

Toronto District School Board

Policy P104

Title: **COMMUNICATIONS**

Adopted: September 28, 2022

Effectuated: September 28, 2022

Revised: N/A

Reviewed: N/A

Authorization: Board of Trustees

1. RATIONALE

This Communications Policy (the “Policy”), developed in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Trustees of October 30, 2019, confirms the Board’s firm belief that communication and information are central to the effective, inclusive role that a school board plays in advancing student success and well-being, strengthening relationships with school communities staff and Trustees, and promoting confidence, transparency and accountability in public education.

The Policy aligns with the Mission, Values and Goals Policy (P002), Equity Policy (P037), Accessibility Policy (P069), the Open Data Policy (P091), and the Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To manage communication across the TDSB in a well-coordinated, effective and client-focused manner;
- To develop, promote and maintain accessible, effective, transparent, timely and consistent communication with all stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff, Trustees, the media, and members of the public; and
- To provide clear expectations for staff with respect to all internal and external communications on matters impacting students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and the school communities.

3. DEFINITIONS

Board means the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “TDSB”.

Confidential Information refers to information in the possession of, or received in confidence by the TDSB, that the TDSB is either prohibited from disclosing, or is required to refuse to disclose, under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (“MFIPPA”), or other legislation, or received in confidence from other third parties of a corporate, commercial, scientific or technical nature, information that is personal, and information that is subject to solicitor-client privilege.

Confidential information includes matters considered by the Board of Trustees in closed session in accordance with sections 207(2) and 207 (2.1) of the Education Act, which include:

- Litigation or any potential litigation affecting the Board;
- Intimate, personal or financial information in respect of a member of the Board or Committee, an employee or prospective employee of the Board or a student or their parent/guardian;
- The acquisition or disposal of the Board’s real property, including a school site;
- Decisions in respect of negotiations with the staff members of the Board;
- Information deemed to be “personal information” under the MFIPPA;
- Information subject to solicitor-client privilege; and/or
- An ongoing investigation under the Ombudsman Act respecting the TDSB.

Personal Information refers to recorded information about an identifiable individual. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual,
- Information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved,
- Any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,
- The address or telephone number of the individual,
- Correspondence sent to an institution by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature, and replies to that correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence, and
- The individual’s name if it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other personal information about the individual.

TDSB means the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “Board”.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Education holds primary responsibility for implementation of this Policy.

Within the Director's Office, the responsibility for the coordination and day-to-day management of the Policy is assigned to the Executive Officer, Government, Public and Community Relations.

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to TDSB staff and Trustees.

The Policy also covers the TDSB community including students, parents/guardians/caregivers, education partners, the broader public and media.

6. POLICY

General Principles

- 6.1. The TDSB will maintain visible and accessible communication with the stakeholders it serves, and will remain open, transparent and client-focused when engaging with the TDSB communities.
- 6.2. The TDSB is committed to providing relevant, accurate, clear and timely information on Board programs, policies, activities and services.
- 6.3. TDSB communications will advance the Board's mission, values and goals and will support implementation of the Multi-Year Strategic Plans.
- 6.4. TDSB communications will incorporate equitable participation opportunities for underserved groups and communities to ensure that no voices are excluded, ignored or privileged to the disadvantage of others.
- 6.5. TDSB communications will uphold protection of personal and confidential information.
- 6.6. TDSB communications will be non-partisan and will not promote or support a specific political party or an individual seeking or holding public office.
- 6.7. TDSB communications will support parent/guardian/caregiver and community engagement, promoting community involvement and participation in decision-making processes of the Board in accordance with other Board policies
- 6.8. The TDSB will ensure equitable access to information and communicate using plain and clear language.

- 6.9. The TDSB will employ a variety of ways and means to communicate and provide information in multiple formats to accommodate all audiences, including those with accessibility and translation needs.
- 6.10. TDSB communications will adhere to the principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression and be culturally responsive to diverse communities of the Board.
- 6.11. The TDSB will routinely seek feedback from the community members regarding effectiveness of Board's communication activities and will continuously improve communication methods and techniques.
- 6.12. Communications activities at the TDSB will be consistent with legislative requirements, Government directives, and Board policies and procedures.
- 6.13. The Board, through the Director of Education, will maintain effective, consistent, timely, accurate and clear communication with the parents/guardians/caregivers, TDSB school communities, Trustees, and the public.

Media Relations

- 6.14. The Board will maintain an effective and professional relationship with the media.
- 6.15. The Chair of the Board of Trustees or designate will act as spokesperson to the public on behalf of the Board of Trustees.
- 6.16. Individual Trustees may address media inquiries representing their own independent viewpoints but not speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees or the TDSB.
- 6.17. The Director of Education or designate will act as a spokesperson to the public and the media on behalf of the TDSB.

Trustee and Constituency Communications

- 6.18. The Board will establish a framework supporting Trustee and constituency communications on a regular and timely basis.
- 6.19. Trustee and constituency communications will not be used to promote a Trustee as a candidate or any other candidate for municipal, provincial or federal office.
- 6.20. The Board will establish a clear, transparent, fair and efficient process for accessing and requesting information and effective mechanisms for responding to information requests by Trustees under the custody or control of the TDSB.

Open Data

6.21. TDSB communications will support proactive sharing of Board's information and data in accordance with the Open Data Policy (P091).

Emergency and Crisis Situations

6.22. The TDSB, through the Director of Education or designate, will manage all emergency and crisis communications.

Social Media

6.23. The Board recognizes the important role of social media and electronic communications. Social media tools provide an opportunity to communicate and share TDSB and other educational information across the internet.

6.24. Trustees and TDSB staff are required to maintain a sense of professionalism and recognize that communication on social media can shape public opinion about oneself, profession, school, the TDSB or public education generally.

6.25. Inappropriate use of social media and electronic communications is prohibited.

6.26. Inappropriate social media use and other online content includes, but is not limited to:

- Making inappropriate online comments that are derogatory, slanderous, or defamatory in nature;
- Disclosing personal or confidential information about the Board, school, students and colleagues;
- Posting the work of others without proper attribution, in breach of copyright law;
- Breaching a court-ordered publication ban;
- Inciting hate against an identifiable group;
- Contravening the Youth Criminal Justice Act by disclosing information about a minor; or
- Using technology to criminally or otherwise harass or discriminate against a student, colleague or any others, undermining the Board's commitment to safe and positive learning and working environment, free of harassment and discrimination as outlined in the Equity Policy (P037), the Human Rights Policy (P031), and the Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034);
- Using a computer to lure a child or a juvenile in violation of the Criminal Code;

- Exchanging or forwarding compromising photos, videos, or audio recordings of students leading to charges of possession or distribution of child pornography;
- Impersonating the social media account of the TDSB, a local school, employee or student of the TDSB; or
- Using social media in violation of the TDSB policies, including the Equity Policy (P037), and corresponding procedures.

7. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

8. EVALUATION

This Policy will be reviewed, at minimum, every two years after the effective date.

9. APPENDICES

N/A

10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Policies

- Accessibility (P069)
- Equity Policy (P037)
- Human Rights Policy (P031)
- Open Data Policy (P091)
- Parent and Community Involvement Policy (P023)
- Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034)

Procedures

- Board Code of Conduct (PR585)
- Code of On-Line Conduct (PR571)
- Crisis and Incident Reporting (PR569)
- Election Activities and Use of Board Resources (PR533)
- Information Flow Protocol (PR733)
- Social Media Procedure (PR735)
- Media Relations (PR555)
- Parent Concern Protocol (PR505)
- Translation and Interpretation Procedure (PR503)

Other Documents:

- TDSB Brand Guidelines