

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

It is the policy of the New Hanover County Board of Education (Board) to maintain regular, ongoing, respectful and accurate communications throughout the community to help parents participate effectively in their student's education. The Board is committed to partnering with its many stakeholders – community, families, students and employees. The school district shall coordinate and share regular and ongoing communications through a variety of means, including print, social media, electronic, voice and visual. The Superintendent shall identify spokespersons to facilitate communications and share information with the media at the district, site and program levels.

Information Sharing

A. Coordination of Communications

The Public Relations Division shall coordinate information sharing at the district, school site and education program levels. The division shall develop information processes for sharing with the district's stakeholders. All news releases shall be forwarded to the media and key contacts in the district by the Public Relations Division. The Chief Communications Officer shall oversee district communications and public relations.

B. Regular Communications

1. The district, school sites and district programs shall provide regular communications to their stakeholders by sharing information about their activities, happenings, curriculum, assessments and goals.
2. The primary source of regular communications shall be electronic with the recognition that the district, school site, or education program levels shall be responsible to ensure that families, community members and employees who do not have access to electronic sources shall receive the shared communications through other means such as an electronic calling system.
3. The primary source of district communications shall be the NHCS website (www.nhcs.net)

C. Communication Standards

The Superintendent, in collaboration with the administration, shall establish communication standards for employees, recognizing the primary means of communications shall be electronic. These standards shall include effective internal and external use of electronic mail.

D. State of the School District Report

The Board shall also provide regular communications to the entire community that shall include an annual report on the state of the school district. The report shall meet the requirements of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, noting:

- District goals;
- Procedures for evaluating goals;
- Results of progress on school district goals and other school district assessment information;
- Reports on ongoing student and program assessments conducted each year in the school district;
- Other legal information; and
- Other pertinent information.

District Spokespersons and Key Contacts for Media

A. Official Spokespersons

The Superintendent is the official spokesperson for the school district. The Superintendent shall appoint additional spokespeople as appropriate, including but not limited to:

- Building site: Principal
- District activity: Chief Communications Officer or administrative designee

The Chief Communications Officer is responsible for coordinating the information shared with the media. The Public Relations Division shall work with each school site or program's designated administrator to share information with the media.

District employees shall receive approval from the Chief Communications Officer prior to sharing school district information with the media when appropriate. The approval may be given to an employee to maintain direct media connections when appropriate (e.g., sports season, ongoing activity).

B. Crisis or Emergency Situation

The Superintendent shall identify one spokesperson to address all media when a crisis or an emergency situation occurs within the district. The spokesperson shall identify specific times and locations of news conferences and/or briefings when necessary.

Superintendent Communications to Media

The Superintendent or designee shall respond to requests by the news media within a reasonable amount of time.

Media Communications with Students

It is expected that the media not contact or interview students on any of the school campuses or at school-related events without permission of the district, school site, or program's spokesperson. Parent/legal guardian permission may be required and determined by the spokesperson. It is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to monitor their student's personal social media communications and behavior.

Parent to School Communication

- A. When communicating via email, parents should:
- Send emails to one person if possible.
 - If sending to a group, indicate who should respond.
 - Follow the flow of communication listed below.
- B. Flow of communication from parent to school:
- Teacher/Individual level- Parents should first communicate with the teacher (or individual involved) about their concern or issue.
 - Principal- If the issue remains unresolved at the individual level, the parent should contact the principal.
 - Superintendent- If the issue remains unresolved at the school level, the parent should contact the Office of the Superintendent.
 - School Board- If the issue remains unresolved at the Superintendent level, the parent should contact the New Hanover County Board of Education.

CROSS REF: Policy 1600 The Community and the Board of Education
Policy 6086 Network and Internet Access for Staff
Procedures for Public Relations and School Communications

Adopted: 09/01/15, 11/07/17

**PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS
SUPPORTS POLICY 9002**

Employee Communication Standard

To develop a standard set of communication expectations for employees to ensure that timely, meaningful and relevant communications are occurring to advance the mission of the district.

School Web-Presence Standard

| AREA | CONTENT | PERSON RESPONSIBLE | UPDATE FREQUENCY |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| School/Home | Welcome/Announcements | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Weekly/As Needed |
| | Parent Links | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Annually/As Needed |
| | Calendar/Events | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Daily/As Needed |
| | Extras (Smart Box) | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | As Needed |
| About Us | Contact Us | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Annually/As Needed |
| | Principal's Welcome Message | Principal | Annually/As needed |
| | Hours and Attendance | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Annually/As needed |
| | Forms and Information | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Annually/As Needed |
| Newsletters | Determined by School | Admin Assistant/ Webmaster | Site Based Decision |
| Academics | Grade Levels (Elem & MS) | School Webmaster | Annually/As Needed |
| | Dept. or Teams (MS & HS) | School Webmaster | Annually/As Needed |
| | Scholarships, College Applications, Letters of Recommendation | School Counselors | As Needed |
| Media Center | Links to Databases Subscribed | Media Specialist | Annually/As Needed |
| Child Nutrition | Lunch Menu | Child Nutrition Manager | Monthly |
| Health | Website: Mental Health Crisis | Social Worker | As Needed |

Teacher Web-Presence Standard

| CONTENT | TOOL | UPDATE FREQUENCY |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| Teacher's Contact Information and Communication Expectations | Website | Annually/As Needed |
| Calendars/Announcements | Website/Grade Book | Weekly/As Needed |
| Schedule/Syllabus | Website | By School Term or Weekly |
| Homework Information | Website/Grade Book | Weekly/As Needed |
| Newsletters (Elementary) | Paper and/or Posted on Website &/or Emailed | Site Based Decision |
| Grades (Secondary) | PowerSchool | Site Based Decision |

Phone Messages Received by Employees and Response to Messages

Employees with a district-assigned phone number shall create a voicemail message. If the employee's position requires him or her to be away from the phone at certain times of the day, the employee shall include:

- The times he or she is available by phone;
- A phone number for immediate assistance in the voicemail message;
- The employee shall monitor voicemail messages on a daily basis and direct callers to another source if the employee is not monitoring the voicemail account during a period of absence; and
- The message should be professional and courteous.

Employees are expected to return or respond to calls of significance (e.g., colleagues, parents, students) within two (2) duty days and, in some unique circumstances, within three (3) duty days.

Teachers Response to Emails during the School Day

- Teachers shall minimize responses during the instructional day and are encouraged to use their "Out of Office Assistant" stating:
"I am currently involved with my instructional responsibilities and will not be reviewing emails until after the school day;"
- Teachers should check emails at the beginning and end of each day;
- School administration shall inform families that time-sensitive emails and calls should be directed to the school office; and
- Teachers shall inform families of and post their communication expectations as it relates to responding to calls and emails in a timely manner, but no longer than 48 hours.

Employee Limitations of Email

- Employees are to keep email informational and directed only to the intended recipient;
- Email distribution lists are encouraged but intended for educational purposes only;

- Employees are not to solicit sales or services; and
- Emails to and from school employees regarding business matters may be considered “public record” and subject to disclosure to the media and the public.

Use of Email and Electronic Technologies

Employees shall follow Policy 6086 - Network and Internet Access for Staff.

Written Correspondence by Employees

Employees are expected to respond to written correspondence of significance (colleagues, parents, students) within two (2) days.

Monitoring of Communication Standards

The direct supervisor shall be responsible for monitoring employees' adherence to the standards. Failure to follow the standards may result in disciplinary action.