

Framingham School Committee

Communication and Public Relations

Task Force

Final Report
May 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Communication and Public Relations Task Force

Operating under the direction of the Framingham Public Schools (FPS) School Committee, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force assembled in January 2015 and since then has:

1. Examined current practices within FPS with regard to communications and public relations
2. Conducted a survey of all community stakeholders and analyzed survey results
3. Researched best practices for communications in nine Massachusetts Districts
4. Completed focus groups and interviews of key FPS staff members
5. Reviewed an audit of current communications practices within Central Administration

The Task Force used this research and a series of weekly meetings to develop a report of all findings and strategic recommendations for moving forward. The immediate recommendations are:

1. **Improve the quality of the communications (letters, memos, press releases, verbal decisions, etc.) from the Superintendent's office and other sources within FPS.** Communications should be timely, clear, accurate, consistent, complete, and deliver an open and transparent message that speaks to all stakeholders and conveys a genuine picture of the state of affairs in FPS. The quality of communications should be consistent from school to school. Two specific steps should be taken:
 - a. Within 30 days, establish a review process for all further communications that includes proofreading, editing, and completeness of message.
 - b. By August 1, 2015, establish a **communications policy to govern communications moving forward for proper approvals, flow, and professionalism**, so that it can be communicated to all stakeholders and in place as the 2015-2016 school year begins.
2. **Overhaul the district website, as it is a critical information hub and communications center. A project manager should be appointed immediately.** Promptly finalize the features needed, select the best third party tools, allocate a budget to include training and ensure that enough staff are engaged on website updates to achieve the quality of communications noted above. If such an effort were properly resourced, and there was a concerted effort, then there would be major project milestones every month and the new website could be operational by January 1, 2016.
3. **Support genuine two-way communications.** The community is not a passive recipient of outbound communications. It can provide important input to a whole range of issues, and possible easy solutions, if they were simply noted and acknowledged. It could also decrease distrust and speculation which is created in the absence of good communications. In general, all stakeholders need their voices heard and responded to in a meaningful, appropriate, and timely manner.
4. **Ensure that communications relating to academic matters are given a high priority.** Keeping parents more consistently informed regarding academics, promises a substantial payback in student happiness and achievement and family satisfaction. District-wide academic initiatives and changes must be communicated clearly and consistently.

The recommendations were delivered live via presentation and in written form to the School Committee on May 18, 2015. The public was invited to attend.

Signed,

Jim Stockless (co-chair), Greg Palmer (co-chair), Catherine Allen, Kim Comatas, Geoffrey Epstein, Brian Menna, Brad Puffer, Laura Richards, Dr. Eric Silverman, Don Taggart III

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Communication and Public Relations Task Force Overview

In December 2014, the Framingham Public Schools (FPS) School Committee called for the creation of a Communication and Public Relations Task Force, and solicited community involvement of parents, teachers, and residents. The mission at the time was to “tackle misconceptions about the Framingham Public Schools posted on social media, including Facebook” (see Appendix D: Meeting Minutes, Press Releases, Press Coverage).

The group first assembled in January 2015, with the Superintendent in attendance as well. He praised the initiative noting its importance in relation to the district’s “Vision 2020” plan and specifically, Strategic Goal Three: “Promote community support for a high-performing system with appropriate resources, strong partnerships, and broad-based communication.”

After the first meeting, the FPS Public Information Officer (PIO) issued a press release on the formation of the group, and its first planned endeavor, a Communications Survey, was designed to solicit feedback from as many members of the community as possible. The survey was issued in February and results were posted on the FPS website on March 13, 2015. In addition, the Task Force members observed the communications from the district during this time.

The Task Force reflected upon the survey results and informal observations, and realized the group’s charge needed to go beyond tackling misconceptions and negative comments; rather, it needed to address the root cause of the problem that led to misunderstandings and negative sentiment. Therefore, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force re-stated its mission and shared that information via a press release to the community on March 31, 2015 (see Appendix D: Meeting Minutes, Press Releases, Press Coverage).

