Communications Committee Annual Report

2020-2021

Chair: Yeages Cowan

Committee Members: Adam Lee, Garrick Young, Mini Varughese, Jenn Sawin

**The Year At a Glance**

Our overall vision is to establish a communications platform that will effectively support MCCPTA’s engagement and advocacy efforts by ensuring the accurate, timely and pertinent dissemination of knowledge and information to all parents, students, families and school communities served by MCCPTA. Our main focus this year has been to work on putting in place a communications framework for MCCPTA.

This began with an internal audit of our current channels of communication and infrastructure, and our committee decided that our first action items should relate to improving and organizing our current communications infrastructure and protocols in a more cohesive and efficient manner.

**Highlights**

1. Social Media.

* We established a firm presence on Facebook, working to disseminate information and discussion around topical issues through the use of Facebook Groups. The MCCPTA COVID-19 Group, which initially had a life of its own, was eventually wrestled into a more easily moderated forum to express views and opinions of our MCCPTA community, and to disseminate information, in an engaging, courteous manner.
* We also established a protocol for committees to request private Facebook groups specifically tailored to their area of interest, all of which would be branded under the MCCPTA umbrella. Revamp MCCPTA’s website, beginning with a vision for the website i.e., what is the purpose of MCCPTA’s website and a roadmap for the website.
* We are in the process of merging our MCCPTA Group with the MCCPTA COVID-19 page.

2. Website. The Committee obtained approval for a complete revamp of our website. We obtained several bids and decided on a contractor, Bobblehead Design, to work with us on revamping our website. We have completed an architecture document, which will form the basis of the content and form of our website, and the new website is expected to go live for the start of the school year. We are hopeful that our new website will allow us to communicate more effectively with parent advocates as well as our general community.

3. MCPS Communications. We established a relationship with the MCPS Communications team, and meet with the team on a monthly basis. We have communicated, strongly and often, the need for clearer, more transparent communication from MCPS in a form that is easy to digest. We believe that we have made significant progress in working with MCPS – the “Five Things You Need to Know that MCPS started to send out was a product of our monthly discussions with MCPS. We are also happy to report that MCPS has requested our assistance/feedback with recent communications, including a press release around the use of Chromebooks during the return to school and the Virtual Academy survey. One of the highlights of our year was building this relationship with the MCPS Communications team in order to foster trust and co-operation.

4. E-Lists. We expanded the e-lists to include a “push” only list, which allows information to be sent out to the local PTSA board members that subscribe to our e-lists. We also created a List of Rules & Procedures with respect to posting on the e-lists, which has enhanced civil discourse amongst our members.

5. Press. We have worked with the President to build our relationships with the press so that we can highlight the work of MCCPTA and our decisions, values and priorities in the media.

**Where we could have done better**

1. We have not made major inroads into disseminating information more broadly to our community and local PTSA members, including particularly to hard-to-serve communities and in different languages to create greater accessibility. To this end, we have started to work on digitizing the blue book through the use of a directory platform, that would also ideally have a messaging platform that would allow us to send out information more directly to our committees, delegates and local PTSA members.
2. We have not been able to meet as a committee as often as we should have.

**Goals for Next Year**

1. Work on a directory platform to replace the Blue Book.
2. Work on dissemination of information by broadening our channels of communication to reach a greater percentage of our stakeholders, with a particular focus on non-traditional communication channels and underserved communities.
3. Work on expanding our social media presence.