District Communications Survey
Fall 2019
Summary & Analysis

Presented to the School Committee
December 4, 2019

Excellent Participation

675 Total Responses

510 Parents

200 Staff
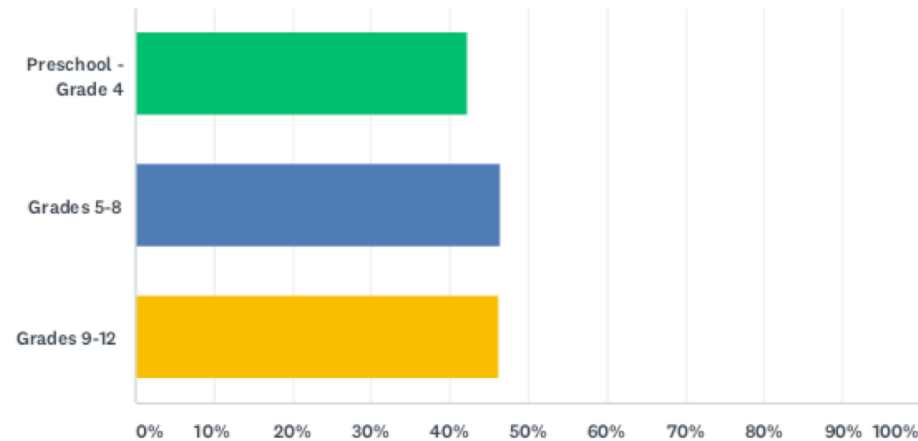
28 Community Members
(neither Parent nor Staff)

14 Town Meeting Members

*Many Parents/Staff/Town Meeting respondents counted in more than one category

Parent Participation Across Levels

Q2 If you are a current SPS parent, what grade span(s) are your children currently in? (Check all that apply)
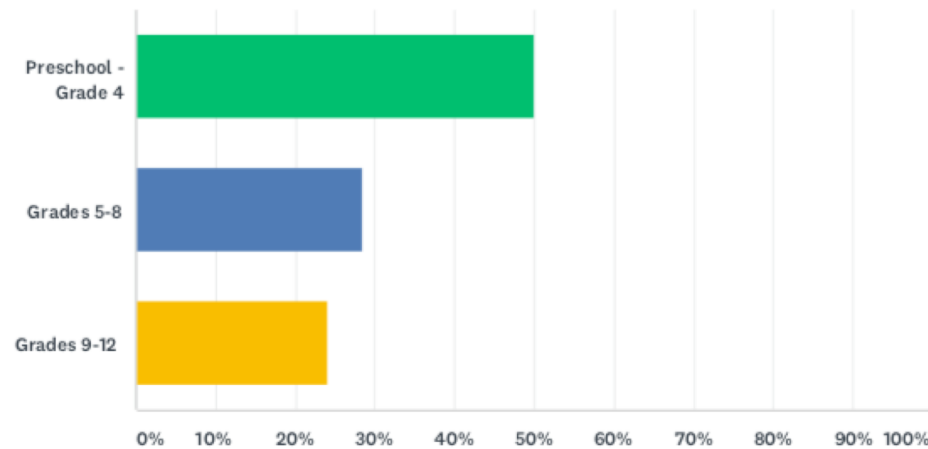
Answered: 510   Skipped: 165

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Preschool - Grade 4	42.16%	215
Grades 5-8	46.47%	237
Grades 9-12	46.27%	236
Total Respondents: 510		

Many parents have children across multiple levels

Staff Participation Across Levels

Q3 If you are a current SPS staff member, what grade span do you primarily work in?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 475

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Preschool - Grade 4	50.00%	100
Grades 5-8	28.50%	57
Grades 9-12	24.00%	48
Total Respondents: 200		

Rating of Forms of Communication

- Forms of communication were rated from 1 to 4, from "Not Preferred/Not Helpful/Don't Use At All" to "Strongly Preferred/Very Helpful"

- 26 different forms of communication were rated

Ratings Consistent Across Constituent Groups

- Ratings of various forms of communication overall were very consistent when data was filtered by group, with some slight variations (e.g., high school parents rated Schoology higher than elementary parents, as this platform is used differently at each level)

- This summary and analysis will focus on overall ratings

Top 10 Forms of Communication
(Weighted Average > 2.5 out of 4.0)

