

**Lake Washington School District: School/Home Communications Task Force Meeting #4 Summary**

---



Lake Washington School District: School/Home Communications Task Force Meeting #4

Thursday, March 10, 2016

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

L.E. Scarr Resource Center, Redmond, WA

**Task Force Members in Attendance**

**Kremiere Boone**, High School Parent  
**Dale Cote**, Director of School Support, Juanita L.C.  
**Lucy Davies**, Elementary Principal  
**Arianna Hainfield**, High School Teacher  
**Melody Kieffer**, High School Office Staff  
**JD Klein**, Middle School Parent  
**Jennifer O'Neal**, Elementary Teacher

**Stephanie Parry**, Elementary Parent  
**Gale Paul**, Middle School Teacher  
**Kelly Pease**, Director of Intervention Programs  
**Victor Scarpelli**, Middle School Principal  
**Julie Tribolet**, LWPTSA Council Representative  
**Carmen Urrutia**, LWSD Data Services Manager  
**Lorraine VanKomen**, Elementary Office Staff

**Members absent**

- **Ramu Iyer**, Middle School Parent
- **J-Marie Johnson-Kola**, Elementary Parent
- **Barbara Martin**, High School Parent
- **Janitzia Pizarro**, Middle School Office Staff

**Meeting Purpose and Overview**

The Lake Washington School District School/Home Communications Task Force held their fourth meeting at the L.E. Scarr Resource Center in Redmond on Thursday, March 10. Topics on the meeting agenda included:

- Introductions
- Review and discuss combined results of newsletter review during last meeting
- Develop options for newsletter recommendations, including:
  - Newsletter source (school/PTSA/combined)
  - Frequency
  - Content types
  - Resources and support needed for schools, including training and capacity building
- Develop substantial consensus for newsletter recommendations

**Meeting Summary**

**Introductions**

Kathryn Reith, the LWSD director of communications and the chair of the School/Home Communications Task Force led the group through introductions. She then outlined the agenda.

**Review and discuss combined results of newsletter review during last meeting**

The results of the newsletter review from the previous meeting were shared with the group.

**Frequency:** Most newsletters were sent out:

- Weekly (18)
- Monthly (7)
- Bimonthly (4)
- Biweekly (1)

**Content:**

- Calendar (24)
- Upcoming school events (22)
- District information (17)
- Personalization/human touch (13)
- Procedural information (12)
- Information to help students learn (8)
- Important information (6)

Other content ideas that the task force liked: Quick links section; volunteer information; thank yous

**Design Concepts:**

- Easy to read
- Table of contents
- Contact information
- Link to past newsletters
- Links to school, district, community
- Principal picture
- Visually pleasing
- Repeated article section
- Student content
- Staff section
- Lots of pictures/photos
- Multi-lingual
- Section specific to particular grade (seniors)
- Links to research
- Mobile-device friendly

**School newsletter goals:** The task force went back to the basics and discussed what the goal of a school newsletter should be. The task force reached consensus that school newsletters should:

- Share the correct dates and information about school events all on one calendar.
- Help parents be informed in a way that is easy for parents to absorb.
- Build community.
- Be accessible to all families.
- Be a tool to communicate action items in a timely manner.

- Be a tool to help parents help kids be successful in school.
- Be student-centered.
- Celebrate successes.

**Develop options for newsletter recommendations, including:**

- **Newsletter source (school/PTSA/combined):** The task force discussed whether the newsletter should be school-only or a combined school/PTSA newsletter. They came to consensus on the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:** School newsletters should be separate from PTSA newsletters, but there can potentially be a space designated for PTSA in each edition.

- **Frequency:** The task force discussed how often the school newsletters should be sent out to parents. They came to consensus on the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:** It is the task force's recommendation (based on best practice research) that school newsletters should be sent out weekly. If resources are not available to send a newsletter out weekly, then at a minimum, schools should send newsletters every other week.

- **Content types:** The task force discussed the different types of content that should be included in school newsletters. They came to consensus on the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:** Below are the list of items that the task force recommends for school newsletter content. They felt that the highlighted items should be present in every newsletter.

- Calendar – every issue
  - Upcoming school events/milestones – every issue
  - District Information
  - Personalization/human touch
  - Information to help students learn – tips by level – every issue
  - Contact information – every issue
  - Procedural information
  - Success stories
  - Feature stories
  - News
  - Safety information
  - Principal message
  - Links to key information
- **Design /Presentation Ideas (for templates):** The task force discussed the design/presentation of newsletters. They came to consensus on the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:** The district will provide templates that:

- Show which articles are repeated (may be placed near the end)

- Are personalized or have a “human touch”
  - Calendar in the same place in every school newsletter
  - Mobile-friendly\* (KEY RECOMMENDATION)
  - Short articles with “Read more” that links to longer articles on website (when appropriate).
  - Organized by content types:
    - Looking ahead to what’s happening in the coming weeks - top
    - Reviews of things that have happened (success stories) - bottom
  - Icons/Pictures/Photos
  - Links to school, district, community
  - Visually pleasing
  - Links to key information section
- **Resources and support needed for schools, including training and capacity building** – The task force discussed the need for resources or support for our schools. They came to consensus on the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:** The task force recommended the following resource and support for schools in creating newsletters:

- Offer examples.
- Create templates – offer multiple options – school colors, personalization to school
- Two hours per month training time for people who are responsible for creating newsletters.
- Training for newsletter editors – don’t use acronyms; simple sentences - grade level; when to use read more
- Offer canned articles from district (vetted) – to help schools with strategic goals
- Web-friendly, web version
- Tipsheets with dos/don’ts
- Icons or an icon library for use.
- Language volunteers to help with translations

**Newsletter templates subcommittee:**

JD Klein and Arianna Haindfield agreed to be part of a sub-committee that will work on template design ideas. The idea was brought to the group about piloting the newsletters in schools this spring before introducing them at all schools in the fall.