



## Policy: Trustee Communication

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|                                 |                                      | <b>Policy Number:</b>        | 100.08           |
| <b>Adopted:</b>                 | May 28, 2002                         | <b>Former Policy Number:</b> | n/a              |
| <b>Revised:</b>                 | December 10, 2013; November 22, 2016 | <b>Policy Category:</b>      | Board Governance |
| <b>Subsequent Review Dates:</b> | n/a                                  | <b>Pages:</b>                | 1                |

### Belief Statement:

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board believes that effective communication between trustees and the community is rooted firmly in the statutory role of the trustee and our Catholic beliefs. The Board also believes that our Catholic virtues guide our best practices. In particular, the Board believes that the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance provide guideposts for its communicative behaviours.

### Policy Statement:

The Board believes that the Chair of the Board will issue statements to the public media and/or communicate with outside agencies on behalf of all trustees. Where there is doubt as to the interpretation of policy, or no established policy exists, the Chair of the Board shall seek directions from the Board regarding the substance and manner in which the matter is to be handled.

Although generally the Chair of the Board will speak and communicate on behalf of the Trustees, this shall not preclude Trustees from offering personal comments on Board actions.

### Policy Guidelines

#### 1.0 General

Trustees should consider sending any communication intended for staff, students, parents or the public to the Director of Education for review prior to sending. The purpose of the review will be to monitor the communication for consistency with system branding initiatives, spelling/grammar/syntax, compliance with Board policy, compliance with legal aspects related to privacy as well as factual accuracy. Trustees, as a courtesy to fellow trustees, should notify the Chair of the Board when communicating messages to groups of staff, students, parents or the public.

- 1.1 Trustees should communicate as clearly, respectfully, professionally, ethically and accurately as possible. This includes communication with staff, students, parents, the public and other Board members.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Board, or designate will speak for the Board. Individual Trustees shall refrain from speaking on behalf of the Board in areas where the Board has not yet taken a position, or where a resolution of the Board has not yet been passed.
- 1.3 Only the Chair of the Board or his/her designate will act as the spokesperson for all communications regarding matters under consideration by the Board, or for explanations of decisions and positions of the Board. This shall not preclude Trustees from offering trustee comments on Board actions insofar as Trustees should clearly identify that their trustee opinions or positions are not necessarily those of the Board.
- 1.4 In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Trustees shall not divulge personal information related to the Board's students or staff. Furthermore, Trustees shall refrain from communicating any information that is discussed or shared at in-camera meetings or are otherwise communicated by staff or Trustees of the Board that have been marked as confidential.



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- 1.5 Public statements should aim to promote Catholic Education, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, and its schools.
- 1.6 Public statements should avoid criticism of the intentions or actions of other Board members, of staff, of parents, or of students.
- 1.7 Public statements should be consistent with the Board's Vision, its Mission Statement, and its governing values.
- 1.8 Trustees should never endorse products or services that may be used in the school district.

### **2.0 Email**

- 2.1 Trustees should not respond to emailed correspondence on which they have been copied (cc'd), and should only respond to emailed correspondence sent directly to their attention.
- 2.2 When an email is addressed to all Trustees, the Chair of the Board should respond, and provide a courtesy copy (cc) of the response to the other Trustees.
- 2.3 Recognizing that email is not a secure vehicle of communication, Trustees should never use email to communicate sensitive or confidential information.

### **3.0 Social Media**

The use of social media, blogs, and websites is the preferred vehicle of communication not only for students, but also for many parents.

- 3.1 Trustee posts, tweets, and comments must reflect the Vision, Mission, and Governing Values of the Board.
- 3.2 Trustees should monitor personal sites to ensure accuracy and timeliness of posts.
- 3.3 Trustee posts, tweet, and comments should never reflect negatively upon the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, its schools, its students, its staff, or fellow trustees.
- 3.4 Trustee posts falls into the public domain and it is not realistic for a member of the public to distinguish between a trustee's post as a trustee from a trustee's post as someone else (a parent for example). Trustees should be mindful of this dynamic when using social media platforms.

