



Scarsdale Union Free School District Communications Plan 2015-16

About Us

As past generations have built today's Scarsdale, so does this generation recognize its responsibility to the future. We seek to develop young people to their fullest, to help them to become self-reliant, lifelong learners who can reach beyond themselves. Our stories are as individual as the children, but a common thread is teaching of unusual quality and a community united in dedication to learning.

The Scarsdale Public Schools aim to provide an intellectually powerful and humane education. They share a commitment to active and challenging learning. Recent years have seen a growing emphasis on common standards, assessments and curriculum. However, the District's greatest strengths are still individual students and teachers, the quality of the encounter between them, and the strong sense of mission shared by school and home.

Our Mission

The Scarsdale Public Schools seek to sponsor each student's full development, enabling our youth to be effective and independent contributors in a democratic society and an interdependent world. To this end, we endeavor to help students to think and express themselves clearly, critically and creatively; to understand themselves and others within the broad fabric of human experience and the natural universe; to appreciate their rights and responsibilities as citizens; and to become people of integrity, maturity and generous spirit. A measure of our success is the degree to which they fulfill their potential for the common good, *non sibi*--not for themselves alone. Valuing our individuality, we unite to keep the flame of learning fervent.

Our Beliefs

Families, religious and other social institutions, the community as a whole, as well as the schools and each student, share responsibility for achieving the Mission. We believe success is most likely when all dedicate their fullest individual energies to this enterprise, understanding one another, communicating well, and cooperating. In recognition of its part, the Board of Education specifically commits itself and the Scarsdale Public Schools, within available resources, to the following ideals:

- High standards of scholarship in a reasoned and humane atmosphere. An education where adults know each student's mind and person.
- Teaching, guidance and counseling which are caring, reflective, respectful of and responsive to individual aptitudes and needs, while mindful of the greater good.
- A school environment structured to help students develop a growing sense of responsibility and self-discipline, involving them in the development and direction of their own education.
- Integrated, continuous and progressively broadening opportunity in and beyond the classroom for students to grow intellectually and in leadership, self expression, talent and interest.
- An education which reflects awareness of promising and effective new development in theory and methods.

Context

The Scarsdale community, in general, is a very involved, educated, and well-informed citizenry that values Scarsdale Public Schools and their important work, and understands that the education of its children and youth are a shared responsibility of all. Effective communication is, of course, at the heart of that work, and our District understands that well. This includes not only external communication that informs parents and the community at large about the curricular and extracurricular programs and services we provide, and our correlating resource needs and other needs, but, also, two-way communication that involves feedback and dialogue with the community in order to make sure expectations are being met on all fronts. Ensuring that this happens with a large, diverse community is challenging at times.

One way that we have attempted to address this issue is that the Scarsdale Union Free School District has had a public information office for many years with the purpose of having a point person responsible for coordinating communication services, including publications, public and media relations, reporting, information-gathering, and coordinating communiques with various school and community organizations. While the tools employed by that office have changed over time, particularly with the proliferation of technology, our purpose has remained constant: to be active partners in providing an exceptional education to Scarsdale's youth and children.

Community Resources

In addition to a plethora of community amenities and services, Scarsdale has an active and engaged news media cohort. Historically, they have been eager to report School District accomplishments, both formal Board of Education meetings and other meetings and announcements, as well as, stories that illustrate successes of students and staff. These news outlets include the *Scarsdale Inquirer*, hyper-local online news sites (Scarsdale10583.com, Scarsdale HamletHub, Scarsdale Patch and Scarsdale Daily Voice), the Journal News, and, occasionally, cable news.

