Communication Vital to WRPS

Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools recognizes the importance of gathering and sharing information about the work that takes place in the classroom and building relationships with parents and community members. Implementing a strategic communications plan helps to ensure that community interactions are used to gather and convey key information so the division can achieve its goals and objectives for students.

The school division spans a large geography and schools encompass everything from large urban settings to small rural centres. There are communication issues and challenges that are unique to each school and impact on the kinds of communications tools and strategies that schools and the Division utilizes. For example, there are schools that recognize the value of having an appealing, interactive web site, but do not have the resources to design one or the in-house expertise to handle regular updates.

During community consultations most parents indicated that they find the monthly school newsletter the most useful communications tool, and find the calendar included with each newsletter the most helpful feature. A small number of parents indicated that they were interested in receiving more information from the division related to bussing issues, particularly in regards to inclement weather.

The Division continues to implement a strategic communication plan to meet the needs of parents and members of the community. For example:

- The Division web site has been updated and revamped to include better functionality, bussing information, specific resources like What’s New and What’s Happening, more photos and improved graphics (located at www.wrps.ab.ca).
- School web sites have been revamped to include better functionality, simplifying the maintenance of the web sites, and the addition of an e-Teacher section for students and parents that provides information about assignments, homework and tests.
- The production of a brochure to provide an overview of all schools in the Division.
- The production of a Back to School newspaper insert to report on school improvement initiatives and the positive impact on student achievement.
- The creation and distribution of a monthly newsletter called Board Highlights to provide current and relevant information about the issues Board of Trustees is addressing.
- The celebration at each regular Board meeting of students who have excelled and staff who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to helping students.
- The improvement to the Division’s visual identity by updating and modernizing the existing logo.
• The creation of templates for individual school newsletters, brochures and other materials to make their production easier and more consistent.
• The improvement of public consultations by holding three public meetings in separate locations throughout the Division to make it easier for parents to attend.

We are continuing to work to improve communication based on the critical input provided by students, parents and staff. The initiatives outlined above are only examples of some of the changes that have occurred and that we hope parents and staff will find to be of value.

The attached publication is an example of the **Board Highlights** document that was introduced this year and will be produced monthly. **Board Highlights** will be distributed to principals and School Council Presidents on a monthly basis. Parents can access this document from the Division web site. Staff may access the document from the Division web site or it may be posted in the staffroom by the principal.

The importance of communication is evidenced further in the results from last year’s public consultations. The Board of Trustees developed eleven strategies based on the ideas and suggestions of parents who attended the public consultations. The majority of these strategies are being implemented during the 2009 – 2010 school year. As an example, based on parental input the Board has initiated a comprehensive review of the Division’s educational facilities. The review by an outside consultant will deliver analysis, options and recommendations that will form the basis of a Ten Year Capital Plan. The intent of the review is to create educational spaces that are as sustainable as possible, within limited financial resources.

The Board of Trustees continues to work to improve communication with all stakeholders as it endeavors to help our students be the best they can be.

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