1. Email updates/newsletters from school principal: 3.48

2. Email updates/newsletters from teachers or teacher teams: 3.46

3. Email updates from the superintendent: 3.35

4. Telephone/voice messaging system: 3.20

5. Text messages: 3.19

Top 10 Forms of Communication
(Weighted Average > 2.5 out of 4.0)

6. Curriculum "Back-to-School" Nights: 3.01
7. SPS Community Bulletin email: 2.99
8. District/school websites: 2.93
9. PowerSchool Parent Portal: 2.89
10. Infographics with school district data: 2.54

Analysis of Top-Rated Forms of Communication

- Forms of communication that are "pushed" directly are rated most highly, especially email

- Auto phone calls and texts rated highly (they typically only are used for weather cancellations/delays, emergencies, or high-profile actions required such as bus registration)

- Website and PowerSchool Parent Portal information appears highly valued (utility)

- Infographics viewed positively

Middle-Rated Forms of Communication
(Weighted Average from 2.0-2.5 out of 4.0)

11. PTO/Parent Organization emails: 2.40

12. SPS Annual Report: 2.40

13. Schoology posts: 2.33

14. Shrewsbury School Journal: 2.33

15. Paper fliers in student backpacks: 2.32

Middle-Rated Forms of Communication
(Weighted Average from 2.0-2.5 out of 4.0)

16. Community forums: 2.31

17. Facebook posts: 2.19

18. Short online videos: 2.10

19. PTO/Parent Organization meetings: 2.08

Analysis of Middle-Rated Forms of Communication

- Many of these are traditional types of communication, including in-person forums/meetings and paper-based mailings or fliers

- These forms of communication contain content that is more informational vs. actionable (such as weekly messages from schools with information that may require action on the part of families)

Lower-Rated Forms of Communication
(Weighted Average < 2.0 out of 4.0)

20. School Committee Meeting Broadcasts: 1.89

21. Twitter: 1.87

22. Town of Shrewsbury Annual Report: 1.82

23. "Superintendent's Update" TV Show: 1.73

24. Local newspaper websites: 1.69

25. Local newspapers (physical paper): 1.58

26. "School Talk" School Committee TV Show: 1.55

Analysis of Lower-Rated Forms of Communication

- Forms of communication that are typically not "pushed" directly

- Changing cultural norms re: reading newspapers and newspaper websites

- Cord-cutting affects access to local cable public access programming; potential lack of knowledge of accessing via website, YouTube, etc.

- Social media not rated highly as a communication channel (Facebook rated slightly higher than Twitter)

Rating of Effectiveness of Communication Related to the Work of the School Committee

