

Last week I spent a great deal of time reading the Communications Audit prepared by Steve Densmore and have several comments. I would like to thank Steve Densmore for the work he did on the Communications Audit. I think the report addressed several areas that the district needs to improve on and offered valuable suggestions as to how these problems might be resolved. I hope that this report will lead to the resolution of at least some of the communication problems faced by our District.

I would like to point out several areas that the report failed to address and why I think these items merited inclusion in the communications audit. The items are:

- Phone systems and usage
- Automated telephone message delivery system.
- Correspondence
- Freedom of Information Law Responses

Phone Systems & Usage

The District phone system is in need of some updating. I have called different buildings where the phone rings without being answered and without a voicemail system to leave a message. I have called the Middle school and selected the option for guidance only to be transferred to the operator in the administration building. Why does the phone system offer the same options across all schools when they don't make any sense? The elementary schools offer options for attendance and guidance offices that they don't have and I have yet to figure what to press to get the main office at the Middle School. Caller ID lists most calls from the District as coming from "Anonymous." Lastly, I have no idea what "please stand by while we perform a security check" means but I suspect it wastes time more than anything.

Automated Telephone Message Delivery System

I don't know if all of the schools have automated message delivery capability but this should have definitely been included in the communications audit. Smith School has this capability and utilizes the system quite a bit. Mr. Letterii uses the system to convey information about fund raising, holidays, testing, Superintendent Days and other school events. The system efficiently delivers messages at a low cost and in a timely fashion. While it is my understanding that the Middle School also has this capability, I cannot remember receiving a single message this year from their automated system. In fact, last week my son missed three days of school in a row and no one from the school contacted me either through an automated system or otherwise.

Correspondence

The issue of correspondence to and from individuals outside the district was not addressed. It has been my experience that the District really needs some improvement when it comes to correspondence. I would like to offer examples of several problems from my personal experience:

- None of my letters to any Board member have ever received a written response or even an acknowledgement of receipt.

- In previous correspondence with the Superintendents office I have never received a written reply or acknowledgement.
- I have yet to receive any response to a letter written to a building principal on February 23.

All correspondence sent to the District deserves the courtesy of a timely reply.

FOIL

The last item on my list is FOIL. While this is related to correspondence it is also significantly different and justifies a category of its own. New York's Freedom of Information Law allows anyone to request copies of records maintained by state or local government including public school districts. Under FOIL I have requested documents from the District, some past responses I have received include:

- "We are not in possession of these documents", when in fact the documents do exist
- Documents are "not available at this time"
- Exceeding the time allowed to respond to a request
- Twice I received no response to an appeal of a denial

While some of the items are not in the spirit of the law several are violations of New York State Public Officers Law.

I would consider any report that did not include these items incomplete and I urge the Board to request that these items be made part of the Communications Audit.

Raymond K. Duncan