

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 150

Communications

The Limestone District School Board is committed to open and inclusive processes. This includes providing accurate and understandable information on its schools and school district in a timely manner to all of the Board's stakeholders.

The Board has a responsibility to be accessible and accountable to its stakeholders, and foster a climate of understanding through informed, effective and responsive communications. As such, the Board will strive to provide open access to information subject to the limitations of the *Education Act*, the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, or other application legislation.

The Board is dedicated to supporting and enhancing essential relationships with both internal and external audiences. These audiences include:

- students
- families of students;
- staff and employee associations and groups;
- Parent Involvement Committee and school (parent) councils;
- Board of Trustees;
- the Limestone Learning Foundation;
- the Ministry of Education;
- key community partners;
- broader school communities;
- potential students and their families;
- media; and
- the general public.

The Board values stakeholder input and participation. Wherever appropriate, the Board will facilitate two-way communication and meaningful interaction with the Board and its various stakeholders.

1.0.0 COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1.0 All system and school administrators (principals), managers, supervisors, and other staff members have a role to play as effective communicators. The Communications Department shall provide advice, support and coordination for communications activities.

1.2.0 The prime responsibility for communications related to Board policy for Limestone District School Board shall rest with the Board of Trustees.

1.3.0 The prime responsibility for communications related to the implementation of Board policy, all administrative procedures and overall

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management of the district, as well as internal communications, shall rest with the Director of Education, or designate.

1.4.0 The prime responsibility for communications related to individual school activities and programs shall rest with the school administrator (principal) of each school, or designate.

2.0.0 APPROACH

2.1.0 The district should reflect a general policy of openness in the conduct and information sharing of its operations. Exceptions to this approach may apply to confidential matters related to purchases of land, contract negotiations, discussion of tenders, individuals, firms or specific groups, and information regarded as private and confidential under the law.

2.2.0 The Director of Education and system and school administrators will engage in appropriate consultation with concerned and interested internal and external audiences.

2.3.0 Communications from the district shall not make derogatory comparisons of schools, either directly or indirectly, and shall not cause personal or professional embarrassment. The strategies and methods used for communication will be respectful and inclusive.

3.0.0 DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

The Director of Education supports the concept of in-service training, workshops and coaching sessions to help all staff members develop and improve their communications skills.

3.1.0 System and school administrators will have a plan in place to improve and guide their communications programs and activities. The Communications Department will provide guidance and support for these planning activities.

3.2.0 Staff development in communications skills including media relations will be available to all staff through the Communications Department.

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4.0.0 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

4.1.0 A variety of communication strategies and methods will be developed, maintained and communicated for information sharing across the district and with all stakeholders as identified by the Communications Department. These can be used at either the system or school level, or both, to ensure that stakeholders have access to accurate, understandable and timely information.

4.2.0 Using a multi-media approach, the Communications Department will identify opportunities to communicate with stakeholders and oversee or provide guidance for the development of communication tools and messaging for internal and external audiences.

4.3.0 All communications shall reflect a professional, business-like style and avoid jargon.

5.0.0 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

5.1.0 Internal communications will ensure that all staff members are kept up-to-date on matters which affect their ability to do their jobs well.

5.2.0 As the foremost method of internal communications, managers/supervisors are expected to keep their staffs informed of all relevant work-related matters. This information may be supported by appropriate communication vehicles such as internal newsletters, bulletins, and memoranda.

6.0.0 SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Schools have a responsibility to keep students, families and their broader school communities informed of school programs, class activities, student achievements and other relevant information. This information may be shared in a variety of formats as deemed most appropriate and effective for its school community by the school administrator (principal).

6.1.0 As the Limestone District School Board continues to build a universal corporate identity (standard logo and branding), schools shall include the LDSB logo and/or the name Limestone District School Board in their communication materials. This will help identify schools as a Limestone District school to the community and beyond.

7.0.0 RELATIONS WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

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- 7.1.0 The Board believes in and supports open, transparent and positive relationships with accredited media/news organizations. All media shall be treated fairly and consistently with the processes detailed in this administrative procedure.
- 7.2.0 The Communications Department shall serve as the first point of contact for, and primary resource to, media. The Communications Department may coordinate interviews, provide approved information, and confirm routine matters of fact. The Department staff will not act as a spokesperson on behalf of the Director or Board of Trustees, unless requested to do so.
- 7.3.0 In addition to providing assistance to reporters working on specific stories, the Communications Department will also offer background briefing sessions to members of the media to help ensure that they have a full understanding of complex educational issues.
- 7.4.0 All media releases are to be created by or directed to the Communications Department for review and final distribution. If schools, school (parent) councils, or student councils wish to issue a media release, they must be submitted to the Communications Department for review and final distribution.
- 8.0.0 DESIGNATED SPOKESPEOPLE (MEDIA)
- It is important to share timely, accurate and understandable information to all stakeholders. Often, though not always, this information is shared through media/news organizations. To that end, the following directives have been identified, along with the designated spokespersons appropriate to the issue or type of media inquiry.
- 8.1.0 When a major issue arises, the Director, with support from the Communications Department, will consult appropriate system and support staff to produce appropriate communication supports (sometimes a media release may be issued). These communication supports will be circulated to system administrators and trustees, and in some cases, school administrators, managers/supervisors etc. on a need-to-know basis. The intent of the communication will be to provide the current factual background and key messages surrounding an issue.
- 8.2.0 The Communications Department will be informed of any crisis issue (any

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event which seriously impacts the school district or school's ability to conduct operations in a normal fashion) so that accurate information can be provided, as appropriate, in response to media and public enquiries.

- 8.3.0 The Director, in consultation with appropriate staff, will inform staff members and Trustees where appropriate of official communication and issues which are of major importance, prior to their release to the media and/or public.
- 8.4.0 The Director shall determine which staff members will have input to crisis communications related to procedural issues. The Chair of the Board will have input into communications about Board Policy issues.
- 8.5.0 In consultation with the Director, the Communications Department will identify the most appropriate spokesperson on an issue, and coordinate subsequent interviews/interactions with media. This allows spokespersons to be fully briefed and prepared prior to interviews.
- 8.6.0 Media are expected to contact the Communications Department with a first request for a school visit, interview, photograph or background information. If media contact a school directly, the school administrator (principal) or other staff will notify the Communications Department and have an opportunity to discuss the appropriateness of such visits or interviews before proceeding. Media access to schools must occur only with the consent of the school administrator or designate, who will ensure the education of students is protected from unnecessary interruptions, and that privacy is protected as per the Freedom of Information permission form.

9.0.0 PERMISSIONS AND RELEASES

When dealing with requests for photographs, videotaping or interviews, media will respect the personal privacy of students and staff, and shall obtain appropriate releases or permissions before proceeding as per the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Permission shall also be obtained before publication of student creative works.

References:

Education Act
Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Last reviewed July 2016