the committee for an orientation meeting (~1 hour)*

- **Action:** Review the project plan, timeline, and survey framework and make any consensus adjustments.
- **Timeline:** November 17, 2025
- *See meeting notes on page*

✓ Task 3: *Convene the committee for a work meeting (~1 hour)*

- **Action:** Review the proposed categories for survey questions and finalize by consensus. Assign work to develop draft questions for consideration at the next meeting.
- **Timeline:** December 8, 2025

Task 4: *Convene the committee for a work meeting (~2 hours)*

- **Action:** Review proposed questions and response format for each identified category. Finalize questions by consensus. Determine the most effective method for survey administration.
- **Timeline:** By December 19, 2025

Task 5: *Administer the survey (and dismiss the ad hoc committee?)*

- **Action:** Administer the survey

- **Timeline:** TBD based on selected method

Task 6: Review survey responses and identify practices to continue, to improve, or to start

- **Action:** Compile data from the survey and present to committee members in advance of the meeting.
- **Timeline:** January 2026

Task 7: Review research and other district plans for exemplars that can accommodate our survey results

- **Action:** Develop a shared folder with examples for the committee's review.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing

Task 8: Develop a strategic engagement and communications action plan

- **Action:** Based on research, exemplar plans, and survey data, develop a draft strategic plan that includes clear action steps, roles and responsibilities, success metrics, and timelines. Identify action steps that can be taken immediately.
- **Timeline:** By March 1, 2026

Task 9: Review the draft plan with the full board

- **Action:** Prepare a committee presentation for the full board at a regular meeting.
- **Timeline:** March 24, 2026

Task 10: Review the final plan with the community

- **Action:** In collaboration with the PTSA, schedule a hybrid community meeting where the committee will present the strategic plan.
- **Timeline:** April 2026

Task 11: Enact the final plan and set the timeline for the first success measurement point

- **Action:** Assign roles and responsibilities as detailed in the plan and begin associated action steps.
- **Timeline:** April-May 2026

APPENDIX A

District Goal #4

The district will increase satisfaction with family engagement with school activities and initiatives by at least 10% using key strategies, including:

- Surveying families on their satisfaction with the level of engagement across the district in key operational areas at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year;
- Developing plans and strategies to address common concerns shown in the survey data;
- Providing consistent communications, opportunities for workshops, and structured meetings on district planning for parents/guardians;
- Working with district partners, including Spring, PTSA, Trailguides, the Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation, and other community groups on topics related to improving student academic and behavioral performance;
- Engaging a professional consultant to study our current communications and engagement strategies and process to assist us in developing an action plan for improvement; and
- Reviewing research on promising practices for family engagement in schools

Community Survey *DRAFT* Framework

1. *Welcoming Environment within the District:* Do parents/guardians feel welcomed when they engage with us in our schools? If not, how, specifically, can we improve upon this?
2. *Effective Communications:* Do parents/guardians believe that they receive timely and substantive communications regarding school and district events, including conferences, curriculum events, parent events, theatre and sports events, and board meetings? If not, how can we improve our work? What are the preferred timelines for communications?
3. *Satisfaction with Teaching and Learning:* Do parents/guardians feel that the school and district offers a strong set of learning opportunities for their child(ren); do they feel that their child(ren) are having a positive experience in their learning; and do they feel that they can partner with teachers and administration to effectively address any concerns that they have regarding their child(ren)'s progress?
4. *Engagement and Participation:* Do parents/guardians regularly attend the various events and activities sponsored by the schools and district? If not, what can the district do to encourage participation?
5. *Overall Satisfaction:* Are parents satisfied with their overall experience with the schools and district, or are they considering other options such as private or parochial schools? If they are considering other options, what can the school and district do to address their reasons for this?

APPENDIX B

Policy 1000: Community Relations Goals

The Board of Education strives to conduct district affairs by way of a continuing, open dialogue between the community and the schools. Given district residents' high level of interest in the education of children, the Board wishes to maintain its high level of sensitivity to the needs and desires of the community and to act expeditiously to meet changing needs and conditions.

To this end, the Board establishes the following goals for community involvement:

1. provide a variety of means whereby residents of the school district may have the opportunity to contribute their best thinking to the orderly planning of education for children in the district;
2. keep the community accurately informed about its schools;
3. understand community attitudes and aspirations for the schools;
4. encourage contributions from the parent-teacher associations of the district so that school personnel and parents cooperate to advance the educational welfare of the children;
5. handle all complaints from the public by the administrative officer in charge of the unit of the school district organization closest to the complainant. However, such complaints may be carried to the Superintendent of Schools and/or the Board if the problem cannot be solved at that level;
6. promote a spirit of cooperation among the Board, the schools, and the community;
7. develop and maintain the confidence of the community in the Board and the school district staff;
8. expand the public understanding of every aspect of the school system, and stimulate public interest in the school;

9. facilitate dissemination of information to the community concerning issues and activities in the school using not only traditional modes of communication, such as a district newsletter, but also current modes of communication such as email, the District's website, and social networking sites;
10. ascertain the community's opinions and desires with respect to the operations of the school system, and to incorporate that knowledge into its actions;
11. build relationships with local businesses, local government, health care, social service, civic and community organizations to share resources in order to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all of our students; and
12. develop and maintain effective means of communication with the community.

