

Communications Policy

Policy Overview

The Communications Policy describes how the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) will engage in proactive, two-way communication. This policy applies to all forms of written, verbal and electronic communication, including social media.

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Policy and Procedures History

- Policy approved – *Communications Policy*, January 2001
- Policy revised – *Communications Policy*, May 2009
- Policy revised – *Communications Policy*, January 2013
- Procedures created – *Communications Policy*, May 2009
- Procedures revised – *Communications Policy*, January 2013

1.0 Legislative Context:

The Communications Policy will align and comply with the following:

- 1.1 Nova Scotia *Education Act and Regulations*;
- 1.2 Nova Scotia *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*;
- 1.3 Nova Scotia *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act*;
- 1.4 Department of Education and Early Childhood Development *Public School Network Access and Use Policy*;

- 1.5 HRSB Policy *F.007 Acceptable Use of Computers and Internet/Intranet Technology*;
- 1.6 HRSB Policy *B.023 Distribution and Display of Materials in Schools of the HRSB*;
- 1.7 HRSB Policy *C.007 Assessment, Evaluation and Communication of Student Learning*;
- 1.8 HRSB Policy *B.017 Parent Concern Protocol*;

2.0 Principles

- 2.1 An informed school community enhances student learning and builds support for public education.
- 2.2 All communications within the HRSB and with external parties will:
 - 2.2.1 be provided openly and honestly;
 - 2.2.2 contain accurate, understandable and timely information;
 - 2.2.3 be prepared in a culturally inclusive and gender neutral manner.
- 2.3 Effective communication is a shared responsibility throughout the organization.
- 2.4 Board members and all employees play an important role in building engagement, support and confidence in HRSB by:
 - 2.4.1 increasing public and employee awareness of its programs, services, student achievement and goals;
 - 2.4.2 supporting and promoting information sharing within schools and their communities;
 - 2.4.3 creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue.
- 2.5 Effective communication is strategic and supports the HRSB's annual business plan.

3.0 Authorization

- 3.1 The Superintendent is authorized to develop and implement procedures in support of this policy.

4.0 Policy Review

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years or on an as needed basis.

Communications Procedures

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1.0 Employee Responsibilities

All HRSB employees are responsible for:

- 1.1 communicating in an open and honest manner;
- 1.2 complying with provincial legislation and board policies as they relate to written, verbal and electronic communication, including the use of social media;
- 1.3 understanding their responsibilities as employees of the HRSB by communicating and publicly supporting the decisions of the Governing Board and the Superintendent;
- 1.4 following approved channels of communication;
- 1.5 understanding their communication responsibilities extend to all written, verbal and electronic communications, including both on personal and professional social media platforms;
- 1.6 alerting their supervisor of any issues, questions or concerns related to communication;
- 1.7 striving to ensure all communication is prepared in a culturally inclusive and gender neutral manner.

2.0 Superintendent Responsibilities

The Superintendent is responsible for:

- 2.1 ensuring appropriate staff are aware of all official communications, policies and directives of the Governing Board related to the operation of the system;
- 2.2 maintaining effective and consistent channels of communication within the board;
- 2.3 delegating responsibility to appropriate staff for responding to public and media enquiries.

3.0 Communication Services Responsibilities

Communication Services staff are responsible for:

- 3.1 coordinating the HRSB's communication activities through a variety of methods, techniques and strategies, including the HRSB website, social media, news media, publications and personal contacts;
- 3.2 developing an annual communications plan (Appendix B) that aligns with the goals and priorities of the annual HRSB Business Plan;
- 3.3 supporting school administrators with school-based communications issues/activities on an as needed basis;
- 3.4 managing the HRSB web site and Twitter account, ensuring the information is accurate, useful and up-to-date;
- 3.5 providing public notice of school or bus cancellations;
- 3.6 ensuring any public notification adheres to all relevant Provincial Acts and Regulations, as well as to HRSB policies, in both content and timeline;
- 3.7 developing issue-specific communication plans as directed by HRSB policy or the Superintendent;
- 3.8 responding to media enquiries.

4.0 School Administrators Responsibilities

School Administrators are responsible for:

- 4.1 ensuring informal and formal methods of communications are used within the school to foster two-way communication between home and school;
- 4.2 using a variety of communications strategies and techniques (i.e. meetings, school publications, websites and social media, signage, bulletin boards and personal contacts between school staff and the community) to promote student success;
- 4.3 ensuring employees and students are aware of their communication responsibilities as outlined in provincial legislation and HRSB policies and procedures;
- 4.4 ensuring school web sites contain accurate, useful and up-to-date information;
- 4.5 reporting any potential issue or crisis situation taking place in their school to the School Administration Supervisor in a timely manner;
- 4.6 approving all school-wide communication prior to distribution;
- 4.7 determining whether to provide media with permission to be on school property.

5.0 Channels of Communication

- 5.1 The HRSB recognizes that formal and appropriate channels of communication encourage the resolution of issues at the local level.
- 5.2 Generally, the appropriate line of communication for employees extends through their direct supervisor unless otherwise prescribed in Provincial Acts and Regulations, HRSB policy, or a Collective Agreement.
- 5.3 Unless otherwise stated in HRSB policy, individual complaints, concerns and/or questions should be referred to the school principal or the employee responsible.
- 5.4 All formal communication between Governing Board members and staff will be coordinated through the Superintendent (or designate), unless otherwise prescribed in Provincial Acts and Regulations, HRSB policy, or a Collective Agreement.

- 5.4.1 Invitations to individual Governing Board members to attend school events or participate in school activities will be extended by the school principal (or designate).

6.0 Official Spokespeople

- 6.1 The Superintendent (or designate) is considered to be the official spokesperson for the HRSB when dealing with the media on issues regarding the day to day operations of the board.
- 6.2 The Board Chair is considered to be the official spokesperson for the HRSB when dealing with the media on all matters pertaining to the responsibilities or decisions of the Governing Board.
- 6.3 The principal (or designate) is considered to be the official spokesperson for the school when dealing with the media on school-based issues.



Appendix A

Definitions

Formal Communication is any communication that is planned and delivered through a defined organizational structure.

Informal Communication refers to a less structured discussion or verbal exchange.

Partner includes any person or organization that shares a common interest to build engagement, support and confidence in HRSB.

Social Media refers to any form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.



Appendix B

Annual Communications Plan

GOAL: (Tied to the Business Plan Goals)

The goal of this plan is build engagement, support and confidence in HRSB.

OBJECTIVES:

- Inform parents/guardians....
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BACKGROUND (Listing of the Business Plan Goals and Priorities)

AUDIENCES: (Who needs to know?)

- Parents/Guardians/Families
- Staff
- Governing Board
- General public
- Etc...

MESSAGES: (What three or four key facts do you wish to convey.)

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TACTICS/ACTIVITIES: How will the messages be communicated?

- See attached table.

Tactic	Audience	Responsibility	Deadline

EVALUATION (How will we know the message has been received?)

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