***Mission:** Recommend an external and internal communications strategy and flow of information that provides multiple channels for establishing and maintaining effective district communication with families, staff and the community.*

***We Will:** Create a set of recommendations and present them to the School Committee in May. The School Committee will review and determine next steps for implementation. We are committed to transparency and we welcome community input and suggestions.*

The group also re-issued its member list and released an email address for open two-way communication. Today, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force stands at ten people, including one teacher, six parents/residents, and three School Committee members.

Task Force Membership

- Jim Stockless (co-chair) – current School Committee member
- Greg Palmer (co-chair) – parent of three students at Barbieri Elementary School; VP at ESP Solutions Group, an educational data solutions and management company; former MA public educator with 10+ years in central office and building administration
- Catherine Allen – parent of a second grader and an incoming kindergartner at Stapleton School; EVP at SHIFT Communications, a national public relations and social media agency
- Kim Comatas – parent of a fifth grader at the Potter Road School, a seventh grader at the Christa McAuliffe Charter School and a ninth grader at FHS; former Potter Road PTO President; current Framingham Town Wide PTO Co-President; Town Meeting member precinct five
- Geoffrey Epstein – town resident; physicist/software engineer; past School Committee member in Newton
- Brian Menna – high school teacher; class of 2016 advisor
- Brad Puffer – parent of a Barbieri Elementary School student and a Walsh Middle School student; current Director with Greenough Communications; former Director of Communications for Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office; former NECN reporter
- Laura Richards – parent of an incoming BLOCKS pre-school student, a fourth grader at Hemenway, and two seventh graders at the Christa McAuliffe Charter School; President of On Point Communications
- Dr. Eric Silverman – current School Committee member
- Don Taggart III – current School Committee member; parent of a Barbieri Elementary School student and a Walsh Middle School student; career educator

The Communication and Public Relations Task Force has met a total of 10 times, including weekly during the past two months, and the interviews, discussion topics, and recommendations are described in the pages ahead.

Communications Survey

The Communications Survey requested community feedback about what is presently working and not working within the district, and solicited ideas for improvement. A series of multiple choice questions were asked, and an open-ended question was included to solicit constructive feedback on improvement.

The survey mission was two-fold:

1. First, the Task Force wanted to set a baseline of community perception of FPS communications today. These same questions can then be asked bi-annually, or annually, and changes in sentiment can be tracked over time as a measurement of effectiveness and satisfaction.
2. Second, the Task Force wanted to obtain a better understanding of what is most important to address first. There are many opportunities for the FPS to improve communications, so guidance on which may have the largest impact is very important.

A total of 1,196 people completed the survey.

(Please note: the former PIO issued the survey and it is unclear how many channels he communicated it to, and how varied they were. However, with more than 1,000 participants including more than 500 written personal narratives on their communication hot buttons, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force felt the results were representative enough to continue with the task at hand.)

Survey Results: By the Numbers

The survey included nine multiple choice questions, one open-ended question, and an additional nine questions related to the survey respondent demographics. Full results of the survey can be found in Appendix A: Survey Results.

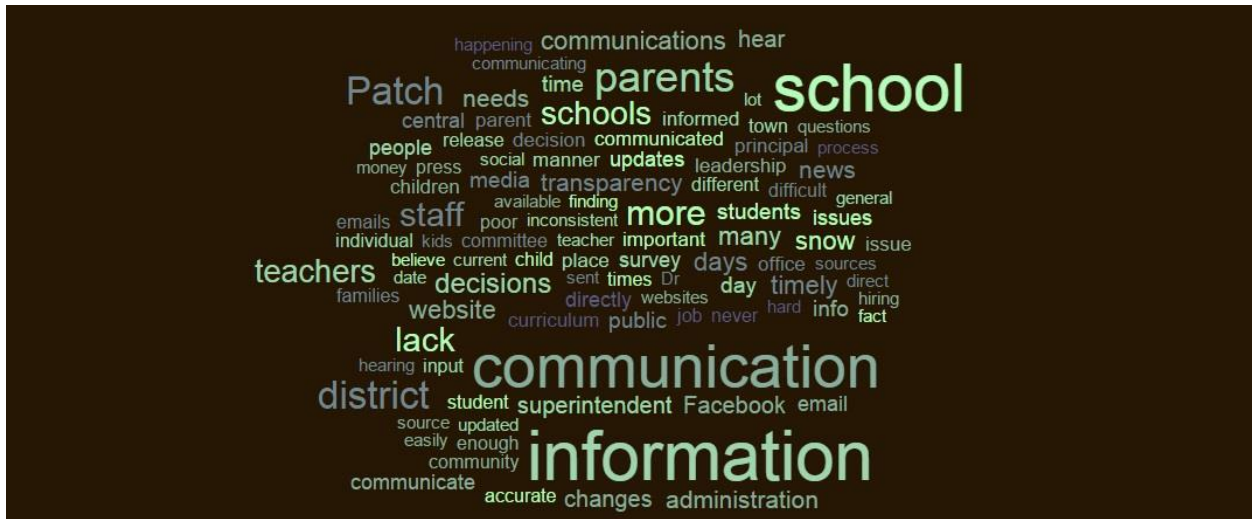
Highlights of the multiple choice responses include:

