

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

### CONTENTS

- PREAMBLE**
- 1.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK**
- 2.0 PRINCIPLES**
- 3.0 CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**
- 4.0 SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION**
- 5.0 MEDIA RELATIONS**
- 6.0 AUTHORIZATION**

### PREAMBLE

The Halifax Regional School Board recognizes the importance of effective communications. HRSB has a responsibility to engage in proactive, two-way communication with its partners in the belief that an informed community will enhance student learning and build support for public education.

### 1.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 1.1 Any communication will comply with the *Education Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, *The Nova Scotia Teacher's Union Code of Ethics* as well as the following provincial and regional policies:
  - 1.1.1 Nova Scotia Department of Education *Public School Network Access and Use Policy*;
  - 1.1.2 Halifax Regional School Board *Acceptable Use of Computers and Internet/Intranet Technology Policy* (B.022);
  - 1.1.3 Halifax Regional School Board *Distribution and Display of Materials in Schools of the HRSB Policy* (B.023);
  - 1.1.4 Halifax Regional School Board *Assessment, Evaluation and Communication of Student Learning Policy* (C.007);

- 1.1.5 Halifax Regional School Board *Parent Concern Protocol* Policy (B.017);
- 1.1.6 Halifax Regional School Board *Diversity Management* Policy (D.009).
- 1.2 The Communications Policy applies to all forms of written, verbal and electronic communication.

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 The Halifax Regional School Board will consider the concerns and views of its partners when establishing priorities in developing and implementing its policies and programs.
- 2.2 The Halifax Regional School Board will ensure that it is visible, accessible and accountable to the partners it serves.
- 2.3 All communications within the Halifax Regional School Board and with the partners it serves will:
  - 2.3.1 Be provided openly, honestly and with integrity;
  - 2.3.2 Contain accurate, understandable and timely information;
  - 2.3.3 Flow two ways, with the board creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue;
  - 2.3.4 Be prepared in a culturally inclusive and gender neutral manner.

## **3.0 CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

- 3.1 The Halifax Regional School Board recognizes that a formal and proper line of communication encourages the immediate resolution of issues at the local level.
- 3.2 Individual complaints, concerns and/or questions should be referred to the employee closest to the point of concern unless otherwise stated in Halifax Regional School Board policy.
- 3.3 All formal communication between Board Members and staff will be coordinated through the Superintendent (or designate), unless otherwise prescribed in Provincial Acts and Regulations, Halifax Regional School Board policy, or a Collective Agreement.

- 3.4 It is understood that certain informal lines of communication exist between staff and Board Members; this policy is not meant to interfere with these lines of communication.
  - 3.4.1 Invitations to individual Board members to attend school events or participate in school activities will be extended with the knowledge of the school principal.
- 3.5 Generally, the appropriate line of communication for employees extends through their direct supervisor unless otherwise prescribed in Provincial Acts and Regulations, Halifax Regional School Board policy, or a Collective Agreement.

#### **4.0 SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION**

- 4.1 Effective communication is a shared responsibility throughout the organization.
- 4.2 Board Members and all employees play an important role in building support for public education in the Halifax Regional School Board by:
  - 4.2.1 Increasing public and employee awareness of its programs, services, student achievement and goals;
  - 4.2.2 Supporting and promoting information sharing within schools and their communities;
  - 4.2.3 Communicating Board decisions to their partners with accurate and concise interpretations;
  - 4.2.4 Increasing awareness of the issues, trends and resources available to support public education;
  - 4.2.5 Maintaining proactive measures to secure positive media coverage.

#### **5.0 MEDIA RELATIONS**

- 5.1 Newspapers, radio, television, school and board web sites, and other information media play an important role in keeping people informed about the operation of the Halifax Regional School Board and its schools.