Please provide your opinion on the effectiveness of communications related to the work of the Shrewsbury School Committee.
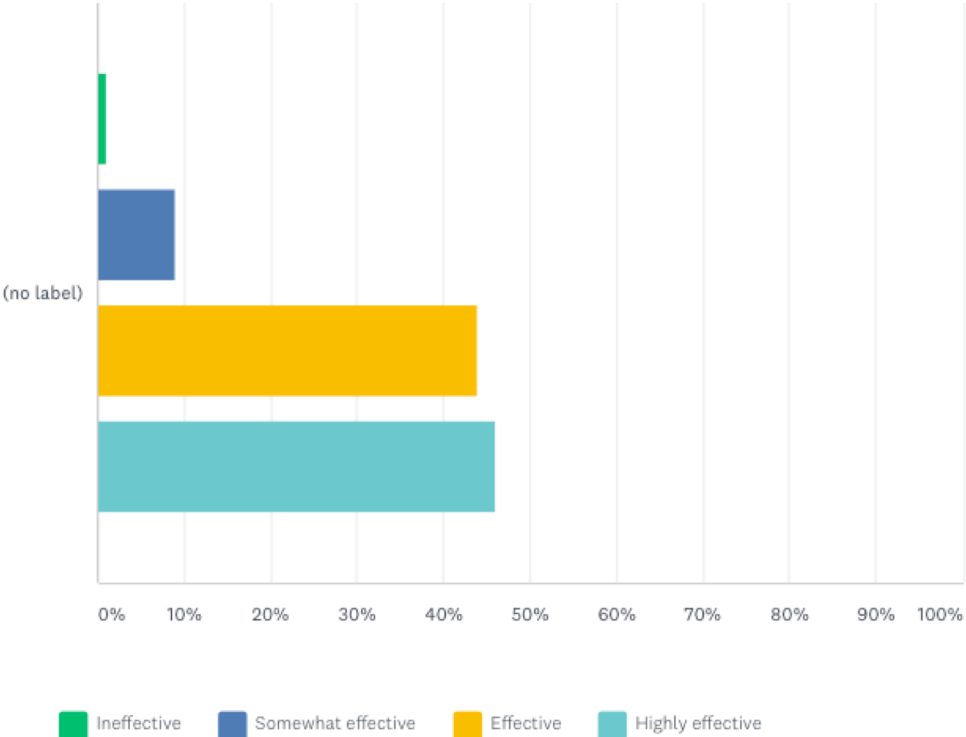
Answered: 661   Skipped: 14
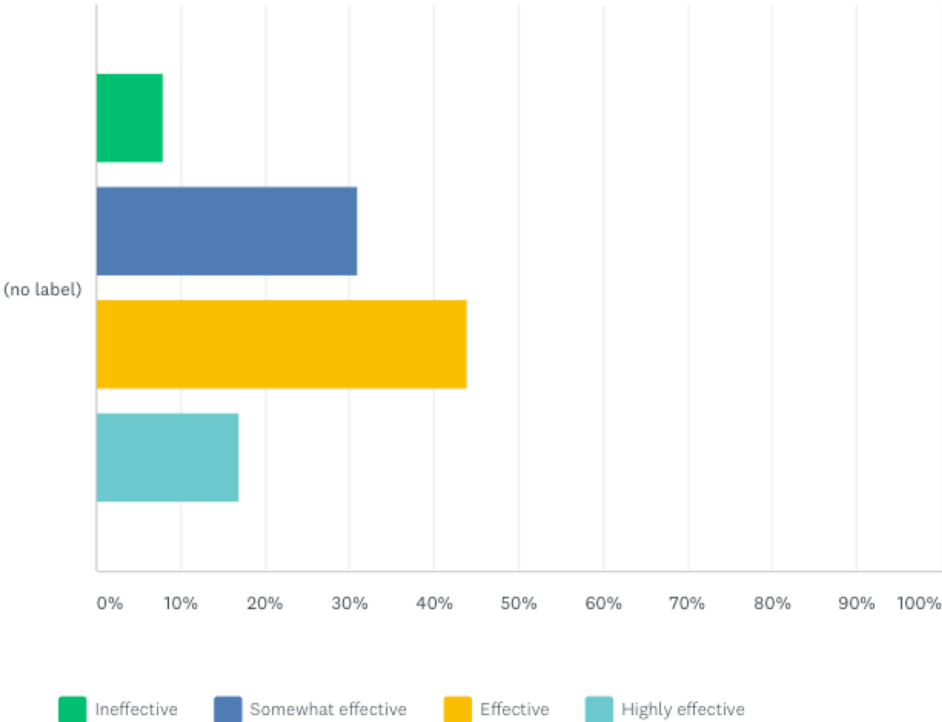
Legend: ■ Ineffective ■ Somewhat effective ■ Effective ■ Highly effective

	INEFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	8.02% 53	31.01% 205	44.02% 291	16.94% 112	661	2.70

Rating of Effectiveness of Communications from the Superintendent

Please provide your opinion on the effectiveness of communications from the superintendent.
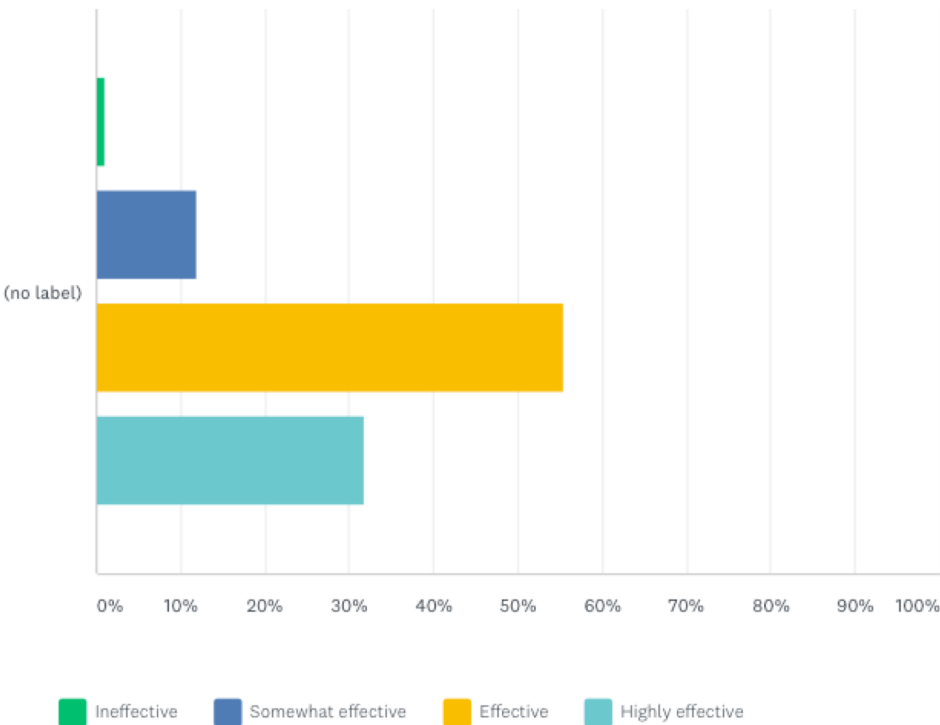
Answered: 671   Skipped: 4

