

**SCARSDALE FORUM INC.**

**Report of the Education Committee**

**On**

**A Proposal for the Formation of a**

**School Community Communications Committee**

The Committee proposes the following Resolution for adoption by the Scarsdale Forum:

**RESOLVED**, that the Report of the Education Committee, on A Proposal for the Formation of a School Community Communications Committee, recommending (1) the formation of a neutral, independent School Community Communications Committee, organized as a permanent entity for the purpose of facilitating collaborative communication and participation among stakeholders in the Scarsdale learning community and education hierarchy, and (2) that the School Community Communications Committee serve in an advisory role, making its recommendations to the learning community and educational hierarchy decision-makers, be approved.

**MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Transparent, substantive, timely and ongoing communications between the School District Administration (the “District”), the Board of Education (the “BOE”) and other stakeholders in the Scarsdale learning community are integral to the success of strategic and tactical plans, initiatives, and enhancements to school structure, curriculum and teaching methods. Recent events around the Covid-19 pandemic situation suggest that not all components of this communications and participation paradigm have been achieved among this community of stakeholders.

Effective communication and participation by stakeholders must be a high priority in the District. This level of communication and participation must be built on strong, trusting relationships supported by transparency. Transparency is demonstrated by providing stakeholders with all relevant information and through involvement during the earliest days of planning and policy development, as opposed to the middle or end of the process when many of the important decisions have already been deliberated. Community reaction to the District’s recently released Restart Plan<sup>1</sup> appears to indicate that there is a need for a broader communication and participation system than currently exists, providing the stakeholder

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://sites.google.com/scarsdaleschools.org/scarsdale-restart/home>.

community with a high degree of more transparent, substantive, timely, ongoing and effective communication opportunities.

The Scarsdale Forum Education Committee (the “Committee”) recommends the formation of a neutral, independent School Community Communications Committee (the “SCCC”), organized and operated as a permanent entity in collaboration with the District and community. The purpose of the SCCC is to promote synergistic communication and participation among and between educators, parents, students, the wider Scarsdale community, the BOE and the District, among other stakeholders in the Scarsdale learning community and educational hierarchy.

It is important that the SCCC be intentionally and carefully separate from decision-making bodies in order to build trust. It needs to be clear to all that it is independent and not in support of any given perspective on educational issues. The essential reason for gathering different perspectives on this committee is to ensure its neutrality, not to represent decision-making stakeholders. Its job is rather to facilitate trusted information gathering and dissemination, and weigh in on data analysis and survey creation/collection/follow-up questioning to assist all parties to make fully informed timely decisions, and to reduce confusion and anxiety among stakeholders. In its role as a neutral facilitator, the SCCC would serve in an advisory role and make its recommendations to District decision-makers who also have representation on the SCCC.

The Committee believes that collaborative, meaningful communication and participation is the key to fostering community engagement with and trust among all stakeholders. In the absence of open, accessible and effective communication and participation channels, a collaborative approach to decision-making, and full transparency in the decision-making process, community and school district stakeholders may tend to make their own determinations independent of other equally important stakeholders. Such a construct, in which communication and information sharing is often filtered through back channels such as social media, may tend to result in misinformation and misperceptions that could be avoided by a more inclusive, diverse community-based communication paradigm.

The communication and participation framework the Committee recommends will facilitate the real time exchange of ideas and opinions, and provide all stakeholders with constructive, inclusive opportunities to share their knowledge, insights, and above all planning, policy development, and decision-making experience to benefit the education of Scarsdale’s students and support for their teachers.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Background**

Stakeholders in the Scarsdale learning community are generally considered to be the BOE, the District, educators, students, parents and community members. All stakeholders

share the same aspiration – to achieve world-class excellence in the education provided to our children.

The District has made major inroads in communicating with stakeholders in the learning community by maintaining a Public Information Office, headed by a Director of Public Information. The office:

- Publishes the District newsletter, *Insight*;
- Distributes Board of Education meeting notices, meeting highlights, and the *'Dale Dispatch* (administration updates) via Constant Contact emails;
- Responds to media inquiries and distributes school news to local media; and
- Provides current and potential residents with information about our schools.<sup>2</sup>

Through the District's website there is an opportunity for the public to join various email distribution lists.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Parent Teacher Associations, or PTAs, of each school distribute weekly eblasts to its members. Also, stakeholders have the opportunity to make statements during the public comments periods of BOE meetings

