

PAC- Two Way Communication Subcommittee Report

Purpose

- Vision and Focus of the group

The mission of the PAC Two Way Communication Subcommittee shall be to continue and strengthen existing advocacy efforts of the Parent Advisory Committee toward establishing true, two-way communication between the PAC and parents at LAUSD school sites.

The vision of this Subcommittee shall be that parents at all District school sites are in regular communication with the PAC, through the LCAP Study Groups, and that the PAC is

likewise in regular communication with parents at school sites. This strong, two-way communication will both increase student academic achievement throughout the LAUSD and support District LCAP Goal 4: Parent, Community & Student Engagement.

12/12/22

Focus-Discussion of Vision and Focus of the group

Outcome -Participants will identify the area of focus and review the purpose of 2-way subcommittee.

Two-way Subcommittee discussions were held to explain the vision and focus of the group as well as providing descriptions of subcommittee roles and responsibilities for leadership positions that were open. Nominations and elections for Chairperson and Secretary positions were held. Candidates provided testimony on qualifications and desire to be representatives. Elections were finalized for the positions and it was announced that the Chairperson elected was Carlos Aguilar and Secretary was Griselda Perez.

1/30/23

Focus-Expanding outreach and communication channels

Outcome-Identify ways LAUSD distributes information about PAC and other important parent engagement information and develop best-practices that enhance outreach efforts.

At this month's meeting we discussed existing ways LAUSD connects to parents and challenges faced through different applications and platforms such as:

- Blackboard Connect
- Texting
- Parent Portal

- School Website
- U.S.Postal Service
- LAUSD Website

As we went over the various ways LAUSD attempts to communicate with parents, participants shared what their experiences had been and how easy or difficult it was using the platforms. Participants welcomed the outreach but felt improvements could be made to increase parent engagement and questions regarding the efficiency of the platforms used by LAUSD came up.

Some parents raised concerns about the varying quality of outreach and information available to them. Parents felt standards were not uniform across LAUSD schools and accountability was missing to ensure high standards of and communication with parents were met.

Some felt inundated with notifications without proper identification as to where they were coming from or for which specific student they were reaching out about.

When information was available, it was not always up-to-date and sometimes school website info was months behind schedule or was poorly laid out, making it hard for parents to find opportunities to participate. LAUSD's website was not considered a great source of information either since it was too big and finding particular info was extremely challenging to search for since information was divided amongst the various programs and projects within LAUSD that had their own pages.

Also, when texts or emails were received, they were missing information regarding the topic, had no info on how to connect or had bad links as well as not being transferable between platforms or services and no point-of-contact was posted to get assistance or more info.

It was shared that LAUSD was still using U.S. mail to send information, news, and all information related to the students but it was noted that not all parents were receiving this information in a timely manner or the information was outdated by the time it was received.

Next Steps

We need commitment from PCS staff that they will move forward with all comments made today with incremental results in the coming months and will continue to develop. Discussions around LAUSD communication with parents continued at the following session before we began drafting recommendations for the PAC. At this meeting it was requested the appropriate LAUSD staff who manages outgoing communications with parents be invited to the next PAC 2-way communication subcommittee.

2/13/23

Focus-Share with Study groups, parent centers, region offices, coffee with the principals

Outcome-Prepare/develop recommendations to share with PAC

At last month's meeting we discussed existing ways LAUSD connects to parents and challenges faced through different applications and platforms. As we continued that discussion, there was an understanding that the existing tools are not always effective and efficient means of communication.

Technological communications tools are commonly used by LAUSD but in this meeting we focused more on what options parents themselves had to promote participation and increase engagement such as:

- Study groups
- Parent Centers
- Regional offices
- Coffee with the principals
- Parent Associations

We discussed how parent engagement was perceived by both the school admin and the parents themselves in these spaces. It was noted that sometimes Study Groups and Parent Associations have technical knowledge on specific subjects that can be share at the local school level but barriers to presenting prevent that sharing of information and knowledge and Coffee with the Principal and Regional Offices are not viewed by parents as rigid and top-down management that limits access and parent involvement.

A plan to improve communication between parents, district and local schools should be created and nurtured that connects to work that supports students. We agreed that parent engagement starts with respect for the parent and is supported by open communication and transparency with tangible achievements along the way.

Parents need to believe District staff has a real interest in their participation and that work put in will bear results because in certain instances, what was planned 25 years ago still has not developed and the same mistakes keep happening.

Parents shared concerns about teachers not checking their emails, taking too long to reply or just simply being ignored. Parents don't want to feel their school admin and teachers are not accessible or are dismissive. This undermines the relationship-building efforts of LAUSD and already active parents.

Defining parent engagement as only the number of people that show up to activities is limiting the relationship. Parents should not be seen as a passive audience to target for turn-out to events only.

We also need to understand that parent engagement is a challenge for the modern-day family and not even technology can be relied on since some parents are not tech-savvy or are working in industries that limit their chances to participate.

Sometimes school admin blames the parent for not showing up to the meetings and events but parents understand the need to participate and share info with our schools. They are just looking for easy-to-find, accessible opportunities to participate in their children's school.