Stakeholders/Audiences:

- The Scarsdale Union Free School District community in its entirety, which is comprised of approximately 6,100 households, including the Village of Scarsdale and the Mamaroneck Strip. Of those, approximately 2,650 are households of families with students currently enrolled in Scarsdale Public Schools.
- Parents (including the 2,650 households mentioned above)
- School PTA and PT Council officers and members, who put in extensive time and effort as volunteers supporting school programs. They also provide financial support for site-based programs and enrichment opportunities.
- District teachers, administrators and staff
- Current Scarsdale students, along with preschoolers and early childhood students, who receive special services.
- District alumni
- Scarsdale community organizations, including both leaders and members.
- News and media outlets
- Potential Scarsdale residents looking for information about moving here and enrolling their children
- University partnerships, particularly Columbia University, Teachers College, with which we have numerous partnerships, and Bank Street College
- Educators, researchers, writers, and partners from the region, State, Nation, and Globe, who are interested in how we educate our students in Scarsdale, and wish to be thought partners in this work.

Nota Bene: With wide recognition of the challenges related to sharing information across the entire Scarsdale/Mamaroneck Strip community, there will be a strong push this year to have all community constituents “opt in” to District-wide communications, especially our eblasts.

Key District Messages

Although we understand it is important to modulate our messages for various constituency group under differing situations (i.e. student communications might look quite differently than those

geared towards community groups), we believe it is important to keep some key messages at the forefront of all District communiques:

- The Scarsdale Union Free School District continues to be at the forefront of American education, providing an exemplary education to students that not only help each child to fulfill their full potential, but also to be prepared for future learning and life.
- Safety and security of our students is a prime consideration in all District decision-making.
- Scarsdale schools are a human enterprise, and, as such, it is recognized that staff, at all levels, are highly-capable and highly-valued.
- Volunteers, at all levels, are necessary partners and critical to our on-going success.
- Community input is encouraged and is used to inform decisions and practice.
- As an exemplary learning organization, we are committed to continuous learning and growth.
- We are committed to providing outstanding programs for our students, keeping in mind our important fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities to our community.
- Emphasis for our communication practices is not only to share information, but also to focus on active listening.
- During this time of massive political and educational change, everyone plays a role in policy advocacy to maintain local control, so that our schools continue to reflect our community values.

These should be threaded into all communications, whether Board of Education Meetings, District and community presentations, print publications, and all other communiques.

Methods and Timing of Communications

A systematic communications model should assist the District in meeting its communications objectives. Drawing in large part on what has worked successfully in Scarsdale, along with best practices in the area of school communications and public relations research.

First and foremost, the Board of Education and administrative team welcome feedback on the programs and services we offer to our students.

District Administration Contact Information

Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Superintendent of Schools

thagerman@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2410

Dr. Bernard Josefsberg

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Leadership Development

bjosefsberg@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2415

Mr. Stuart Matthey

Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities

smatthey@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2420

Ms. Lynne Shain

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction/

Co-Director, The Center for Innovation

lshain@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2430

Mr. Jerry Crisci

Director of Technology/Co-Director, The Center for Innovation

jcrisci@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2430

Ms. Rachel Moseley

Director of Information Technology/ Chief Information Officer

rmoseley@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2408

Mr. Eric Rauschenbach

Director of Special Education and Pupil Services

erauschenbach@scarsdaleschools.org

914-721-2445

Mr. Ray Pappalardi

Director of Physical Education, Health & Athletics

rpappalardi@scarsdaleschools.org
914-721-3190

Ms. Victoria Free Presser

Public Information Officer

914-721-2525

vpresser@scarsdaleschools.org

Board of Education Contact Information

Maude, Leila

Board of Education, President

lmaude@scarsdaleschools.org

Natbony, William J.

Board of Education, Vice President

wnatbony@scarsdaleschools.org

Fuehrer, Pamela

Board of Education, Trustee

pfuehrer@scarsdaleschools.org

Morin, Christopher

Board of Education, Trustee

cmorin@scarsdaleschools.org

Rublin, Arthur S.