The BOE and District recognized the need for a greater focus on increasing participation and improving communications with stakeholders through the creation of a Board Committee on Community Engagement (the “BCCE”) at the end of 2019, just prior to the closing of schools due to the pandemic. The BCCE met twice and also arranged two listening sessions for residents and community organizations in early 2020. Furthermore, the District developed a Communications Plan in 2015-16, and the District has been tasked with updating and refining that plan as an action item from the BCCE meetings.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that the Committee and many in our community greatly appreciate efforts by the District, BOE and educators in meeting the educational, organizational and operational challenges resulting from the pandemic during the 2019/2020

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.scardsaleschools.k12.ny.us/domain/6> .

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.scardsaleschools.k12.ny.us/> .

<sup>4</sup> See Board of Education Community Engagement Committee Minutes, at <https://www.scardsaleschools.k12.ny.us/Page/28804>; Scarsdale Union Free School District communications Plan 2015-16, at <https://www.scardsaleschools.k12.ny.us/cms/lib5/NY01001205/Centricity/Domain/1/CommunicationsPlanSeptember2015.pdf>; BOE 2019-11-20 Community Engagement video, at [https://vimeo.com/374520016?utm\\_source=Board+of+Education+Community+Engagement+Listening+Sessions&utm\\_campaign=BOE+Highlights+%2B+Announcements&utm\\_medium=email](https://vimeo.com/374520016?utm_source=Board+of+Education+Community+Engagement+Listening+Sessions&utm_campaign=BOE+Highlights+%2B+Announcements&utm_medium=email); Scarsdale Board of Education Community Engagement Sub-Committee December 13, 2019 meeting, at [https://vimeo.com/379822222?utm\\_source=Board+of+Education+Community+Engagement+Listening+Sessions&utm\\_campaign=BOE+Highlights+%2B+Announcements&utm\\_medium=email](https://vimeo.com/379822222?utm_source=Board+of+Education+Community+Engagement+Listening+Sessions&utm_campaign=BOE+Highlights+%2B+Announcements&utm_medium=email); Board of Education Listening Session, BOE 2020-01-29 Community Engagement, at <https://vimeo.com/scardsaleschoolstv/boe-2019-2020/page/4>; BOE 2020-02-25 Community Engagement II, at <https://vimeo.com/scardsaleschoolstv/boe-2019-2020/page/3> .

school year. Similarly, the Committee and residents recognize the innumerable hours of thought, wisdom and dedication expended by the District, Board, educators and a select group of stakeholders to develop the Restart Plan for the 2020/2021 academic year. The District has also demonstrated flexibility in re-considering and adjusting various components of the plan with the start of the school year.

Despite the best efforts of the District, BOE and educators and the presence of the communication channels noted above, during the initial phases of the pandemic and continuing during the summer, many stakeholders desired more interactive opportunities to express their thoughts over remote learning experiences. In addition, there appeared to be heightened interest among stakeholders in becoming more involved in the development of the Restart Plan. The desire for a higher level of participation can be related to issues that were raised in Zoom listening sessions conducted by the BOE and District, as well as in social media and print media. Among the concerns expressed publicly by many stakeholders were the need for greater transparency; more clarity and detail in plan components such as the degree of in-school instruction vs. remote learning; eLearning technologies and methods; measurement and achievement of academic growth and performance; selection criteria for Restart Committee Task Force representatives; extent of educator involvement in formulating plans; synchronous vs. asynchronous learning opportunities; and contingency plans based on changing health conditions, etc.<sup>5</sup>

This community dialogue raised issues relating to the decision-making process; a greater level of confusion than perhaps necessary among stakeholders; a number of surveys post-plan development to gauge public opinions and to gather important information such as parent preferences for school structure alternatives and transportation requirements; revisions to the draft plan; varied perceptions of BOE and District leadership; competing factions among parents; approximately 30 hours of listening sessions sponsored by the BOE and District; and hundreds of questions on plan components posed to the BOE and District leadership just prior to the required submission date to the State, and continuing after submission.