- 5.2 The Superintendent (or designate) is considered to be the official spokesperson for the Halifax Regional School Board when dealing with the media on issues regarding the day to day operations of the board.
- 5.3 The Board Chair is considered the official spokesperson for the Halifax Regional School Board when dealing with the media for all matters pertaining to the responsibilities of the elected Board.
  - 5.3.1 When speaking with the media, the decisions and views of the Halifax Regional School Board supersede those of individual Board members.
- 5.4 The principal (or designate) is considered to be the official spokesperson for the school when dealing with the media on school-based issues.

## **6.0 AUTHORIZATION**

- 6.1 The Superintendent is authorized to issue procedures in support of this policy.

## **COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES**

### **CONTENTS**

#### **1.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **APPENDIX**

##### **Definitions**

#### **1.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1.1 All HRSB staff members are responsible for:
  - 1.1.1 Understanding their roles as ambassadors of the Halifax Regional School Board by communicating and publicly supporting the decisions of the elected Board and the Superintendent;
  - 1.1.2 Following approved channels of communication;
  - 1.1.3 Understanding their communication responsibilities extend to all written, verbal and electronic communications;
  - 1.1.4 Alerting their supervisor of any issues, questions or concerns related to communication;
  - 1.1.5 Striving to ensure all communication is prepared in a culturally inclusive and gender neutral manner.
  
- 1.2 The Superintendent is responsible for:
  - 1.2.1 Ensuring staff are aware of all official communications, policies and directives of the board related to the operation of the system;
  - 1.2.2 Maintaining effective and consistent channels of communication within the board;
  - 1.2.3 Delegating responsibility to appropriate staff for responding to media enquiries;
  - 1.2.4 Approving all system-level media releases.

- 1.3 Communication Services staff are responsible for:
  - 1.3.1 Coordinating the board's corporate communication efforts through a variety of methods, such as distribution of publications, utilization of the news media, and personal contacts;
  - 1.3.2 Supporting school administrators with media relations;
  - 1.3.3 Providing public notice of school or bus service cancellation;
  - 1.3.4 Responding to media enquiries;
  - 1.3.5 Supporting schools with the promotion of activities and events;
  - 1.3.6 Celebrating and promoting student and staff accomplishments;
  - 1.3.7 Ensuring any public notification will adhere to all relevant Provincial Acts and Regulations, as well as to Halifax Regional School Board policies, in both content and timeline;
  - 1.3.8 Writing and distributing all system-level media releases;
  - 1.3.9 Posting all system-level media releases on the Halifax Regional School Board web site;
  - 1.3.10 Ensuring the Halifax Regional School Board web site contains accurate, useful and up-to-date information;
  - 1.3.11 Overseeing other communications activities as determined by the superintendent;
  
- 1.4 School Administrators are responsible for:
  - 1.4.1 Ensuring informal and formal methods of communications are used within the school to foster two-way communication between home and school;
  - 1.4.2 Using a variety of communications techniques (i.e. meetings, school publications, signage, bulletin boards and personal contacts between school staff and the community) to promote student success;
  - 1.4.3 Ensuring staff members are aware of their communication responsibilities as outlined in Halifax Regional School Board policies and procedures;

- 1.4.4 Ensuring school web sites contain accurate, useful and up-to-date information;
  - 1.4.5 Reporting any potential issue, headline event or crisis situation taking place in their school to the School Administration Supervisor in a timely manner;
  - 1.4.6 Approving all school-wide communication prior to distribution;
  - 1.4.7 Providing media with permission to be on school property;
  - 1.4.8 Maintaining open lines of communication with School Advisory Councils.
- 1.5 School Administration Supervisors are responsible for:
- 1.5.1 Notifying appropriate system personnel, including the Communications Services Office, of any potential issue, headline event or crisis situation.
- 1.6 Teachers are responsible for:
- 1.6.1 Ensuring effective implementation of the School Plan for Communicating Student Learning.

## **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, verbal exchange, note, or memo

**Partner** includes any person or organization that shares a common interest or participates in the achievement of enhancing student learning and building support for public education.