Parents feel they are underestimated and undervalued and it shouldn't be that way. Parents come with so many skills and experiences to share but sometimes they don't feel the support for their involvement, aren't offered ways they can help or are simply excluded.

This is a good reason Thought Exchange opportunities to share insights, thought, recommendations, observations should not be limited to a few participants. Countless parents are missing that opportunity that should not only be made available to PAC members or members of any LAUSD committees and official meetings at SSC, ELAC, LSLC and others should always encourage public comment. The District should not limit input out of fear of honest criticism.

In regards to committees, parents hear about the PAC committee at the district level but not within schools. There should be more effort made to introduce the various committees and subcommittees at the local school level, share their goals and the impact they can have in creating better environments at school by bringing in decision makers and have the dialogue on issues, brainstorm solutions and create a plan of action.

We need to have an open discussion and consider applying recommended changes through Schoology, along with DELAC, PAC and other partner committees. We have a lot of work to do and bring these concerns and other to a discussion with committees such as SSC, ELAC, and others at our local school.

Next Steps

Develop a Report for PAC

3/13/23

Focus-Presentation on LAUSD Communications. Recommendations to the PAC.

Outcome- Finalize recommendations developed with the Parent Advisory Committee for approval

This month focused on the LAUSD Office of BlackBoard MASS notification presentation by Paul Ishimaru who shared how blackboard connect works to connect with parents via email, calls and text. He shared that based on his understanding of response data, text is more efficient and preferred. He answered question about effectiveness of messaging program as well as took on concerns that will help his team improve the mass outreach process for LAUSD families.

This was the final meeting of the 2-Way Subcommittee for the 2022-2023 school year.

PAC 2 Way Communication Sub Committee Recommendations For LAUSD:

1. Create a welcoming environment for parents to participate and be involved.
2. LAUSD website to implement a top 10 topics list for quicker location of info.
3. Thought Exchange opportunities to share insights, thought, recommendations, observations should not be exclusive to parents participating in the various LAUSD committees but should be open to all parents at all the local schools.
4. Provide parents an "Interest Form" at schools with info on all committees at the district level.
5. Make greater efforts to Bridge the Digital Divide
6. Provide Flexible hours/days to participate
7. Parent Centers should be allowed to host touring workshops on various topics
8. Simplify event registration process to increase participation
9. There should be more effort made to introduce the various committees and subcommittees at the local level.
10. Do a follow up on accountability at the local school level. Sometimes when there is a change in the school websites, parents are not aware and or are not up to date and/or information is missing.
11. If you completed any training you should be offered a certificate of completion.
12. Have PAC do trainings at local schools on ways to get involved and how to participate in PAC and subcommittees.
13. Refine parent engagement as not only the number of people that show up to activities. Parents should be able to engage, be active and share in development and implementation of events and activities.
14. When Parents sign up get texts, emails and other communication there should be a way for parents to modify preferences to reduce the number of notices received.
15. LAUSD needs to develop an information tracker to know and be able to check if any text, email, or a letter is reaching their destination.
16. Simplify parent volunteer process and be more transparent about opportunities.
17. School websites need to be taken more seriously and updated as part of communication plan to reach parents, reinforcing it and having a specific budget allocation for schools to administer the school websites, give maintenance and keep it up to date.
18. When sending messages make sure it is shareable/compatible through all platforms, if it's text, parents should be able to forward it to email, and vice versa.
19. When a text or email is sent out make sure it has the attachment or a working link of the event.
20. When sending texts or emails they should include information regarding the topic, how to connect, have tested links to make sure they are not locked and are transferable between platforms or services with a point-of-contact posted to get assistance or more info.
21. It will be helpful if teachers send out News, things going on at school or your students' classroom, on weekly reminders on Fridays.

22. Choose a phone number that is clearly identified for each LAUSD department and program so parents can more easily determine if a message is coming from local school, the district or specific program.
23. Schoology should have more clear information for parents looking for missing work from students and the teacher should be more specific, take the time to enter detailed information such as number of pages if it's from a book, or if it was a hand out paper for parents to help the student.
24. Have resources ready to help with the missing assignments.
25. Explore a different platform besides Schoology for a better/easy access to all student information.
26. Add within the parent portal upcoming workshops with subject title, time and date.
27. Have real time notifications when a student is absent and or late.
28. Continue to reach out to parents and seek their input.
29. Let the district and all personnel involved, stakeholders, committees, and school principals add a topic during their Personal Development training on responding to parents in a timely manner.
30. The District should invite parents to give feedback and get suggestions or provide orientations before they launch any kind of platform or effort, and make it available to all LAUSD parents who want to participate.

For LAUSD PARENTS:

1. Emphasized the importance of checking your language preference when you enroll your children. The way you filled that form is how the school office will enter the information on the computer. Language preference goes to MiSis when the parents select the language preference during the enrollment so making sure parents choose what they speak at home for LAUSD to contact them in that preferred language.
2. Parents should verify your account at school if you notice you're not receiving information, and or reminders from school.

Submitted by: *Carlos Aguilar* (Chair)