- 55% of respondents feel that Framingham Public Schools keeps them informed or mostly informed
- 44% of respondents believe it is very easy or somewhat easy to find answers to Framingham Public Schools policy or procedure questions
- 54% of respondents prefer to receive school updates ‘as they happen’
- More than 60% of respondents are most interested in receiving information pertaining to: curriculum updates, calendar events and listings and rationale of school and district decisions
- Respondents also identified:
 - When they need to find information today, the top four communication channels they currently use are school email, the FPS website, a FPS school website, and Framingham Patch
 - To stay informed on news today, they use school email and Framingham Patch as their top two channels
 - In the future, they would prefer the Framingham Public Schools use the following channels in this order of importance to them: school email, a FPS school website, a weekly principal newsletter, the FPS website, the FPS automated call system, and Framingham Patch

Survey Results: Constructive Comments

Via an open-ended question, the survey also solicited constructive feedback for the betterment of the system. It asked, *“Given the chance to speak directly to the Task Force, what is the number one communication or information issue facing the Framingham Public Schools today?”*

The 570 narrative responses were quite intriguing. This word cloud paints a picture of the most common themes. (Reminder, full results of the survey can be found in Appendix A: Survey Results.)



Highlights of the open-ended responses include:

- Families, teachers, and staff turn to Framingham Patch or social media interactions with fellow parents for information, yet they are unhappy about it. Stakeholders would prefer to hear directly from their school or the district.
- Communications suffer from a multitude of defects. They are not clear, concise, informative, nor accurate. They are not timely. They are inconsistent and confusing. They are too infrequent. They also suffer from poor writing and simple spelling errors.
- There is a lack of trust in central administration from families, teachers and staff. The lack of transparent, timely, and open communications has led to speculation and distrust. Words used in the survey answers included: *guarded, filtered, misleading, mistakes are covered up,* and *decisions are provided without context*. In summary, communication from the superintendent and central administration needs substantial improvement.

- Communications with staff needs improvement. This is especially troublesome to the Task Force, as teachers and staff in particular should be valued communicators, tightly in the communication loop, both to know what is going on and to amplify and share communications and answer questions. However, it appears they are often left in the dark and are frustrated that they have to rely on press coverage for answers themselves.
- Communications “customer service” is poor: families are looking for ways to answer their questions (from student grades to early dismissal days, to sports calendars, and more), yet find our current website cumbersome to use and ineffective for finding answers on their own. In addition, there is such a variance on communications from teacher to teacher and school to school that families are left confused when listening to other families describing their experiences at other schools. This exacerbates distrust.
- Two-way communications need a big boost. It impacts decision making, where stakeholders may not be included or informed. Parents need more feedback on how their children are doing and how they can help when their children are struggling. Often contact information is difficult to find or phone calls and emails are not answered. Family and community feedback is not solicited on many issues. There is no consistent mechanism for incoming questions to be processed and answered. Inbound communications is the big issue here.
- Communication through the district website requires improvement. The district website is difficult to navigate and access information, or information is missing altogether. School web pages are not up to date. If there were sufficient information, families would not have to keep emailing questions to the administration. Furthermore, teachers’ websites are neither standardized nor universally accessible. All information needs to be up to date. Bus route information is hard to find. Calendars need to be up to date. Teachers contact information should be up to date and complete. A district newsletter should have links back to the district website. The website does not work for all browsers. The website needs a usability evaluation. Traffic data should be used to optimize the website.