Based on the comments made during public discussions of the Restart Plan, it does not appear that the Restart Steering Committee, nor its Task Groups, nor the public comment

---

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., The Scarsdale Inquirer: “Schools grapple with plans for fall restart” (July 31, 2020), at <https://bit.ly/2Ya5oWe>; “Scarsdale’s evolving return to school plan released” (August 7, 2020), at <https://bit.ly/3kOb4Pv>; “Scarsdale teachers fear for health at schools” (August 14, 2020), at <https://bit.ly/3248dJp>. Scarsdale Public Schools Education Television: BOE Listening Session (2020-07-28), at <https://vimeo.com/442691410>; BOE Restart Planning Public Forum (2020-08-06), at <https://vimeo.com/445366363>; BOE Restart Plan Special Meeting (2020-08-06), at <https://vimeo.com/445375247>; BOE 2020-08-06 Listening Session, at <https://vimeo.com/445417317>; BOE Business Meeting (2020-08-11), at <https://vimeo.com/447097366>; BOE Restart Plan Public Forum (2020-08-13), at <https://vimeo.com/447800338>.

periods during BOE meetings, have served as adequate forums for stakeholders to express fully their views, opinions and questions, with the expectation of receiving timely and substantive feedback. It appears instead that the communication strategy and levels of stakeholder participation that were developed for the Restart project may have fallen short of achieving its goals.

Stakeholder reaction to the process suggested to this Committee that a mechanism for better, more timely, and ongoing communication and participation is required. Indeed, discussions about the District's Restart Plan served as a catalyst for the Committee's recommendation to form the SCCC, structured to serve as a permanent entity involved in the issues of the forthcoming school year and beyond. The SCCC would provide the community with additional "communication bandwidth" to give stakeholders who do not have effective access to the other communication opportunities a neutral, independent environment in which to participate in the broader discussion of education issues, and as an additional resource for expertise, research and analysis.

### **Proposal Overview**

The fundamental purpose of this proposal for the formation of an inclusive, independent SCCC, organized and operated in collaboration with the District and the community, is to provide a workable platform that will enable a diverse group of school and community stakeholders to maintain an ongoing, relevant, innovative dialogue as a vital adjunct to help inform successful District planning, policy development, decision-making and operations. This Report is intended to present the broad outline of a framework for the SCCC, in support of the ultimate goal of building a positive communications and participatory culture among stakeholders who share a commonality of interests in maintaining the excellence of Scarsdale schools.

This proposal envisions the SCCC as an active, vibrant committee, ready to become more or less engaged as events demand, both during periods when communication and participation strategies are necessary to support ongoing information sharing, as well as during the rare occasions when immediate action may become necessary. As current events have shown, an unexpected crisis may consist of power outages greater than several days, or a long-term situation such as a global pandemic that has the potential to exert a profound impact on the lives of stakeholders and the functionality of school operations.

### **Stakeholders**

The Committee expects that such a diverse group of stakeholders who may wish to participate in the SCCC would include, but not be limited to, representatives of the BOE, District, educators from each school level, students, parents whose children attend each of the seven schools, and members of the wider Scarsdale community who do not have children currently attending the schools. In addition to representatives from each stakeholder group, the SCCC would include the District's Director of Public Information and Director of Instructional Technology. These District leaders could provide the expertise to enable the

use and operation of various communication modalities, while the District could provide the necessary technological platforms. Depending on the issue requiring communications and participation among stakeholders, individuals with appropriate expertise, such as health professionals, legal counsel and government liaisons, might be invited to join the SCCC as ad hoc participants.

It is anticipated that there might be some overlap in representation with other established school related organizations. But the objective is not to create redundancy or to duplicate the important work of any one or all of these groups. Confidence in the decision-making process would be paramount, and enhanced, for example, by gauging public opinion and gathering parent and student preferences on a timely basis prior to plan development on issues, while promoting transparency, full disclosure, clarity and detail in BOE and District decision-making. The overarching objective is to create a uniquely neutral, independent environment in which all groups can come together in an effort to effectively coordinate and collaborate on finding solutions to the common issues that engage the whole community of concerned and interested stakeholders.

### **Threshold Issues**

In the process of introducing innovative ideas such as this one, questions about feasibility and public skepticism may arise over “will it work?” and “how will it work?” Related questions could take time to address as part of the process, for example: where does the SCCC's authority derive from, how will the SCCC ensure its independence, how will the SCCC select committee members, where will the SCCC obtain its resources, among others. Suggestions for resolving these issues are provided in this report, although it would be left to stakeholders to address a number of the details as part of the initial work effort of the SCCC.