*See Appendix A for Social Media 'Do's and Don'ts'*

### **4.0 Media Relations**

From time to time, Trustees may contact or be contacted by media officials. The following should be kept in mind when responding to media requests and contacting the media:

- 4.1 All media inquiries and Trustee communication with the media should be facilitated through the Director of Education to ensure that key messaging is appropriate and consistent with the position of the Board.
- 4.2 Only the Chair of the Board or his/her designate will act as the spokesperson for all communications regarding matters under consideration by the Board, or for explanations of decisions and positions of the Board. This shall not preclude Trustees from offering trustee comments on Board actions insofar as Trustees should clearly identify that their trustee opinions or positions are their own and are not necessarily those of the Board.
- 4.3 When speaking or corresponding with the media, individual Trustees shall uphold the decision of the Board and the implementation of any Board resolution once it has been passed by the Board.



**5.0 Supporting Parent Engagement – Catholic School Advisory Councils (CSAC) and Regional Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (RCPIC)**

Strong school systems have highly engaged parent communities. Trustees can support parent engagement by providing a communication bridge between CSAC and RCPIC. Trustees should consider the following ways to support the work of CSAC and RCPIC by:

- promoting the value of CSAC and RCPIC;
- facilitating communication among Councils within the trustee's district;
- attending RCPIC meetings where representatives from CSACs meet throughout the year;
- promoting the awareness of Board policies;
- raising awareness of the role of trustees and the Board as per the Education Act within the context of our local board; and
- reinforcing policies and practices designed to support community members on how they can influence decision making.

When a trustee desires to attend a Catholic School Advisory Council meeting, they should consider using the Director's Office as a resource for requesting attendance and scheduling visits. Minimally, trustees should, as a courtesy, contact the school principal to request attendance at a future meeting and inform fellow trustees of their intent.

**References**

Board By-Laws  
Trustee Code of Conduct Policy 100.04  
Trustee Communication Policy 100.08, General Guidelines (Appendix A)



### **Social Media: The Do's & Don'ts**

The following list of do's and don'ts apply to all social media networks and should guide trustee use of social media:

**1. Live in Christ**

As a member of the BHCNDSB, it is important that all activity on any social media network fall in line with our mission statement and values as a Catholic learning community.

**2. Be Authentic**

Gone are the days of being anonymous online, especially in social media. It is important for your followers and community to know who you are, what you stand for and who you represent. Your online activity should also be honest, allowing others to trust you and what you have to give and share back to the community.

**3. Listen**

A key success tool in social media is to be an active listener. There could be hundreds if not thousands of individuals, organizations and partners engaging with each other online, and listening to what is being said and/or asked will provide a clear path for your involvement.

**4. Be Consistent**

Your online identity and the organization you represent should be reflected in your profile description, what you post about and what you share. Try to avoid confusing your followers as to who they are actually following and what they can expect to receive.

**5. Be Kind & Pleasant**

Every interaction you participate in reflects on you, the BHCNDSB and our Catholicity. To build a trustworthy and admirable online presence, all of your communications should reflect kindness and take on the stewardship of God's gifts as your personal responsibility.

**6. Participate**

Beyond just listening, it is important to see the communication as a two-way street. People perceive those who listen and respond as individuals or organizations that care. In social media, you want to be a conversational listener, acknowledging that message reception alone is not enough, but a response (where appropriate and reasonable) is proper etiquette.

**7. Don't share personal, work and/or confidential information**

Avoid sharing any information relating to your personal life, your work, colleagues, partners, or other information that would be both irrelevant to your audience but could also be a security and privacy risk.

**8. Don't criticize**

Every post or comment you make is a reflection of you, the BHCNDSB as well as our Catholic beliefs. It is important not to criticize your followers, other organizations, partners or any other individual and to maintain a professional and respectful demeanor at all times.

**9. Don't misrepresent**

Everything you post online becomes part of the public domain, and as such, it is not always possible to remove or delete a post or comment, which means every action you take online should be properly thought out and considered beforehand.



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Make sure to properly represent yourself and the BHNCDSD in your profile as well as your posts and comments. If you are sharing a post or comment from another online user, account or source, make sure to give them proper credit and avoid any plagiarizing.

### **10. Report inappropriate posts immediately**

Report inappropriate postings, language, photos and videos immediately to your supervisor. Share as much information as you can (such as the account name, a copy of the exact posting, the time and date of the inappropriate post, etc.) so that the information can be reviewed and a decision made on how to handle the post. Note: the outcome will depend on the details and severity of the information.

### **11. Make sure that you have consent**

Ensure that consent forms have been read, signed and returned the school before you link, post, tweet or include images, work or references to any student.