From the survey, it is clear that we needed to identify how to best enable schools to communicate (via school email, school websites and the FPS website), help the district correct trust and transparency issues, establish a proposed communications policy and flow of information, and identify obstacles leading to these communications breakdowns today.

Audit of Current Communication Practices

The Communication and Public Relations Task Force set out to better understand which administrators in the system are charged with executing or supporting communications today.

The Task Force met with the following people for interviews:

1. Dr. Stacy Scott, Superintendent of Schools
2. Dr. Edward Gotgart, Chief Operating Officer
3. George Carpenter, Director of Information Technology
4. Magaly Sanchez, Director of Family and Community Engagement

Full results of these interviews can be found in Appendix B: Audit of Current Practices. At a high-level, the Task Force came away with the following insights and concerns:

- There is a strong desire to communicate, but the current staff feels resource-strapped (technology, personnel, and training hours).
- There are many disparate technology platforms in place that do not ‘speak’ to each other and that are serving ‘siloes’ roles and cannot currently be integrated (X2, ConnectEd, Family Connection Portal, Adobe registration forms, Google Classroom, etc.). However, some of these tools, with better training and understanding, might be a quick fix for better communications today.
- Everyone agrees that the website needs an overhaul, yet it has never been made a priority or allocated much-needed funding and personnel. The website is neither user friendly, mobile compliant, nor interactive, however there are challenges with this project including cohesive vision and cost. There seems to be a desire for an incremental approach, not only to address this endeavor financially but to also identify ‘technology ambassadors’ at each building to generate content, monitor what’s going on, and maintain flow. Dr. Scott’s Administrative Assistant has been the primary connection between the district and the Director of Technology in terms of getting information to the website.
- There are no set standards for administrators and principals in regards to communication with teachers, parents, community members and the media. Some staff members

communicate well and others are not quite as experienced. There has not been any formal training nor a formal approach to bringing all administrators to the same place with regard to communication.

- Translation needs are dire. It is the policy to translate, yet resources are not always available and are cumbersome in execution. The system has become used to holding information until translations are ready, however, getting information out quickly, even in one language with others to follow, is a priority. Dr. Scott has placed a translation position 1.0 FTE into the current budget.
- While all of the interview participants play a role in communications, no one person ‘owns’ communications today. In reviewing an older organizational chart, this responsibility fell to the Assistant Superintendent, which is vacant. In addition, some interview participants were just one year into their roles (such as the Director of Information Technology and the Director of Family and Community Engagement) or on contract (the Superintendent and the COO). The lack of longevity or long-term commitment to the system is worth exploring further, as it may prioritize quick fixes over long-term planning or more substantial initiatives.
- In reviewing the FPS Technology Plan draft, the website is just one of many bullets listed under Instructional Technology component of the plan (Appendix F, page 8). However, it is the Task Force’s opinion that the website is not ‘Instructional Technology.’ Rather, a website, as well as other technologies that will support school-to-home communications merit their own plan section and would better fit as a part of a ‘Marketing and Communications Technology’ component of the plan, which does not exist today. Similarly, those tasked with creating and maintaining communications should be invited to participate in the Technology Advisory Committee (mentioned on page 19). The Task Force was encouraged to see ‘Technology Professional Development’ suggested as a new practice (mentioned on page 25), and fully supports this effort as a way to overcome any technology adoption and use hurdles.

In addition, the PIO at the time also created a Current Communications Audit, which is a good synopsis and worthy of review. It can also be found in Appendix B: Audit of Current Practices.

Implementing a Communications Policy

The community feedback, audit of current practices, and research into how other districts communicate, led the Communication and Public Relations Task Force to begin outlining a communications policy for the district. A full communications plan or policy should be fully developed by all stakeholders, and based on the staffing, technology, and training resources at hand.