The process of implementing a new framework will necessarily include examining these important threshold issues. For an examination of some of the hurdles that come up generally, the Committee finds instructive the examination of threshold challenges addressed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Laboratory for Innovation Science & Policy:

“the process begs several questions: which stakeholders must be at the table to ensure effective ecosystem change? Who are the most effective leaders to drive such ecosystem efforts, and under what circumstances? How can diverse stakeholders be brought together effectively? What are the fault lines that characterize the tensions in their interactions, and does it matter if some stakeholders are missing?”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., P. Budden and F. Murray, “MIT's Stakeholder Framework for Building & Accelerating Innovation Ecosystems” (MIT's Laboratory for Innovation Science & Policy, April 2019), retrieved from [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjKxKeiPDrAhXhUd8KHYAArMQFjAAegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Finnovation.mit.edu%2Fassets%2FMIT-Stakeholder-Framework\\_Innovation-Ecosystems.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2nuNp17rvO9JbiWIJtQYLt](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjKxKeiPDrAhXhUd8KHYAArMQFjAAegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Finnovation.mit.edu%2Fassets%2FMIT-Stakeholder-Framework_Innovation-Ecosystems.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2nuNp17rvO9JbiWIJtQYLt).

## **Models for the Framework: Design Thinking, the Charrette, and Scarsdale Advisory Council on Communications**

To answer these and related threshold questions, the SCCC does not have to go too far afield, because it has been done before utilizing “design thinking.”

“Design Thinking is an iterative process in which we seek to understand the user, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems in an attempt to identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent with our initial level of understanding. At the same time, Design Thinking provides a solution-based approach to solving problems. It is a way of thinking and working as well as a collection of hands-on methods. Design Thinking revolves around a deep interest in developing an understanding of the people for whom we’re designing the products or services. It helps us observe and develop **empathy** with the target user. Design Thinking helps us in the process of questioning: questioning the problem, questioning the **assumptions**, and questioning the implications. Design Thinking is extremely useful in tackling problems that are ill-defined or unknown, by re-framing the problem in human-centric ways, creating many ideas in **brainstorming** sessions, and adopting a hands-on approach in **prototyping** and testing. Design Thinking also involves ongoing experimentation: **sketching**, prototyping, testing, and trying out concepts and ideas.”<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, of all the possible models on which to base the structure and process of the SCCC, the charrette might come closest, as advanced recently by the MIT Teaching Systems Laboratory exploration of a school restart plan in the context of Covid-19:

“ In May 2020, we conducted four online design charrettes with school and district leaders, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to translate design-based practices for leading school change into an online context. In this report, we present two meeting protocols: one for multi-stakeholder meetings and one primarily for students. To accompany these protocols, we have sample agenda, online workbooks, and sample notes and exercises from our discussion to help school and district leaders facilitate these kinds of meetings in their own local contexts.

The goal of these meetings was to identify shared values and priorities for reopening schools, to build stakeholder engagement, to seed stakeholder leadership and involvement, and to develop new ideas and structures for reopening schools. In particular,

---

<sup>7</sup> R. F. Dam and T. Y. Siang, “What is Design Thinking and Why Is It So Popular?” (Interaction Design Foundation, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/what-is-design-thinking-and-why-is-it-so-popular>. See also, Community Tool Box, “Developing Multisector Collaborations”, Ch. 24 §4 (Center for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas, 2020), retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/improving-services/multisector-collaboration/main>.

we were interested in “tentpole” ideas, structures and routines that could define a reopening plan and provide an organizational frame for the hundreds of smaller curricular, programmatic, and logistical decisions that will need to be made next year. In a linked report-- “[Imagining September: Principles and Design Elements for Ambitious Schools during Covid-19](#)”- -we have published “storyboards” for a variety of school reopening ideas and structures inspired by the participants in our charrettes.

Re-opening schools in the fall will be a community-wide effort, requiring leadership, innovation, and experimentation from all parts of school systems. Including diverse stakeholders early in the process of imagining September will bring forth a community’s best ideas and invite people through the system to join the work of retooling schools for the challenging year ahead.”<sup>8</sup>

The MIT model provides the detailed guidance on suitable protocols, from planning, materials, meeting preparation and formats, participant design exercises and exchange of ideas, and post-meeting engagement that would help move the SCCC program forward.

