



Report to the Board of Trustees

Revised Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication

Prepared By: Jacquie Davison, Superintendent of Business and Treasurer

Public:

Confidential:

Budget Implications:

Core Priority:

- Student Achievement and Well-Being
- Effective Stewardship of Board Resources
- Appropriate and Effective Faith-Based Programming
- Organizational and Capacity Building

Meeting Date: Sept. 24, 2018

Report Number: E.9.(h).18.

Action:

Information:

Follow Up Item:

Prev. Report #: *Prev Num*

Recommendation(s):

1. That the Board of Trustees give first reading to revised Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication.
2. That revised Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication be circulated to all schools, student cabinet, the District School Council/PIC and presidents of all employee union and professional groups for review and response by Friday, November 2, 2018 to Superintendent of Business and Treasurer, Jacquie Davison for presentation at the regular Board meeting on Monday, November 26, 2018.

Background and Purpose:

The Policy Committee of the Board, Chaired by Trustee Linda Steel, met on Tuesday, September 11th, 2018 and recommends that Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication be brought forward to the Board of Trustees for first reading.

Discussion:

Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication was reviewed as part of the circular policy review. The policy was last reviewed in 2014 and no changes were made.

Appendices:

Revised Policy Code: B 5.1 - Communication

COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY

CODE: B 5.1

Policy Statement:

The London District Catholic School Board is committed to building relationships that are rooted in Gospel values, mutual trust, and a spirit of cooperation and respect. Positive communication with all stakeholders is an important measure of this commitment. The Board also recognizes that, from time to time, misunderstandings or conflicting priorities may make it difficult to understand and acknowledge the perspectives of others. It is therefore important that the communication process is structured in such a way that all are able to work toward solutions that benefit our Catholic community. The Board's philosophy of positive communication is reflected by the whole school approach that is outlined in the Ministry document, *Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs* (2007). This document is relevant for all conflict resolution scenarios, including those involving parents of non-identified students.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide all stakeholders, including students; parents; staff; Catholic ratepayers; and educational partners, with an effective communication framework that encourages engagement, maintains constructive dialogue, and reduces misinterpretation.

Application and Scope:

This policy applies to matters related to the general operation of the London District Catholic School Board, including its schools and staff.

1.0 Principles:

- 1.1 The monitoring of quality service to stakeholders is dependent on staff ability to attentively listen to and act upon constructive public suggestions for improvement.
- 1.2 All public and interpersonal communication must recognize the dignity of the individual and be conducted with fairness and respect.
- 1.3 Effective communication and community relations involves open, transparent, respectful and reciprocal exchanges of information within a positive school climate.
- 1.4 Effective communication provides information that is accurate, understandable, and timely.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY (continued)

CODE: B 5.1

- 1.5 The communication process is rooted in the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, where action is first taken at the lowest, and most appropriate, level. Communication regarding an issue, concern, or suggestion should be undertaken at the source with the individual most involved or related to the matter.
- 1.6 Information will be provided to the public subject to the limitations of the Education Act, The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or other applicable legislation.

2.0 **General Communication Structure:**

- 2.1 The London District Catholic School Board is committed to the provision of the best possible learning opportunities for our faith community. These goals can be best met when the level of communication between the home and the school provides for an open discussion of issues that are of importance to parents and adult learners registered in our system. The following steps outline the Board's general communication structure:
 - 2.1.1 For problems or questions of a general nature that do not involve an individual member of staff, the parent should contact the principal's office. However, the first point of contact regarding teaching and learning in a specific subject or grade should be the teacher.
 - 2.1.2 If a concern or an issue cannot be resolved with the teacher directly, then the parent and/or teacher should refer the matter to the principal.
 - 2.1.3 The principal will discuss the matter with the parent and/or teacher and seek a resolution that is mutually acceptable to the parties involved.
 - 2.1.4 When in the opinion of the principal or the parent the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the local level, the principal or the parent should refer the details of the disagreement to the appropriate Superintendent of Education.
 - 2.1.5 When in the opinion of the superintendent or the parent the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved at that level, the superintendent or the parent should refer the details of the disagreement to the Director of Education.
 - 2.1.6 The Director of Education will attempt to find a solution to the problem that satisfies the involved parties. Where this is not possible, the Director of Education will advise the parties that the matter in dispute was brought to the attention of the Chair of the Board and the appropriate Trustee(s).

COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY (continued)

CODE: B 5.1

- 2.1.7 Notwithstanding the above, a parent may contact a trustee at any time. However, the general communication structure must be followed in order to effectively and efficiently resolve issues of concern.

3.0 Role of the Principal in Communication

- 3.1 The Principal may involve the appropriate staff members in any discussion with a parent/guardian. The Principal may request, at any step in the process, that specific concerns be put into writing.
- 3.2 The Principal will ensure that a statement on effective communication between the home and the school as per Section 2.0 is annually published in the school newsletter and website. Principals will at least annually familiarize all staff with this policy, as well as provide a copy of the policy to the Catholic School Council and discuss its content as a meeting agenda item.

4.0 Role of the Trustee in Communication

- 4.1 Trustees are partners in education. Consequently, communication with the Board of Trustees is encouraged. When contacted, the trustee will ensure that concerns are directed to the appropriate staff member as follows:
- 4.1.1 Trustees will communicate with the Director of Education who will communicate the information or concern to the appropriate staff person.
- 4.1.2 Resolution of the concern will be communicated by the Director of Education or as delegated by the Director to the person who voiced the concern or suggestion.

5.0 Roles of the London District Catholic School Council - Parent Involvement Committee and Catholic School Council in Communication

- 5.1 Parent members are focused on assisting the Board in its mission to engage all parents in the Catholic education of students. In order to make communication a positive and enriching experience, parent members should be familiar with the relevant Board and Ministry documentation, particularly *Making a Difference: A Practical Handbook for parent Involvement Committee Members* (Ministry, 2012) and *School Councils: A Guide for Members* (Ministry, Revised 2002).

COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY (continued)

CODE: B 5.1

- 5.2 Neither the London District Catholic School Council - Parent Involvement Committee nor Catholic School Councils are forums to discuss issues of direct staff concern, including specific disagreements with school staff. If such matters are received by or brought to the attention of either of these councils or members of these councils, the concern should be referred immediately to the appropriate principal or superintendent, who will ensure the proper processes are followed.

6.0 Telephone and Other Electronic Communication

- 6.1 In order for the public to make effective use of telephone or electronic communication when making a concern, problem, or issue known to staff, the following steps are recommended:
- 6.1.1 Identify yourself clearly and state the purpose of the communication.
 - 6.1.2 Make a note of the date(s) and time(s) of telephone calls, electronic communication, and/or meetings. Keep a note of the names and titles of staff with whom you have communicated or attended meetings.
 - 6.1.3 Use your notes to identify concerns and state the facts.
 - 6.1.4 Be prepared to seek out and discuss alternative solutions. Listen to the suggestions of others and compromise when necessary in order to facilitate the best solution possible. In some cases, advocacy can be an emotional and draining process for parents. In such circumstances, the parent is welcome to discuss with the principal on how to facilitate the option of bringing an advocate to assist with the conversation or to take notes in a meeting.
 - 6.1.5 Ask questions and seek clarification from staff when in doubt of Board or Ministry policies or procedures.

7.0 Collaborative Approaches to Conflict Resolution

- 7.1 Effective collaboration is rooted in a communications approach that leads to the shared resolution of problems, issues, and concerns that is supportive of the best learning outcomes for students. Parents and staff are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the progressive conflict resolution structures as described by the Ministry of Education in *Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs* (2007). There are three progressive options for collaborative communication in *Shared Solutions*:

COMMUNICATION POLICY

POLICY (continued)

CODE: B 5.1

- 7.1.1 Problem-solving – an informal approach that can often take place with a phone call, an email, or a brief meeting with the appropriate staff member. The basic steps in problem-solving are (1) issue definition, (2) information and idea sharing, (3) generation and exploration of potential solutions, (4) prediction of consequences, (5) choosing a mutual solution and development of an action plan, with performance measures, and (6) a follow-up evaluation.
- 7.1.2 Finding common ground – using the strategies of problem-solving but at a more formal level in order to address pre-conceived ideas that may be getting in the way of a collaborative solution.
- 7.1.3 Using a facilitator – used in those situations where participants need assistance in issue identification, finding common ground, and the search for a mutually acceptable solution that meets student learning needs.

8.0 Expected Outcomes of Policy

- 8.1 Clearly delineated process for communication when concern/issue or suggestion arises.
- 8.2 A model to use for finding resolution to issues that is shared with all parties.
- 8.3 Better communication and timely resolution to issues.

Adopted: September 28, 1998

Revised: June 23, 2014