Communications Committee Report - 1/18/2022 Meeting

Attendees:

**BOE:** Allison Silverstein, Eric Scherzer

**District:** Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Nina DeRosa

I. **Discussion regarding recent communication concerns raised by Staff and Students**

The handbook has been brought up with Personnel. Damen is going to work on editing. Nina says it’s there but old. The idea was that perhaps issues could be avoided if there were a centralized document that staff could access so there will not be as many concerns about lack of continuity or clarity in certain situations.

II. **Meeting Structure – placement of Non-Agenda Public Comment**

This was discussed with President Jannah informally prior to the meeting. She had suggested that for Workshop meetings, all public comments can be in one block to avoid the late start of comments. Not as much on agenda for voting at these meetings and so it seems that the two meeting structures can be approached differently to avoid these concerns ½ of the time.

We discussed the New Business portion of the meeting and the desire to have it listed out regularly on the meeting agenda. Dr. Morgan indicated that she would advise the business office to add this to the regular template for the meetings.

III. **Revisiting our Board Goal**

I went over the Board Goal that was drafted a while back to see where we were in terms of working to that goal. Highlights of things we have been working on thus far:

- Involving stakeholders and promotion of culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. We did community outreach with the survey, continue to take comments made at public meetings and explore them. An example is the constant tweaking of meeting structure, changes to website structure and creation of COVID dashboard. Close partnership with PTAC to help with communicating valuable information before/after BOE meetings.
Meeting structure changes and continuous use of feedback to make the meetings as user friendly as possible while also trying to avoid continuous looping back to prior structures.

“The Board will create avenues for the public to effectively communicate with the Board so that they feel heard and listened to. The Board will work to improve internal collaboration and to keep all members informed as to important developments in the District.”

- Eric expressed a concern about the responses to the public inquiries. Board President is the only who responds and there is concern that the public does not know that this is by design. Nina advised that the website does have information advising public that when they communicate to entire board, that they will only hear from Board President. Eric was going to work on edits to see if this avenue can address the concern raised.

- When issues are referred to administration, BOE not always looped into the communication chain afterwards to be able to know that issues are addressed (though sometimes we are, the loop is not always closed). We sometimes hear that “no one responded to me” which is not always true, but we do not know that. We discussed ways to have keep board informed (i.e. – on messages sent to entire board, copying on response when possible/not privacy violation or just a general message to board confirming that there was a response with generalized details)

IV. New Board Member Training Manual

• Since Eric is addressing any suggested tweaks to “About the Board” part of the website, I will start work on the manual in early February with aim to have first draft around prior to our next meeting.
• Also discussed idea of mentoring – having new Board Members paired up with existing members.

V. Communication Play Book

i. I mentioned the sample that Dr. Harrison-Crawford had provided previously and the link to another district’s playbook and discussed the possibility as to whether our district could have one. Also mentioned New Jersey Public Relations Association discussed at meeting I attended.

VI. Future topics of discussion

a. Student communications – I have since had a chance to attend meeting with BOE Student Reps at High School with Dr. Ponds, Dr. Morgan, Principal Freeman and
President Jannah. We had discussions as to changes to student communication with high school students. Mention of the grade level Google Classroom as best route to get the largest audience. Social media is sometimes good – but Administration does not use Instagram or Facebook so maybe students can be directed to Google Classroom by fellow students on these platforms. Students also requested that they get certain information there that their parents get (i.e. – Snow Day notifications; general COVID letters, when remote option was given, etc.). Dr. Ponds advised that he discuss with counsel what could and could not be shared in this forum. There was also discussion about the daily announcements and desire to keep them concise with referral to Google Classroom for things like club meetings, etc. Principal Freeman mentioned they also run announcements on monitors in hallways.

b. Student Representatives and Principal Freeman are going to investigate setting up meetings with Renaissance and Buzz Aldrin students akin to meetings they had at Glenfield.

c. Interesting conversations about non-college track and giving those students more opportunities. Dr. Ponds and Dr. Morgan mentioned things that are in the works and that it will take time to see the changes, but they are being worked on.