While a closer analysis of the academic research in this area is beyond the scope of this Report, the SCCC proposal appears to be in the mainstream. Indeed, MIT has a complete “toolbox” of guidance for the type of structure envisioned for the SCCC in this Report.<sup>9</sup>

Several years ago, Scarsdale Village’s Board of Trustees and Village Administration recognized the need to improve communications methods and content with its residents and initiated a new committee, the Advisory Council on Communications (the “ACC”). The ACC continues to evolve and improve in accordance with the community needs. Membership on the ACC consists of a diverse group of community residents, a member from the Village’s Board of Trustees, and the Deputy Village Manager who also serves as the acting Public Information Officer. In some ways, the ACC functions as a model for the proposed SCCC:

“The Advisory Council on Communications (ACC) works with Village staff to develop communications programs and strategies, and advises the Board of Trustees on related matters. Through promoting professional, effective, and efficient communication with residents, the ACC helps individuals and families to be active

---

<sup>8</sup> Reich and J. Mehta, “Imagining September: Online Design Charrettes for Fall 2020 Planning with Students and Stakeholder” (MIT Teaching Systems Lab, July 3, 2020), retrieved from <https://edarxiv.org/ufr4q>. See also J. Reich and J. Mehta “Imagining September: Principles and Design Elements for Ambitious Schools During COVID-19” (MIT Teaching Systems Lab (July 3, 2020), retrieved from <https://edarxiv.org/gqa2w>.

<sup>9</sup> X. de Souza Briggs, “Organizing Stakeholders, Building Movement, Setting the Agenda” (MIT June 2003), retrieved from [http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy\\_tools/organizing.html](http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy_tools/organizing.html). See MIT Community Problem-Solving toolbox, retrieved from [http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy\\_tools.html](http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy_tools.html).

community members, including stimulating their engagement in local government affairs. In addition, the Council assists in identifying specific issues and/or community concerns that may merit an official communication strategy. The ACC's specific responsibilities include 1) Preparing an annual work plan for Village Board review and approval; 2) Advising the village board and staff on recommended best practices in public communications; 3) Assisting with communications content creation and/or review; 4) Completing relevant industry research and testing to support its work plan and village messaging goals; and 5) Performing any related studies as needed or requested by the Village Board and/or staff.”<sup>10</sup>

It would be beneficial for the ACC and the newly created SCCC to meet periodically to discuss projects and issues of mutual concern to the Village and School District, where jointly developed communications strategies, driven by stakeholder involvement, would be beneficial to both entities and the public at large.

### **SCCC Member Selection**

Professor de Souza Briggs notes that “....more *participatory* planning and decision-making can produce better substantive ideas, useful problem-solving relationships and the trust needed to take action together in the future (‘social capital’), stronger community institutions, new possibilities for forging agreement across old divides, and other tangible and intangible benefits.”<sup>11</sup>

To best achieve success with participatory planning and decision-making, individuals who participate in an SCCC-like committee would assume these roles:

“*Organizers* help identify and gather those with tangible stakes, help prepare them on the issues, and help them think about how to participate in a larger process (or develop their own) in order to have influence. *Sponsors/Conveners* typically invite the participation and take responsibility for sponsoring and/or accommodating gatherings or other arenas for exchange...the sponsors may be those who provide the resources that support a process or may channel such resources from donors who do not participate directly. *Contributors* are those who, literally, contribute the input that is the “core currency” of participation. Ideally, such input includes: what issues matter, how they should be thought about, what actions should be considered in response, and how those actions should be evaluated and prioritized. *Deciders* are those who make authoritative decisions using contributors’ input... *Facilitators* help participants manage exchange—to uncover assumptions and information gaps, promote learning, generate consensus, and more. *Analysts* are those who provide

---

<sup>10</sup> See Scarsdale Village website, at <https://www.scarsdale.com/588/Volunteer-Advisory-Council-on-Communicat>).

<sup>11</sup> X. de Souza Briggs, “Planning Together: How (and How Not) to Engage Stakeholders in Charting a Course,” page 3 (The Community Problem-Solving Project@MIT, 2020), retrieved from [http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy\\_tools/planning%20together%202003%20MIT%20download.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy_tools/planning%20together%202003%20MIT%20download.pdf) .

information support for deliberation and decision-making, often by (a) collecting and analyzing raw data with citizens' and decision-makers' information needs in mind and (b) presenting (reporting back) the results of such analysis in various media (words, numbers, pictures, even sound).”<sup>12</sup>