It is the Task Force's opinion that by creating a formal policy – the way the Framingham Public Schools wants to communicate and should communicate – will dovetail into establishing what needs to be changed district-wide to achieve this mission. It appears that over the years, stop gap fixes were implemented, and that has led to a breakdown in communications, and an analysis paralysis of possible fixes. When this is coupled with frequent turnover in key communications-involved jobs, such as those we've interviewed, it may be that these problems are routinely passed to the successor, who will re-live the pattern. Independently, the former PIO agreed that the number one mission should be to establish Communication Protocols.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Communication and Public Relations Task Force that the School Committee work with the Framingham Public Schools to establish a Communications Policy to govern communications moving forward.

SAMPLE: Strategic Communication Plan and Policy Recommendations

Mission: At the policy level, introduce and implement best practices for all district communications and public relations, internal and external, to principals, teachers, staff, district administration, and all community stakeholders.

Objective: Design a sustainable communications plan and policy as a governing document to inform and guide all Framingham Public Schools communications.

Communications and Public Relations High Level Policy Recommendations

Establish Communications Protocols:

1. Define roles and responsibilities for communications, at the district and school levels
2. Establish vehicles for communications (website, newsletters, press releases, social media, etc.)
3. Outline the media relations approach

Outbound Communications Flow:

1. Communications Team

- a. Determine who will create and approve communications from central administration and from each school if appropriate
- b. Establish benchmarks for success
- c. Include fully available and integrated translation capabilities
- d. Engage a skilled copywriter to reduce errors and confirm completeness of message
- e. Establish communications flow and understanding of Massachusetts Open Records, Open Meeting Law, and Student Privacy

2. Staff Communication

- a. Send urgent school and district news via email from principal or superintendent
- b. Issue routine communication weekly on Fridays to recap previous missives and share any non-urgent news

3. Student and Family Communication Channels

- a. Utilize existing Aspen X2 program, which includes a student information system and parent portal with email capabilities
- b. Employ ConnectEd as appropriate

- c. Continue 'backpack' communications, both physical copy and online backpack (with opt-out capabilities for those who prefer all online, and to reduce expenses and preserve environment)
 - d. Leverage district and school websites and related social media accounts
 - e. Start or continue monthly principal newsletters, using a standard format making it easier for principals to update, and consistent for parents to read school to school
 - f. Pitch media and press contacts with relevant news and press releases when appropriate, but ensure it is after communicating directly to staff, students and parents on the topic
4. **Community**
- a. Update district and school websites and social media accounts weekly at a minimum
 - b. Consider capability for non-school families to opt-in to email communications
 - c. Pitch media and press contacts with relevant news and press releases when appropriate, but ensure it is after communicating directly to staff, students and parents on the topic

Please note: The Communication and Public Relations Task Force strongly encourages the district to create a clear, complete Crisis Communications Plan written in tandem with law enforcement and town emergency personnel. This document should be widely shared among staff and routinely practiced.

Inbound Communications Flow:

1. All FPS emails, newsletters, etc., should include an appropriate reply email address for response capabilities re: further questions, comments, and concerns. Responses should occur within one school day.
2. Publish staff directory online with short job descriptions and contact information for families to ask questions. Responses should occur within one school day.

3. FPS should establish an appropriate media spokesperson, and provide his or her email and cell contact information to the media. Responses should occur within 24 hours.

Communications Vehicles At-A-Glance

FPS Website:

1. Serve as an up-to-date informational hub
2. Be easy to navigate
3. Become mobile friendly
4. Fed by school pages and social media feeds
5. Matches any physical communications coming home through other channels

Translation Process:

1. Establish translation process
2. Define staff roles
3. Determine reasonable deadlines

Social Media:

1. Update the social media policy for the district-wide communications
2. Determine what social media is used
3. Define roles for staff to update social media
4. Train staff on the basics of social media
5. Define a process for selecting what is posted
6. Determine frequency
7. Understand non-school channels already in use and provide consistent monitoring and response as needed; share outbound communications as well
 - a. Sample sites include: Frambors, Facebook Group “Open and Honest Discourse About The Framingham MA Schools,” Facebook Group “Chat about the Framingham, MA Public Schools,” Facebook Group “Framingham Area Moms,” Framingham Whistle Blower

Press Releases:

