



Broward County Public Schools

Parent/Community Involvement Task Force

Communications Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 15, 2011
Plantation High School, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Attendees: Doug Kruse (Co-Chair), Janet Bravo, Marisa Burke, Judy Conner, Elena Dolinski, Rolanda Epstein, Alwin Gittens, Jenny Gittens, Claudia Izquierdo, Darline Janvier, Christopher Malter, Pamala Ziegler

➤ Welcome

Subcommittee members introduced themselves and discussed issues they faced, including:

Communication in middle schools: There has been difficulty for parents to receive notes from teachers.

Communication is reportedly lacking between teachers and parents, and between parents and other parents.

Two working parents on the subcommittee would like to share their “best practices” as parents.

Parents sometimes feel “out of the loop.” They are not sure if schools are meeting their objectives.

➤ Overview of Subcommittee Tasks

The charge of the Communications Subcommittee was reviewed: To look at the way we communicate with parents and the community at large; to look at how we may improve communication, with an emphasis on utilizing technology. Also, this subcommittee will recommend a new method of collecting routine survey information from parents.

Survey instruments were discussed:

1. Gather information from parents on what they need to communicate.
2. Determine the best method to communicate.
3. Determine the best method to get feedback.

All tasks listed on the agenda were reviewed.

In addition to tasks on the agenda, this subcommittee initiated a discussion of areas they would like to address:

1. Issues facing parents.
2. Information is needed in different languages for the various cultures in our District.
3. Children have the ability to “tap into” other children’s mindset and issues. This will increase communication.
4. Fun media “stuff” will attract children to attract their parents, a means to increase involvement.
5. Parental involvement is greater for elementary and middle schools than it is for high schools. Parents of high school students can get involved more; it doesn’t have to be in their children’s classrooms.
6. Many people do not use emails, so telephone communications are important.
7. “Involvement” needs to be defined by the subcommittee, so everyone is on the same page.
8. The subcommittee would like to brainstorm the different groups it needs to reach.
9. How do policy makers respond? How do they decipher the data and act upon it?
10. The subcommittee would like to develop simple, effective recommendations that are implementable.
11. Is there a budget to implement the recommendations? While the recommendations need to be “revenue neutral,” resources can be re-directed from the current budget to implement the recommendations. Mr. Kruse stated that keeping people informed and engaged does not have to be expensive.

➤ Meeting Rules

1. Raise your hand if you would like to speak.
2. Give others a chance to speak.
3. Stay focused.
4. Respect each other.

➤ Additional concerns

1. The subcommittee would like to define “communication” – what do they want to say and to whom?
2. One member expressed concern about not getting the message about a recent lockdown sooner. Automated messages to parents were discussed. Could these messages be re-directed from home phones to cell phones so parents could receive them sooner?
3. An app (program) to keep parents informed was suggested.
4. A member recommended paying attention the school calendar when planning activities.
5. The subcommittee discussed organizations to reach out to, including the Athletic Booster Club and Hispanic Unity.
6. Building communication in a basic way is important, for example, phone calls to parents in their primary language.
7. After a discussion of a variety of stakeholders in our District, it was suggested to limit the focus to parents so this subcommittee will achieve its goals.
8. Computer programs to translate documents into different languages were discussed. It was reported the District’s website does have this capability for certain documents.
9. Parents should be given the message that they should go to their child’s school if they have an issue and make themselves heard.

➤ Requests

1. An email group (e.g., Yahoo, gmail) for communication among members.
2. Telephone conferencing, although in-person attendance is preferred.
3. Demographics (including age) of our District's parent population. Grandparents who are actively involved may not use the latest technology (including texting).
4. To invite a speaker who will share information on the systems available for communication.
5. To have the meeting agenda at least one week prior to the meeting (co-chairs will create the agendas).

➤ Meeting recorder selected

Rolanda Epstein agreed to take the meeting minutes for the subcommittee, beginning with the next meeting.

➤ Next meeting

Thursday, July 14, 6 pm – 7:30 pm (room will be available until 8 pm), Plantation High. The same room (2502) was requested. The Sunshine Law will be discussed. Here is the link for BECON on Demand, where videos on the Sunshine Law are available:

<https://becon223.eduvision.tv/default.aspx>

Type "Sunshine" in the search box.