

Ashland School District No. 5, Jackson County, Oregon - The Board of Directors met in a work session on May 23, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. in the Ashland Middle School Commons. Present were:

Amy Amrhein) Chair

Chuck Keil)
Sheryl Lipski) Board Members
Terry Littleton)
Heidi Parker)

Juli Di Chiro, Superintendent
Community Members
Jeanne Peterson, Executive Secretary

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m. by Chair Amrhein.

II. Roll Check

A roll of the board was taken and all members were present.

III. Review Key Communicators Network

Juli Di Chiro gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Key Communicators Network explaining that it is a method of improving communications between the Ashland School District and its stakeholders. It is also a way to reach community members who do not have children in school. Members of the Key Communicators Network will meet annually after the start of school and will receive an overview of the district's plans and budget for the school year. After that, key communicators will receive regular updates from the district about what is occurring. If a particular issue arises, key communicators will receive timely and accurate information about the issue. Key communicators will have a contact person, either a school administrator or a school board member, who is their liaison with the district. If a key communicator has a question or needs clarification about anything, their liaison will respond within 24 hours.

Members present divided into groups and the following questions were addressed.

How do you currently get information about what is happening in the district?

Newspaper (3) – (low confidence)
RVTV shows and televised school board meetings
Administrators (2)
Parents (2)
Teachers (2)
Board Candidates
School Board Members (2)
Email from Special Education Department
Presentations from school district personnel to PTOs, PTAs, other students
Students (2)
School Newsletters (3) – not always complete; space limited
Community member email/specific interest groups
Website

Call or stop by district office
Email
Updates? How?
Television
PowerSchool (problems – opt in email broken?)
Parent/teacher conferences
Word of mouth – grocery store, sporting events, parent hobnobbing
Like mailed information – newsletter (activity, important events, legislation information, school closing) Parent audience, general public
RVTV channel surfing
Site Councils/PTO
Staff – medium confidence
School flyers
Rumor
Ashland Schools Foundation – Susan Bacon
Stringing telegrams
Senior Project Evaluation Panel
Rotary – student presentations
Service Clubs
Get 75% into schools: volunteer opportunities, plays, kids /parents invite neighbors, carnivals, organized outreach, expand Smart Reader, pair kids with community members
School Board date/time in newsletters with agenda
Get nothing at all
Get by working at it (not easy enough)

Do you feel the information is accurate?

From parents, 75% is not accurate (emotional overtones)
Newspapers – Not in depth; one sided; sometimes very inaccurate; reflect the sender's viewpoint; misinterpretations; strange emphasis – wrong priority; trust; weigh information; loss of local control; perspective
Often information from school district personnel is incomplete
Some school district personnel are good about presenting all points of view
Letters to the editor: sometimes seem purposely inaccurate and are taken as truth; they are by definition emotional, one-sided and often are part of a “group speak” tactical strategy; too often taken as “truth”
Letters are important way to communicate with a large group
Late!
Too much information?
What's mundane
Communications political issues only
Two way – how will this work
School as integral part of community
Conversation on important issues – involve as many people/parties as possible
Don't just disseminate information – must be two way
Want more input into important decisions
Cumbersome, still end up with those who feel disempowered
Complex issue: how to get input to Board in a timely fashion; what to give, how to give, what is timeframe
Trust newsletters from schools and information from district

What would be the best way for the District to communicate with you?

- Email (2) – be sure it is clear who sender is; have contact information; principal lists; key communicators; include website link; build database across town; make email clear and concise
- Keep it simple
- Indicate why it is being sent
- Good lead time/time to respond meaningfully
- Any follow-up required (like a “call to action” notice)
- Should it be forwarded?
- Annual Meeting: opportunity for face-to-face, give and take, put faces to names, important upcoming issues; break-out groups on key issues
- Utilize website (especially for parents)
- Get information out early, ripple effect takes time
- Don’t hesitate to pick up the phone
- Relook at setting of agenda farther out
- Hold more meetings out and about
- Televised board meetings
- RVTV School House
- Update website – opt in email on district website
- General (fond, facilities) publication
- Community notice in Tidings (calendars)
- “School page” once a week with specific advertisers sponsoring
- Rogue News
- Rotating column (similar to Scott Delgarno)
- Regional articles for Mail Tribune
- Fact Sheet out to schools as well
- Rotary
- Mini news releases to newsletter editors, chamber
- Bulk Mail

What would be the best way for you to communicate with the district?

- Use personal contacts for emailing, etc. (emails are good because of the written record)
- Chat room on website
- Invite “crazy” “innovative” ideas
- Good mechanism for discussing why ideas are dropped, etc.
- Create a bank of frequently asked questions like FAQs for week/month
- At annual meeting, consider grouping school district reps with “their” key communicator group (colored name tags)
- At first annual meeting, debrief about effectiveness
- Emails
- Phone calls
- Town meeting on regular basis for planning
- More than once a year meeting – quarterly?
- More meaty dialogue, solution based
- No “sacred cows” – put everything on the table when entering decisions
- Training to use website
- Liaison with school board/admin team response
- Way of collating, also sharing of common information – hub, posting a threaded email – disc (see City Council)

Not just email but ability to have discussion; bring people together – Liaison led?
Email – summary with links to more detail
Contact person for follow-up, who to talk to
Phone and email

What other strategies should the District be using to communicate better with our community?

Look at school district newsletter, especially for non-parents (quarterly, biannual); look for grant help
Piggyback with “The Source” (city publication)
Newspaper column/guest editorial
Disseminate names of Key Communicators to “gather” information
Emphasize 75% non-parent population
Site clubs
Community groups
Website
Quarterly newsletter
Insert into utility bills (mail outside city limits – cost)
Include Pinehurst community
JPR – bulletin for posting community events, radio spots
Chalkboard, ESD station (channel) – news release
Rotary and other community clubs – Key Communicators help with this
Work sessions – similar to AQEM

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Jeanne Peterson, Executive Secretary

Chair

Clerk