1. Establish procedures for writing, editing, and approving press releases
2. Press releases should be timely and consistent
3. All journalists and bloggers will be given equal access to information about the schools; general press releases will be made available to all media outlets simultaneously for the broadest exposure
 - a. Sample media outlets include: Framingham Patch, MetroWest Daily News, Framingham Tab, WSRO 650 AM, Boston Globe, Boston Herald, NECN, WBZ Channel 4 (CBS Affiliate), WCVB Channel 5 (ABC Affiliate), WHDH Channel 7 (NBC Affiliate), Fox 25, Framingham Public Access (AccessFram.TV)
4. Press releases should be posted, date-stamped, archived and accessible

Website Recommendations

Feedback from the survey and conversations with staff all support a substantial redesign of the district website. The Communication and Public Relations Task Force investigated how other school districts are using their school and district websites for more effective delivery of information as well. The Group analyzed nine school websites: Brookline, Cambridge, Fitchburg, Natick, Newton, Quincy, Sudbury, Waltham, and Wellesley. The Task Force's analysis of each website can be found in Appendix C: Website Research.

The district website is best viewed as a central hub for information, which is easily accessible, comprehensive, and always up to date. It should serve a variety of visitors, including:

- Students and their families
- Other town residents, including newcomers and those with no school-age children
- FPS staff at all levels, include central administration, school administration, teachers and other staff
- Prospective and future residents of Framingham
- Town officials

The district website should also handle multiple levels of information, including:

- District
- School
- Grade
- Class
- Additional academic and non-academic programs

The district website should encompass at least: school and teacher websites, information covering events and calendars, emergencies, snow days, latest news, press

releases, newsletters, programs and curriculum, sports and extra-curricular activities, policies, decisions, contact information, bus routes, homework, homework help, budget, and staffing.

All of this information needs to be well organized and optimized so access is easy. School and teacher websites should be standardized for ease of use of the content creator and the families who will transition from teacher to teacher and school to school as their children progress through FPS.

The site should include search functionality and website page translation. Plus, the website should accommodate all popular browsers, support mobile access and be American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. Furthermore, updates of web information should be well supported through a decentralized model. A teacher should be able to create, update and remove webpages on his or her website. A principal should be able to easily update the school website.

Not only should the district website serve as a reservoir of information, but it should also act as a hub for outbound communications. A school principal should be able to log in to the site, create a newsletter and send it out to his or her school community with ease. A teacher should be able to log in to the site, create an email and send it out to families with ease. The superintendent should be able to log in to the site, create a newsletter and send it out to the district with ease. All such communications should then archived and viewed through the district, school, or class website.

Acknowledging the fact that effective communication has to be two way, the district website should provide a variety of channels to accept feedback. Feedback from the community is vital to ensure that good ideas see the light of day, problems are addressed, decision-making includes all of the stakeholders etc. Surveys advertised and launched from the district website provide one feedback mechanism but others are possible. One website, SeeClickFix.com, might be adapted to serve school district needs and integrated into the school district website. Integration of the district website with Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools needs to be addressed to ensure that all communications are coherent and consistent. Lastly, as questions accumulate and are answered, a FAQ should be developed.

The principal mission of the school district is to provide the best education for every student in every school. The district website should make sure that the vital teacher, parent, and student communication loop is especially well supported.

The current website design has remained largely unchanged since 2008 and falls short of the above requirements by a very large margin. Redesign is not a trivial matter and should be approached in a manner which takes advantage of the substantial progress which has been made by outside vendors. This is not a task which could be accomplished by an in house development effort.

No comprehensive review of available redesign tools has been carried out by this Task Force, but a good example of the available level of support and expertise is provided by SchoolWires, which has numerous school district installations and has been adopted by some other school districts in Massachusetts.

Apart from management of the redesign effort, serious attention needs to be paid to the ongoing resourcing needed to keep the district website current and responsive to changing district needs and to make sure that staff who perform updates receive the appropriate training.

It is obvious that redesigning the district website is a formidable task. However, if it is properly resourced and expertly executed, it will have a huge impact on the day-to-day operations and long term success of the Framingham Public Schools.

