

Communications Committee Annual Report

*August 2015 – April 2016
Submitted by Isabel Pipolo*

Committee's Stated Goals:

- ◆ Collaborate with the district to represent the public face of the PTO
- ◆ Develop, update, and maintain the PTO's website and social media accounts
- ◆ Manage and expand the PTO's email contact list
- ◆ Promote the PTO through email and social media posts
- ◆ Design & produce flyers to publicize events

Members and Meetings:

The first and only committee meeting was held on October 19th and was attended by one parent, in addition to the chair. No further in-person meetings have been held, due to the lack of response from parents or staff members.

Over the course of the year, I have successfully reached out to certain parents for help with discrete tasks, such as translating texts into Spanish, designing the concert program layout, and counting out programs for our concert ad fundraiser.

Accomplishments:

Website

- ◆ Created hosting account with InMotion Hosting, to be renewed annually in September (at approximately \$130/year)
- ◆ Created email addresses for all Executive Committee members
- ◆ Designed and developed PTO website, which currently consists of about 20 pages; including sections for individual committees, mission/purpose, contact info, calendar listings, school building info, and administrative archives, plus detailed pages on fundraising projects, special events, and volunteering opportunities
- ◆ Performed periodic updates to website throughout the year as needed, to add relevant information and maintain archived files

Website Evaluation/Notes

- ◆ Our hosting account includes unlimited server space, free data backups, and unlimited email addresses with spam protection; customer service has been good and I think this service is working well for our needs
- ◆ According to our web analytics, the site is getting an average of 200-300 unique visitors per month

Contact List

- ◆ Created account with MailChimp and designed templates for email newsletters and info blasts
- ◆ Merged the district's parent email list into our existing mailing list to extend our reach; new email addresses from meeting sign-up sheets are also being added as needed
- ◆ Current email list includes 1253 active addresses; our free account includes up to 2000 recipients
- ◆ 15 email blasts have been sent since October; our MailChimp account is also now linked to our Facebook group, so every eblast is automatically posted on Facebook and can be shared publicly

Contact List Evaluation/Notes

- ◆ Going forward, I think we should send out one detailed newsletter approximately every two months, with smaller updates and reminders going out in the interim, approximately every two weeks
- ◆ MailChimp allows us to easily maintain our email list, because it automatically updates when addresses bounce or recipients unsubscribe themselves; the software also runs live analytics of how many recipients have opened messages and clicked on links
- ◆ The downside of MailChimp is that some email clients filter out our messages as spam

Social Media

- ◆ Created "Peekskill PTO" group on Facebook, which now has 75 members
- ◆ In addition to posting within our own group, I regularly post notices to other local Facebook groups, to promote PTO events and district highlights
- ◆ Created Pinterest account and added a handful of boards with info about hands-on learning and classroom craft project ideas

Flyers and Print Media

- ◆ Created and distributed monthly meeting reminder flyers throughout the year
- ◆ Partnered with district staff to promote all performing arts events
- ◆ Promoted District Open House event to district families, as well as local daycares and nursery schools

Print Media Evaluation/Notes

- ◆ Going forward, I would like to prepare meeting reminder flyers in advance and request that building reps pick them up at the Executive Committee meeting and distribute at each school

Goals for 2016/2017:

- ◆ Create PTO “Welcome Packet” for incoming parents that will be distributed at kindergarten orientation and sent home to newly registered families; packet will include general info about the PTO, as well as information about volunteering and passive fundraising
- ◆ Create a “General Info” handout that summarizes our mission and projects, for parents that are unfamiliar with the role of a PTA/PTO
- ◆ Create section on website dedicated to “what we support,” including all the programs and projects we funded this year
- ◆ Create section on website dedicated to “volunteering/class parent orientation,” including the district’s volunteer application forms, general info on background check requirements, and links to online sign-up sheets
- ◆ Add photo galleries for cultural enrichment and special events as they occur
- ◆ Complete the Spanish translation of the website
- ◆ Expand our social media presence on Pinterest and Twitter
- ◆ Complete a district-wide promotional brochure that can be shared with prospective families and local realtors
- ◆ Reach out to parents and encourage them to post positive reviews of the school district on the district’s Facebook page and greatschools.org.
- ◆ If we can recruit at least one or two tech-savvy volunteers, it would help with online promotion of district events and accomplishments

Conclusions:

Since there seems to be limited interest among parents and staff to participate in this aspect of the PTO, I would propose that we restructure this committee into the role of a communications coordinator. Now that most of the major development tasks have been completed, I think that maintaining PTO communications and correspondence could be managed by a single individual. If we can recruit one or two assistants to help with expanding our social media presence (in both languages), that would be very helpful.