Board of Education, Trustee

arublin@scarsdaleschools.org

Seiden, Suzanne

Board of Education, Trustee

sseiden@scarsdaleschools.org

Silberfein, Scott

Board of Education, Trustee

ssilberfein@scarsdaleschools.org

Communications Schedule:

Annual Communications

1. Back to School Articles by Superintendent & Other administrators
2. Administrative & BOE Back-to-School Letter(s) to Parents, Teachers & Students
3. Convocation Speeches to Staff
4. Presentations at Retirement and Recognition Events
5. Updates and reconfigurations of special publications (such as the Emergency Guide for parents, staff handbooks for substitute teachers and teacher aides, and brochures on the Employee Assistance Program and payroll savings programs)

Quarterly Communications:

1. The District newsletter, *Insight*, is published quarterly and mailed to all Scarsdale households. This publication has historically included articles by District leaders, school highlights, and news regarding faculty. The following is a plan for *Insight* for the coming year:
 - a. Fall--(1) Back-to-School and (2) Teaching and Learning (2015-18 Transition Plan Goals)
 - b. Winter--(1) Teaching and Learning (2015-18 Transition Plan Goals) and (2) Facilities
 - c. Spring--(1) Teaching and Learning (2015-18 Transition Goals) and (2) Budget for Following School Year
 - d. Summer--(1) Year in Review & (2) Teaching and Learning (2015-18 Transition Plan Goals)

Monthly/Weekly Communications:

1. Proposed schedule for weekly eblasts per month:
 - a. 1st week--PTA
 - b. 2nd--School/principal (teaching and learning, teachers, innovation, impact on students)
 - c. 3rd--PTA
 - d. 4th--District (Departments: Curriculum, Technology, Physical Education and Athletics, Facilities, Human Capital, Special Education and Pupil Services, Superintendent & BOE Highlights)--Focus on Teaching & Learning, Impact on Students & Growth of District. Suggested topics by month:

- i. Sept.--Back to School (Portfolios; Balanced Literacy, curricular consistency)
- ii. Oct.--Facilities & Learning
- iii. Nov.--Student Activities, Clubs, Organizations & Athletics
- iv. Dec.--Technology & Innovation/ STEAM
- v. Jan.-- World Language & Fine & Performing Arts
- vi. Feb.--Human Resources (hiring, retention, professional development), innovations & STI
- vii. Mar.--Lessons/Voices from Students
- viii. Apr.--Experiential and Culmination Projections (Capstone, ePortfolio, Senior Options, 9th Grade)
- ix. May--Feedback & Assessment (student, evaluation, metrics, portfolios)
- x. June--Recap (student experiences...)

Other Communications Considerations Without Designated Times:

News Media:

1. We will continue to work with local reporters in a timely fashion to encourage their coverage of events and activities, send them photos of events, and answer all inquiries.
2. We will continue to solicit feedback at regular intervals in order to improve relations and efficiencies.

Social Media:

1. We will continue to use Facebook to post photos and captions that illustrate school activities on a weekly basis on the official District Facebook public page.
2. We will consult with experts in the field and review best practices to utilize other social media tools, such as Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, as methods of enhancing District communications and visibility.
3. We will work with District staff developers to ensure that teachers have appropriate professional development to use these tools both technically and ethically.

District Website:

1. We will redesign the website this Fall, to make sure that the information there is complete, current, and easily accessible as well as responsive for use on a variety of devices in order to encourage ease of use.
2. The re-designed website will serve as a repository for District information, helping to promote clarity, transparency, and understanding.
3. We will develop a plan for regular review and revision.

Alumni:

1. We will take over the Alumni database over the course of the year.

2. Once established, we will design appropriate communiques that help alumni to stay connected to the District on important issues.
3. Once established, we will design a plan in order to connect current students with alumni for purposes of collaboration on school assignments, college admissions, internships, and the like.

Limitations of the Plan & Strategic Focus

This plan is being developed with the full understanding that it is the first of its kind for the District. The intention is to codify current practice, as well as, to expand and enhance our offerings. Another important piece of this work is the recognition that we will need to review and revise this plan, in real time, and at other regular designated times, in order to ensure we are meeting our aims with this work.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan, we will also identify metrics this year for determining effectiveness of our communications moving forward. It is our intention to use data that we gather this year to inform a more strategic vision for communications moving into the 2016-2017 school year.