School District

Public Relations and School Communications

I. Purpose

This policy ensures that Edina Public Schools maintains regular and ongoing communications throughout the community.

II. General Statement of Policy

Edina Public Schools is committed to partnering with the community, families, students and employees. The school district will coordinate and share regular and ongoing communications through a variety of means, including print, electronic, voice and visual. The district will identify spokespersons to facilitate communications and share information with the media at the district, site and program levels.

III. