

School Lake Washington School District: School/Home Communications Task Force Meeting #6 Summary



Lake Washington School District: School/Home Communications Task Force Meeting #6
Thursday, May 12, 2016
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
L.E. Scarr Resource Center, Redmond, WA

Task Force Members in Attendance

Monica Garcia, Elementary Principal
Arianna Haindfield, High School Teacher
Melody Kieffer, High School Office Staff
JD Klein, Middle School Parent
Barbara Martin, High School Parent

Stephanie Parry, Elementary Parent
Janitzia Pizarro, Middle School Office Staff
Victor Scarpelli, Middle School Principal
Julie Tribolet, LWPTSA Council Representative
Carmen Urrutia, LWSD Data Services Manager

Members absent

- **Kremiere Boone**, High School Parent
- **Dale Cote**, Director of School Support, Juanita L.C.
- **Lucy Davies**, Elementary Principal
- **Ramu Iyer**, Middle School Parent
- **J-Marie Johnson-Kola**, Elementary Parent
- **Jennifer O'Neal**, Elementary Teacher
- **Gale Paul**, Middle School Teacher
- **Kelly Pease**, Director of Intervention Programs
- **Lorraine VanKomen**, Elementary 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, May 12. Topics on the meeting agenda included:

- School website discussion, recommendations
- Other school/home communications tools
- Next steps

Meeting Summary

Introductions

Kathryn Reith, the LWSD director of communications and the chair of the School/Home Communications Task Force led the group. She began by outlining the day's agenda.

Review school website interests from April 21 meeting notes

School website interests:

The district website refresh project is now underway. School websites are not part of the project. However, that project is likely to inform a subsequent project involving school websites. We can recommend changes to the current website templates and make suggestions to be considered during a future refresh.

- Be a repository for items that have been sent out in the past (i.e., newsletter archive – searchable)
- Easy to navigate
- Current and up-to-date
- Searchable
- Easier way to pay for stuff
- Electronic way to report absences – secure absence reporting
- Transactional
- 2-way communication
- Mobile-version; mobile-friendly
- District-wide procedures made uniform on site (example: Bellevue S.D. registration process)
- Visually appealing – makes you want to stay there.
- Larger font – variable font
- Uniform fonts
- Printable pages
- ADA Compliant
- “For Parents” always confuses me – what is supposed to be there?
- Categories are confusing
- Content consistency
- Volunteer component or portal connection to ask for volunteers
- List of volunteer opportunities by school
- New family information:
 - Welcome section (See Rose Hill Elementary – links and helpful information) – consider holding a focus group of new parents to find out what content would have helped, what they found confusing.
- Secure: Breach-free, stalker-free
- General safety information: Basic ideas about safety
- Health information: Vaccinations, too sick for school – good for website and newsletter
- School closure information
- Public site and internal site – school portal/Haiku link
- Electronic forms

Sara Fergusson, the district’s web specialist, surveyed school webmasters for more data. 63 people responded to her survey.

Question 1: What is your main role at the school?

- 22.22% - Teachers
- 20.63% - Librarians
- 19.05% - Office Managers

Question 2: How much time per week do you currently spend working on your school's website?

- Less than 1 hour – 74.6%
- 1-2 hours – 22.22%
- 3-5 hours – 3.17%

Question 3: How much time per week would you like to be able to spend working on your school's website?

- Less than 1 hour – 55.56%
- 1-2 hours – 38.10%
- 3-5 hours – 4.76%
- 5 hours or more – 1.59%

Question 4: In order to keep the website fully current and up-to-date, how much time per week would you need to spend working on it?

- Less than 1 hour – 34.92%
- 1-2 hours – 46.03%
- 3-5 hours – 15.87%
- 5 hours or more – 1.59%

Question 5: What do you typically do when working on your school's website (check all that apply):

- 84.13% - Add content (text, images, announcements, PDFs, etc.) that someone sends to you.
- 73.02% - Update announcements
- 69.84% - Search for out dated content and remove/update it
- 52.38% - Think of current content or information that could be added to the website
- 50.79% - Add content (text, images, announcements, PDFs, etc.) that you write or create

Question 6: Who typically sends you information to put on the school's website?

- Other = 71.43% (They listed: PTSA; Music/band/orchestra programs; Office staff; Athletic director; District office; Staff in charge of specific activities / clubs; Teachers; Counselors; Coaches; Librarian)
- School principal = 22.22%

Kathryn Reith showed preliminary results of the Parent Strategic Work survey that is currently in the field. It is important to note that this survey is still out there in the field. A direct link to the survey was sent to all families. 961 responses had been recorded as of this meeting date. In particular, the group was directed to look at questions 24 and 25.

Question 24: How often do you visit one or more of the LWSD school websites?

- Two or three times a month – 27.06%

- A few times a year – 22.58%
- Weekly – 21.54%
- Once a month – 18.21%

Question 25: What is your purpose for visiting a school website? (Select all that apply.)

