



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES MEMORANDUM

APC001

Communication Guidelines

DATE OF ISSUE: July 1999
Revised: August 2002 ; February 2004

MEMO TO: All Staff

FROM: Director of Education

PURPOSE

In our strategic plan, *Sharing Our Journey*, we state our belief that our stakeholders should receive accurate and timely information and feedback regarding the implementation of the system's vision. We also believe in inviting open communications and listening attentively to all constructive suggestions to improve our educational service. The purpose of this Administrative Procedures Memorandum is to affirm our beliefs and to set in place communications procedures that can facilitate consistency between who we say we are and what we do.

REFERENCES

- Board Policy I 001 – “Sharing Our Journey” – page 23 (Shared Vision); page 29 (Our stakeholders); page 31 (Our Leaders); page 32 (Our Organization).
- Board Policy IV 003 - “External and Internal Relationships” – “the Director of Education may not operate without communication guidelines in place to deal with trustee, staff, volunteer, parent and community inquiries...”
- Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy Legislation
- WCDSB System Emergency Response Plan

COMMENT AND OVERVIEW

1. The Senior Manager of Public Affairs has overall responsibility for public communications for the school system. Inquiries concerning communications or interpretations of this Administrative Procedures Memorandum should be directed to the Senior Manager of Public Affairs at 578-3660 extension 236.
2. This memorandum addresses three key areas of communication:
 - a) Personal Communication Between Parents and Board Staff
 - b) Public Communication By Board Staff
 - c) Trustee Communications

3. Principals will ensure that the parent communication guidelines (see Part 1) are published annually in the school newsletter. Principals will provide all staff with a copy of the parent communication guidelines.
4. For the purposes of this memorandum the term “staff” means any employee of the Board.
5. Principals will provide a copy of this memorandum to their School Council and will discuss its contents with the School Council.
6. Parents, students, staff, volunteers and Trustees have a right to receive public affirmation for their positive efforts and, likewise, the right to know when concerns arise, what the concerns are, and who has raised them. All public and interpersonal communications must recognize the dignity of the individual and be conducted fairly and with respect. When concerns arise, they will be dealt with directly by the individuals involved in compliance with Part 1 of this memorandum.

PART ONE: PARENT COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

When a parent has a concern or suggestion, it is expected that the concern/suggestion will first be taken up with the individual with whom the parent has the concern/suggestion -- for example with the staff member involved. Therefore, the following process is in order:

Step One: Speak to the staff member...(issue resolved)...(If the issue is not resolved, proceed to step two).

Step Two: Speak to the principal. If you have not yet spoken to the staff member involved, the principal will ask you to do so first.

The Role of the Principal: The principal will involve the staff member in any discussions with the parent(s). The principal may request, at any step in the process, that concerns be put in writing. The principal may involve, at any time in the process, others who may be helpful in resolving the concern: supports from the school board, employee group representatives, the local parish, community agencies.

The Role of Trustees: Parents may contact any trustee at any time. The trustee will direct the parent to follow the process outlined above.

The Role of the School Council: The School Council is not a forum to discuss parent-teacher-student issues. If these matters are brought to any School Council member or any School Council meeting, the concern is to be referred immediately to the principal who will ensure the proper process is followed.

For all other school-related concerns/suggestions that do not involve taking the matter up first with a staff member, the communication should be directed to the school principal.

The effective use of these communication guidelines by all concerned will result in the fair and quick resolution of concerns.

PART TWO: PUBLIC COMMUNICATION BY BOARD STAFF

School administrators and senior staff are encouraged to communicate with their stakeholder communities and the local news media on a regular basis to ensure the good news of the school system is publicly communicated through all available means.

In order to assist this proactive, positive communication – and to safeguard the public image of the school system -- the Senior Manager of Public Affairs will:

- Promote, encourage and co-ordinate media access to schools on “good news” stories.
- Be immediately informed (either directly by the Principal, by the Principal via their Supervisory Officer, or by the Senior Manager involved) of all contentious issues involving or likely to cause public concern and/or result in media interest.
- Manage (in consultation with the appropriate Principal, appropriate Supervisory Officer, Director of Education and Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy Coordinator) media access to students, staff and facilities on all contentious issues.
- Be responsible for emergency preparedness, including maintaining and updating as necessary the Board’s Situation Response Plan and coordinating the Board plan with school level and local municipal emergency plans.
- Maintain a log of all media contact with schools on non-contentious issues. Principals will report all such media contacts to the Senior Manager of Public Affairs on an FYI basis.
- Co-ordinate media effectiveness training for all senior staff, school administrators and Trustees.
- Manage development, maintenance and content of the Board’s web site to facilitate around the clock access to Board information.

PART THREE: TRUSTEE COMMUNICATIONS

Our Trustees are partners in education. Consequently, communications with our Board of Trustees is encouraged. When contacted, the trustee will not resolve problems but will instead ensure that concerns are directed to the appropriate staff member. Trustees do not normally communicate concerns/suggestions with school Principals. Rather, Trustees communicate with the Board Chair and/or Director of Education. To facilitate communication with Trustees, the Board web page, www.wcdsb.ca includes a Trustee section. The Trustees’ home phone numbers, email addresses and committee assignments are presented. As well, the appropriate Supervisory Officer for the schools in the respective geographic areas of the Trustee is noted. Beyond the web page, Trustees can be reached by mail or phone at:

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board,
35 Weber Street, Unit “A”
P.O. Box 91116,
Kitchener, Ontario
N2G 4G2
(519) 578-3660 x 2239

With respect to overall Trustee communications, Principals are encouraged to provide ALL Trustees with the following -- by sending the material to the attention of the Executive Administrative Assistant to the Director of Education, who will ensure the materials are forwarded to the Trustees.

- A copy of the school's monthly newsletter.
- A copy of school events to which Principals wish to extend a standing invitation to trustees.
- An invitation to ALL trustees to attend Secondary School Graduation ceremonies.
- A list of School Council meeting dates to which School Councils wish to extend a standing invitation for trustees to attend.

It is understood that due to their work schedules some Trustees may be unavailable for day time events. However, when a Trustee is able to attend, they will communicate their plans directly with the school concerned.

CONCLUSION

The intent of these communication guidelines is to facilitate positive and timely exchange of information as well as to resolve concerns in a timely manner, enhancing the public image of the school system and creating a more positive learning environment.