Tom Gray, Superintendent of Schools
Kelly Wentworth, Director of Finance & Human Resources
Erica Mazzeo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Elisha Morris, Director of Instructional Support

Strategic Communications Committee
March 31, 2026
8:15 a.m. - Superintendent's Office
Minutes

Committee**:** Strategic Communications
Meeting Date: March 31, 2026
Submitted By: Tom Gray, Superintendent
Committee Members in Attendance: Kara Kaikini, Kelly Sink, Stephanie Worth
Members absent: None
Members of the Public: Lindsay Hahn, Michael Metzger, Jenna Shue

Agenda Items and Discussion:

1. Superintendent Gray called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m.
2. Appoint a Chair
    a. Kelly Sink nominated Stephanie Worth as chair, Kara Kaikini seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

3. Communication plans to support long term district goals
    a. Kara Kaikini explained that in the past this committee had met regularly to facilitate staff and parent satisfaction surveys in alternating years (one year staff, the next parents, and so on), and also to review the budget brochure. The Strategic Communication committee had ceased meeting because the Strategic Planning process was underway and was taking the forefront with regard to communications. The concern now is that the FY 27 budget and recent ideas for long-term reconfiguration have come forward presenting a more urgent need for Board communication.
    b. Focus should be on the FY 27 budget process, explaining to voters how the process works and also conducting outreach from the Board to explain the reasoning behind the budget and to grow public support.
    c. Tom Gray will address this in his weekly email update to the Board, and will also speak to Board Chair Michelle Richeson about drafting a message to the public on

behalf of the Board of Directors. Steph Worth, as Chair of this committee, will report out at the April 8 Board of Directors meeting about a public message from the Board.

d. Kara Kaikini asked for Youtube videos (livestream) of Board meetings to be timestamped to reflect the agenda. Tom Gray will speak to the Technology Department about this. Steph Worth noted considering tools and/or additional methods of summarizing or distilling board meeting recordings could be useful and improve communication.
e. The committee decided that it would not be appropriate for district resources to be appropriated to mount a campaign to build support for the budget.
f. Discussion of the capacity of district personnel to engage in broad communication was discussed. Superintendent Gray pointed out that we have a breadth of information on the website, but that the information can be dense and hard to understand. He also pointed out that the district will be using a new software system, ClearGov, which is widely in use for municipal governments and school districts to help develop budget workbooks that present information in a streamlined way. He will ask Finance Director Wentworth to attend the next meeting of the Strategic Communications Committee to share this. Superintendent Gray also noted that capacity was limited to devote more time to communication, but that there may be ways to use time differently, or communicate using different tools such as social media or a podcast.
g. The recent ideas for district reconfiguration were discussed. Members of the public noted that in Pownal, the sense of urgency (that the Board could make a quick decision) was driving uncertainty and creating a sense that Pownal needed to act quickly to save its school. It was suggested that if the RSU 5 Board could state publicly that PES would remain intact, as it is, through the 2027-2028 school year, it would ease that feeling. Superintendent Gray recognized that this would be a Board decision, but noted that from his perspective, it would not be realistic to try to make a major change in district configuration before that time. Superintendent Gray also expressed his intention to engage the RSU 5 Board in a public conversation at the April 29, 2026 Board meeting using a weighted values tool to frame a discussion about the factors that would influence decisions related to reconfiguration. This would not be an action item, nor would it be binding; it would be a step to promote transparency.
h. The Committee decided to meet again on Tuesday, April 14, from 7:45 - 8:45 a.m. at the Superintendent's Office.

4. Meeting adjourned 9:33 a.m.