- View school calendars/upcoming events – 67.12%
- Log in to Parent Access – 46.51%
- Access the PTSA website – 34.44%
- Contact school staff – 30.80%
- Access a school's athletics or activity information – 25.60%
- Add funds to a child's lunch account – 21.96%
- Access district or school forms – 21.64%

Questions 19 and 20 are interesting as well:

Question 19: On which device do you most access www.lwsd.org and school websites?

- Laptop – 45.89%
- Desktop computer – 29.34%
- Mobile phone – 15.50%

Question 20: On which type of device would you prefer to access the district website, www.lwsd.org, and school websites? (Select one.)

- Mobile phone – 36.32%
- Laptop – 32.78%
- Desktop computer – 18.63%
- Tablet – 11.13%

Do we have similar data around newsletters – how are they being read?

- It would depend on the school and what tools they are using to send out their newsletters.

With this research in mind, the group further discussed school website and their recommendations.

School website discussion, recommendations:

- Schools want/need more direction on what content should be in the different areas of the current sites.
- The group likes that there is a similar look between schools.
 - However, what is underneath the tabs on the left is not consistent between schools.
- Provide assistance to webmasters in organizing this information.
- Show webmasters how to post data in one place and provide links in other locations back to the one place to get the data.
- Every team, group, activity wants their content on the front page of the website. Feel like it should be limited.

- Written rules or instructions on what can be on the front page that webmasters can share with these groups.
- What should be on the front page of a school's website?
 - Contact information
 - Start/end times
 - Calendar times
 - Major announcements
- The calendar application on the site needs to be easier to use.
- Consistency between schools on what can be seen on the calendar
- Announcement dates cause issues – items move up based on the event dates – groups request webmasters to update their date just to move to the top of the announcements list.
- Were there a set of rules/expectations when the school sites were originally created?
 - Yes, there were some basic protocols and basic sets of data that were supposed to be on each school's website.
- Identify the issues and bring together webmasters to work through those issues.
- Consistency of calendar use/what is showing up.
- More sophisticated way of signing up for announcements, events, etc., so I only see the information I care about.
- Communications preferences on the site:
 - Is there a way in Parent Access to allow parents to select their preferences for communications?
- Search function needs to work
- Look at usage analytics for each school – how are people using the site today?
- Scrolling announcement/calendar items on the front page of the websites.
- Forms – an important section that parents are often looking for.
- Auto-expiration of items or receive notifications when items are about to expire.
- Remove building maps from the school website – security issue
 - Information is in the handbook around recess times, etc., but not available on the website
- Training around safety of information for students. What is safe to post vs. what is not safe to post.
- General safety information:
 - Set realistic expectations around how long it will take them to be able to pick up their kids in an emergency, what to bring, etc.
- Structure ownership of content around what the district owns (district assets), what the school owns (school assets) and what content goes where on the site.
 - Consistency of look, feel and functionality.
- Fell like you are on the same basic website, but some data changes by school.
- Can the district post content on the district site that is automatically pushed to the school sites?
- Like the Bellevue School District Website:
 - Taxonomy
 - The “For Parents” section is confusing – needs to be re-visited.
- Translation features:

- Stick with Microsoft Translator or move to new tool?
- Location of the feature – need to make it more visible?
- Parent Access link at the top of the home page for each school site
- Need to stay on top of understanding the ways parents communicate.
- Need to look at future trends in communications – based on parent preferences.

What other school/home communication tools should we consider?

- Mobile App
 - Preferences for your school (groups, clubs, etc.)
 - Announcements for what you select
 - Calendar for what you select
 - Links to all applications used by the district – Haiku, Family Access, MySchoolBucks, etc.

School newsletter templates:

A sub-committee including Arianna Hainfield, JD Klein, Shannon Parthemer and Kathryn Reith, met with the district's graphic artist, Chelsea Lee, to discuss school newsletter templates. Three templates were brought to the meeting to be discussed as a group.

Comments:

- The newsletter should be one column not two, so it is easier to see and review on a phone.
- Want to have options within the schools so the person who creates the newsletter feels comfortable.
- Choices allow you to personalize the newsletter to your school.
- Will work with the schools to create the templates.
- Look of header will be customized for schools.
- Needs to work on mobile.
- Move calendar to a bigger column.
- Need to review newsletter best practices, brain research about what makes a publication work.
- Send out sample newsletters inside SchoolMessenger so that the group can experience them as a parent will.

Future Groups:

Are there other groups or task forces that should be formed on this topic?

- Grading (Skyward) and Haiku – used more consistently and give office managers the tools to see these parent resources.
- Too many tools – how to combine/train families on what tools to use for each thing they are trying to do.
 - Training videos
 - Training classes for parents
 - Every tool on Parent Access

Next Steps:

Lake Washington School District: School/Home Communications Task Force Meeting #6 – 5/12/16

The plan is to create a formal recommendation with all of this feedback in mind. That recommendation will be emailed to the School/Home Communications Task Force to provide your feedback via email to Kathryn or Shannon.