Legend: Ineffective · Somewhat effective · Effective · Highly effective

	INEFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	1.04% 7	8.94% 60	43.96% 295	46.05% 309	671	3.35

Rating of Overall Effectiveness of Communications from the School District

Please provide your opinion on the overall effectiveness of communications from the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

Answered: 668   Skipped: 7

Legend: ■ Ineffective ■ Somewhat effective ■ Effective ■ Highly effective

	INEFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	1.05% 7	11.83% 79	55.39% 370	31.74% 212	668	3.18

Comments

- 120 comments were added by respondents

- Comments included praise, constructive criticism, and suggestions

- This feedback is highly valuable and much of it is actionable

Themes from Comments

Appreciation for level/quality of communication

- "I think it's important and valuable for communication to take so many different forms in order to reach as many people as possible in a way that is meaningful to them. Even if I don't utilize all the methods, I am impressed by the widespread consistent messaging that comes from SPS."

- "The Shrewsbury Schools communications are effective and appreciated. They forge powerful connections within the community and build consensus for our #1 priority: students (and their families). Thank you to all who make this possible!"

Themes from Comments

Information overload

- "Most of these communications methods are fine in and of themselves, but the fact that you leverage ALL of them can be overwhelming as a parent. In my email alone, I get emails from the superintendent, the school system, 2 different principals, 2 different teachers, multiple specialty teachers (i.e., gym, orchestra, art, Spanish), and the PTO. Then there are multiple apps, a portal, and social media to check…"

- "I think the information is effective--and I am typically someone who reads everything that is related to the school system. I just wish there was a way to streamline the information a little bit. Or to eliminate the amount of emails? I have 3 kids in 3 different schools and my inbox is pretty overwhelmed with school updates for everyone, each week. I am diligent about staying abreast of the current happenings in the school system, but it is a lot. Thank you!"

Themes from Comments

Length of communications

- "While the information in the email was thorough and useful for teachers, what was most essential to them for planning purposes was not prominently displayed or easy to find. This is a minor criticism, but it would be helpful if emails had more of a "TLDR" (too long, didn't read) style to them so that teachers could quickly see the absolute most important details, without having to spend a significant amount of time poring over a digital tome when they may not have time in that moment."

- "…adding photos or graphics to the emails would be more interesting than a long list of information."

- "Some emails are too wordy and long, they should be organized with the most pertinent information in the first few sentences and could be a lot shorter."

- "(Some communications) are long lists of info inside which information can easily get lost or overlooked. In general, I think people pay more attention to short bursts of information."

Themes from Comments

Desire for a central location and consistent format for information

- "It would be nice to have one central hub, or one central reference point, that contains links or guidance to all these different forms of communication."

- "Would be great if all of the communications were coordinated and consistent. With multiple kids in multiple schools, getting inundated by information. Having it centralized and consistent format, etc would be helpful in making me feel confident I am not missing anything."

Themes from Comments

Other concerns/questions

- User-friendliness of different platforms (PowerSchool Parent Portal, Schoology, website)

- Timeliness/maintenance of information (e.g., earlier messages regarding School Committee meeting agendas; keeping websites up to date)

- Kindergarten lottery process improvement

- Mixed feelings on some approaches (social media, use of video messages, etc.)

<u>Next Steps</u>

- Review feedback with School Committee and administration leadership team

- Consider ways to centralize information for ease of retrieval

- Review platforms and determine best type, style, and frequency of communications for various audiences and purposes; consider formats that provide metrics regarding audience reach/engagement; consider ways to "push" content such as links to TV shows

- Provide professional development/training as needed to enhance quality of communications