



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Title: Communications and Media Relations

Effective Date: January 2019

Responsibility: Director of Education

Rationale

The Near North District School Board recognizes that the provision of open, timely and appropriate information to our school communities, parents, students, the public and the media is necessary to strengthen relationships, promote program activities of the Board and remain open and transparent to constituents. Further, the Near North District School Board is responsible for providing education and communications that are barrier-free and accessible in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and associated Regulations.

Principles:

It is the intention of the Near North District School Board to encourage, promote and maintain open, accessible, timely and transparent communication with both its internal and external stakeholders; that is clear, accurate and supportive of the Board's commitment to provide quality education to educate learners to their fullest potential in order to prepare for life-long learning. This requires not only the provision of information, but accurate and timely response to requests for information.

Section 1 General guidelines:

- 1.1 All employees and members of the Board of Trustees are responsible for effective and efficient communications.
- 1.2 Upon request, and in accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* the Board endeavors to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports or arrange for the provision of a comparable resource for persons with disabilities.

- 1.3 All communication within the organization and external to the organization shall:
- a. Be provided openly, honestly and with integrity;
 - b. Contain accurate, timely, and understandable information;
 - c. Function two ways, with the creation of opportunities for meaningful dialogue;
 - d. Be prepared in an inclusive manner;
 - e. Be respectful, courteous and uphold the principles of the Human Rights Code.

Section 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 *Chair of the Board*

The Board Chair is the official spokesperson for the Board of Trustees with respect to all external communications on matters under consideration by the Board, as well as explaining Board positions and decisions including budget and policy decisions.

2.2 *Trustees*

Trustees are not to speak on behalf of the Board unless authorized to do so by the Board Chair.

2.3 *Director of Education*

The Director of Education is the official spokesperson for the Board with respect to administrative matters and day to day operational matters.

2.4 *Communications Officer*

Under the supervision of the Director of Education, the Information/ Communications Officer is responsible for the review, coordination and issuance of all releases of information with respect to the Board and its operations.

2.5 *Principals*

Principals or supervisors are the official spokesperson for their individual school and are responsible for creating communication links with their local media personnel and for providing information on school specific activities.

2.6 *Employees*

Employees are responsible for referring requests for information and/or any sensitive matters to their immediate supervisor for further action and/or response.

Section 3 - Responding to Concerns

Public Inquiries

- 3.1 All response to Public Inquiries shall adhere to the requirements and process identified in the Administrative Guideline – Public Inquiries.

Section 4 - Media Inquiries and Response

Media Releases

The Information/Communications Officer is responsible for issuing system-initiated releases of information as part of an ongoing communications plan. These information releases will highlight Board initiatives and provide up to date information for students, parents, community partners, and all stakeholders within the Near North District School Board jurisdiction.

Media releases issued on behalf of the Board of Trustees or Director of Education are generated and administered by the Information/Communications Officer. Request to issue media releases by Board of Trustee Members is to be done through the Board Chair. Prior to issuance, the media release shall be approved by either the Board Chair or Director of Education.

All requests for and/or proposed media releases by Board Administration staff are submitted to the Information/Communications Officer for review prior to issuance. When applicable, the Information/Communications Officer may suggest alternative language or format to ensure that documentation is consistent with Board messaging and standards.

Media releases concerning school-specific news or events are prepared at the school level by the principal or designate. Prior to issuance, the media release shall be submitted to the appropriate school Supervisory Officer for review. The Information/Communication Officer, in consultation with the school Superintendent, may suggest alternative language or format to ensure that documentation is consistent with Board messaging and standards.

The Director of Education and School Superintendents may at any time delegate approval authority to the Information/Communications Officer with respect to the approval of media releases.

Once the appropriate approval has been provided, the Information/Communications Officer shall be responsible for issuance of the media release.

Media Requests

All media requests for administrative or political response on Board matters and/or interviews shall be directed to the Information/Communications Officer. The Information/Communications Officer does not act as a spokesperson for the Board, unless directed to do so by the Director of Education. The Information/Communications Officer shall obtain further information with respect to the information and/or response being sought and direct the matter to the appropriate individual for response.

Whenever possible, media requests received directly by individual trustees or board staff are responded to following consultation with the Information/Communication Officer, fellow staff and/or Board Trustees to ensure that the response is reflective of the position of the NNDSB.

Any personal opinions must be clearly identified as such and further, that such opinions are not necessary those of the NNDSB.

Media requests received at the school level are responded to by the designated spokesperson as determined by, and in consultation with, the Principal.

The Information/Communications Officer is an available consultation resource for Board trustees, board administrative staff and schools and may assist in the development of key messages prior to responding to media requests.

Media Access to School Properties

Requests for access to school property and premises shall be considered in accordance with the Safe Schools: Access to School Premises Administrative Guideline. Media representatives are only permitted on school property and premises when invited by the principal/designate to the premises for a specific purpose or an event. Permission to be on school premises does not entitle a person to have access to all areas of the school premises. The Principal/designate shall inform groups or individuals using the school about the specific school restrictions and/or permissions.

The Board supports the Principal of the school in controlling access to the school and its components parts. However, the Board reserves the right to prohibit access to school premises if they are of the belief that such access is not in the best interest of the staff or students.

Capital Projects Communications

All media releases and/or public communications with respect to capital priorities investments/projects funded by the Ministry of Education must be submitted to the Ministry of Education, or a representative from the Government of Ontario, prior to issuance.

All communications of any kind with respect to capital projects and/or investments must acknowledge the support of the Government of Ontario. This could include but not limited to, any report, announcement, speech, advertisement, brochure, audio-visual material, web communications or other public communication.