

CHAPTER 7

PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

On Friday, of the first week of school, I sent home the first PrincipalPOINT, to introduce families to what would become my regular monthly communications. I sent home a newsletter to remind families of upcoming important events, inform them about current research in education and deliver ‘shout outs’ for all who volunteered or shared exceptional talent.

Prior to the start school, Mr. Goldman introduced me to Betsy Rosso, who was responsible for marketing and coordinating our school website. Betsy had an excellent copy editing background. In addition to writing e-newsletters for WEDJ, Betsy had been contracted in the past to edit handbooks and other school related documents. Much of the content in my monthly PrincipalPoint newsletter was used by Rosso to populate the material for her e-newsletters. Goldman noted that we could reduce costs in the future if I was comfortable taking over the writing of e-newsletters. Ideally, the PrincipalPoint newsletters would be viewed electronically, but Mr. Carter highly advised me to send paper home. Even if many updates wound up crumpled at the bottom of a backpack, there was an increased likelihood more families would have had a chance to read the monthly school news, if it was delivered in a paper format. Following this good advice, I sent home the monthly 2-page newsletter in paper form, as well as had them posted electronically on the website. Rosso continued to write separate e-newsletters aligning with much of the content from the PrincipalPoint material.

We tried many strategies to build the parent culture. We set up a volunteer leadership structure for parents who wanted to tackle specific projects. I invited interested volunteers in the fall of 2012 (see [Figure 4](#)) to a luncheon, where we established the list of parent leadership roles including classroom representatives. The December 2012 newsletter highlighted a message thanking volunteers.

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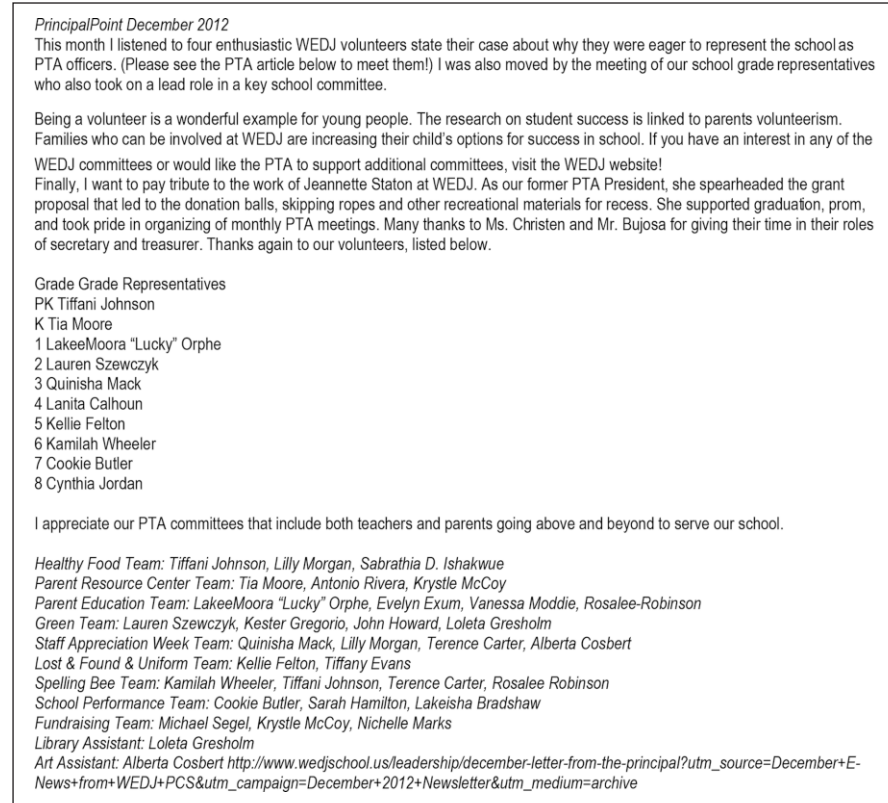


Figure 4. PrincipalPoint parent newsletter December 2012

I was eager to see parent volunteers link directly to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Many parents were generous with their time, but these groups wound up reporting to the school, more so, than the PTA. Perhaps we tried to mobilize too much at one time. At first, some parent activities fell short of goals of assembling large-scale participation. Later on, in the year, we tried bringing folks together by coordinating a 'Family Week.' In April 2013, parents were invited to view the premiere of *Brooklyn Castle*, play or learn how to play chess, and participate in yoga led by Mr. Harris. Mr. Carter also set up a Knowledge Day with workshops and seminars on writing resumes and career-building skills. I also tried to piggyback off of Ms. Kensler's 'Muffins for Moms' and 'Donuts for Dads' activity, to kick off a 'Principal's Breakfast' idea, but few parents stuck around for conversation. We were committed to looking for as many ways as possible to engage parents in our school.