Communication Misfires

A frequent topic of discussion at each Communication and Public Relations Task Force was the previous week's communication errors from the Office of the Superintendent. Unfortunately, these concerns were so frequent, they became an ongoing agenda item. Because of this, we felt it imperative to note this in our final report for consideration purposes.

- **March 16 Meeting -**
 - Discussed how the Communication Survey was not posted in a timely manner by the PIO and how requested edits to the survey were not incorporated prior to release;
 - Discussed Kim Taylor's appointment press release (from Dunning to King) that was missing reference as to what would then happen to Dunning Principal role
 - Discussed snow day decision - the unclear wording of the decision, the media coverage as a result, seen by parents and teachers and staff ahead of any formal FPS communication, and then the subsequent retraction hours later
- **March 30 Meeting -**
 - Discussed how the March 25, 2015 press release about the PIO role being put on hold was (1) issued on a Friday afternoon (against best practices), (2) had wording that invited more questions than it answered (3) needed copyediting
 - Discussed how the 2015-2016 school calendar which was voted upon had not yet been posted on the website
- **April 6 Meeting -**
 - Discussed Superintendent communications during a School Committee meeting (which was subsequently covered by the Framingham Patch) that spoke to hiring a \$120,000 communications staff member; *in response, the Task Force issued an immediate letter to the Superintendent and School Committee with concerns*
- **May 11 Meeting -**
 - Discussed Family Connection Portal letter that did not include directions or a URL on how or when to register

Written and verbal communications from central administration help to form the public's opinion of our schools and their efficacy. We cannot address 'misconceptions in social media conversations about our schools' if unfortunately the conversations reflect reality. It is therefore the opinion of this Task Force that the School Committee work with the Superintendent's office to address both the overarching communications policy for better future communications flow, and the immediate quality concerns of central office communications.

Task Force Recommendations

Based on research and investigative discussions throughout the past seventeen weeks, and healthy deliberation of what was uncovered, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force has narrowed to a top set of recommendations for the School Committee's consideration.

The immediate recommendations are:

1. **Improve the quality of the communications (letters, memos, press releases, verbal decisions, etc.) from the Superintendent's office and other sources within FPS.** Communications should be timely, clear, accurate, consistent, complete, and deliver an open and transparent message that speaks to all stakeholders and conveys a genuine picture of the state of affairs in FPS. The quality of communications should be consistent from school to school. Two specific steps should be taken:
 - a. Within 30 days, establish a review process for all further communications that includes proofreading, editing, and completeness of message.
 - b. By August 1, 2015, establish a **communications policy to govern communications moving forward for proper approvals, flow, and professionalism**, so that it can be communicated to all stakeholders and in place as the 2015-2016 school year begins.
2. **Overhaul the district website, as it is a critical information hub and communications center. A project manager should be appointed immediately.** Promptly finalize the features needed, select the best third party tools, allocate a budget to include training and ensure that enough staff are engaged on website updates to achieve the quality of communications noted above. If such an effort were properly resourced, and there was a concerted effort, then there would be major project milestones every month and the new website could be operational by January 1, 2016.

3. **Support genuine two-way communications.** The community is not a passive recipient of outbound communications. It can provide important input to a whole range of issues, and possible easy solutions, if they were simply noted and acknowledged. It could also decrease distrust and speculation which is created in the absence of good communications. In general, all stakeholders need their voices heard and responded to in a meaningful, appropriate, and timely manner.

4. **Ensure that communications relating to academic matters are given a high priority.** Keeping parents more consistently informed regarding academics, promises a substantial payback in student happiness and achievement and family satisfaction. District-wide academic initiatives and changes must be communicated clearly and consistently.

In Conclusion

The Communication and Public Relations Task Force believes this top set of goals will begin to move the district toward better communications among all groups. With the summer fast approaching, and the FY16 budget cycle concluding, the Task Force believes that the FPS School Committee and FPS Central Administration must partner now to turn these recommendations into actionable next steps, driven by the district.

Upon delivery of this report, the Communication and Public Relations Task Force mission is complete. The FPS School Committee or FPS Central Administration may wish to engage the Task Force partially or in its entirety, to help FPS reach these goals contained in this report.

The Communication and Public Relations Task Force would like to thank all members and contributors to this report.

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