### **Organizational Planning and Goals**

The Committee believes that the District could benefit from the collective experiences of all stakeholders. Yet sharing those experiences is likely to be achieved only through the creation of alternative mechanisms for substantive dialogue, and an effective platform that fosters real time discussion, ongoing feedback, and other opportunities for stakeholders to engage among themselves, teachers, parents, students, the BOE and the District.<sup>13</sup> The Committee's proposal envisions a framework in which the SCCC contributes to the development of strategic and tactical communication and participatory modalities to achieve the following objectives, among others:

1. to improve internal and external communications with the goal of facilitating open communication and participation among stakeholders that is both proactive and interactive, encouraging conversation and seeking feedback;
2. to develop a system of synergistic communication and participation that creates an environment that promotes teamwork, cooperation and creativity among stakeholders;
3. to create a positive climate that welcomes and encourages family and community involvement in our schools;
4. to assist the District and BOE with the development of communication strategies and plans;
5. to utilize methods of communication and participation that meet the expectations of diverse constituencies;

---

<sup>12</sup> Id. “Planning Together” at pages 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> See J. E. Innes and D.E. Booher, “Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century” (Abstract, Journal of Planning Theory and Practice, 2001) (“Research shows that collaborative participation can solve complex, contentious problems such as budget decision making and create an improved climate for future action when bitter disputes divide a community. Authentic dialogue, networks and institutional capacity are the key elements. The authors propose that participation should be understood as a multi-way set of interactions among citizens and other players who together produce outcomes.”), retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1464935042000293170?scroll=top&needAccess=true>; B. E. Goldstein and W. H. Butler, “Expanding the Scope and Impact of Collaborative Planning: Combining Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Communities of Practice in a Learning Network” Page 244, Table 1 (Journal of the American Planning Association, Spring 2010) (focusing on collaborations comprised of diverse membership open to all stakeholders; process incorporating various perspectives; and outcomes designed to resolve differences and create joint action plans), retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01944361003646463> .

6. to maximize stakeholder engagement with the District's Strategic Plan 2019-2024, the 2019-2021 Technology Plan, and tactical plans developed on an as-needed basis; and
7. to provide a venue for educators and community members to discuss changes in, understanding of, and approaches to learning and youth development, for the purpose of assisting the community/District in creating a living and forward thinking vision of what "world class education" means.

As an integral part of its mission to provide a forum where participants are open to meeting the challenges of resolving complex issues in a group setting with empathy, inclusivity and flexibility, the SCCC might reach out to many stakeholders in the wider community for additional engagement. This may take the form of surveys, focus groups, work sessions, digital whiteboard meetings, social media, print media, district newsletters, emails, a District website communications portal, a mobile communications app, a centralized virtual call center for one-on-one case management support, and a knowledge center with FAQs, etc.

As a communications facilitator, the SCCC might play an important role in evaluating information provided to media sources that is intended for community dissemination, for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy and consistency of information in the public space.

The work of the SCCC might be reviewed periodically by the committee, through surveys administered by the committee to its wider stakeholder membership, to evaluate the degree to which the SCCC's work conforms to its intended purposes, and to make adjustments where necessary to achieve its goals more effectively. The SCCC might also study past communications issues and create an after action report with findings and recommendations. An important goal would be to continually refine its own process.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee's re-envisioning of the existing communication culture and methods to promote greater participation among stakeholders was the catalyst for this proposal for the formation of a neutral, independent and inclusive School Community Communications Committee. Public sentiment appears to support the need for a better communications and participatory paradigm that will facilitate greater transparency coupled with opportunities for the open exchange of stakeholder opinions, knowledge and ideas relating to District planning, policy development, decision-making, and operations. The School Community Communications Committee would seek to accomplish this new paradigm through its representation of stakeholders whose shared common goal is preserving the excellence of Scarsdale schools for the benefit of our children.

The Committee hereby recommends (1) the formation of a neutral, independent School Community Communications Committee, organized as a permanent entity for the purpose of facilitating collaborative communication and participation among stakeholders in the Scarsdale learning community and education hierarchy, and (2) that the School

Community Communications Committee serve in an advisory role, making its recommendations to the learning community and educational hierarchy decision-makers.

Respectfully submitted by the following members of the Education Committee:

Barry Meiselman, Chair

Jordan Copeland

Madelaine Eppenstein

Maggie Favretti

Robert Harrison

Terri Harrison

Amy Lewis

Michelle Lichtenberg

Laura Liu

Michael Otten

Carlos Ramirez

Avital Soldatenko

Gregory Soldatenko

Bruce Wells