Notwithstanding the above, the final decisions in these areas will rest with the Board.

Adoption date: October 2, 2014

Meeting Notes: November 17, 2025

- **Action:** Review the project plan, timeline, and survey framework and make any consensus adjustments.
1. The committee reviewed the project plan and discussed the proposed framework for a community survey.
 2. The committee discussed
 - a. the end goal of the process - improved communications? Improved engagement? - as some of the topics on the framework seemed rather large in scope.
 - b. The value of a survey in producing actionable results.
 - c. The lack of value in general satisfaction surveys.
 - d. The viability of a retrospective survey - taking certain actions and then surveying to see if the community notices an improvement.
 - e. The option of focusing on a few key action steps related to board meeting engagement - summary of what will take place in the meeting, summary of what happened at the meeting, leveraging already scheduled events to show how easy it is to access meeting and board information, etc.
 - f. Using already scheduled events to host focus groups on key topics that we are seeking feedback on.
 - g. What feedback loops exist in the district.
 - h. How we can make events regular and expected like back to school nights. Should the district revise State of the District meetings that happen on set dates each year?
 - i. Can the district develop “elevator speeches on key aspects of our programs and offerings.
 3. A summary of the conversation points:
 - a. Offerings may be great, but nobody knows about them.
 - b. Is this an overall survey or by building?
 - c. Granularity in general, is a concern. The story I got on about curriculum from my two teachers were different, neither bad, but not aligned. How do we capture what is working?

- d. We don't want a survey that doesn't help you do anything.
- e. What does good look like, coming out of this?
- f. What are your strategies for each of these buckets?
- g. Here's what the district does, are you aware of this.
- h. Caution against satisfaction questions because they aren't helpful.
- i. What events would you show up for?
- j. Give options:
 - i. Town Hall
 - ii. Principal coffee chat virtual
 - iii. Principal coffee chat in-person morning
- k. If you are dissatisfied with something, what channels do you use?
- l. Bridging the communications gap. We really want to be able to work smarter, but what does smarter look like?
- m. Use a survey to float something that you might want to do...is it worth the effort? Or use it to track sentiment.
- n. How serious are we about #3? Is it too big of a chunk to include? Maybe...do you feel like you know who to reach out when you have a concern about your child's progress?
- o. We want to have a sense if those ideas are the right ideas before we do something. Disan said this could be powerful to do with the Board minutes. Write an inviting email or write a summary. Then, when you ask people you have a very different benchmark. Six months to trying a thing.
- p. We want specifics. Do you want on a certain day, do you want more than two paragraphs, do you want to click the link.
- q. What is the overall goal of this? To get to better communication? Is it to improve parents trust?
- r. Likes Disan's idea on focus groups.

- s. Springhurst coffee chat--questions are indicative of the mood of the community.
 - t. You all show up for BTS nights...why? Can we offer more of those?
 - i. Come 20 minutes early and we have five rooms for focus groups on the evening of a BTS night.
 - u. A BOE is a meeting held in public, not a public meeting.
 - v. What are we already doing that we can better leverage?
 - w. Principal chat: Here were three things we discussed: Q/A. Hope to see you the next time.
 - i. The forum matters, chat in the garden is more congenial than those in the cafeteria.
 - x. How do you want to spend your time?
 - y. Survey--more discussion of what's in it.
 - z. More about communication than in trust.
 - aa. Here are values the district holds, do you agree that those are our values?
 - bb. Subset surveys?
4. Next Steps: Ken will commit to getting draft minutes to Mindy/Brooke and then everyone. Two tracks: What are things that we can think about doing? The other is more refinement around the idea of a survey that is going to give us actionable items.

Meeting Notes: December 8, 2025

- **Action:** Review the proposed categories for survey questions and finalize by consensus. Assign work to develop draft questions for consideration at the next meeting.
1. The committee continued the “two-track” approach as discussed at the November 17 meeting and discussed the following:
 - a. The current approach to communications from the schools with multiple notices and updates coming to families during the week. How can we better coordinate this work, and what tools can be used to give families the most important information, with access to additional information? Members of the committee stated that the middle school newsletter was a model to consider.
 - b. The options for opting into and out of text messaging from schools and the district.
 - c. The feedback loops in our current communications and strategies for how to generate feedback, including short surveys on key topics. While the general sense is that our communications to families are good, we need to survey families to determine if our sense is accurate.
 2. The committee discussed the use of the district website as an information source, but noted that it is not easily searchable. Board members and the superintendent updated the committee on the new website that will be released later this month, which has a more intuitive organization, an enhanced search feature, and up-to-date information. The district’s goal is that the website will contain the most current and accurate information for district actions and news.
 3. The committee discussed the process for developing questions for a community survey. Developing a working Google doc is an option that members could add to. Survey approaches include short surveys at common events, such as concerts, where QR codes are already in use. Survey questions could be built into the process for accessing the concert program.
 4. The committee discussed a parent-to-parent structure as a strategy for engaging families in discussing important, student and family-related topics, including managing technology and understanding the IB program and its options and benefits. Other topics, such as the reading program, are better for administrator-led discussions. The district needs to identify areas of parent/guardian confusion/interest to determine how to best meet their needs.

Next steps:

1. Ken will share the results of the *Eagle Eye* budget survey from last year.
2. Ken and Juliet will develop a set of draft topics that would serve as the basis for an interest-based survey.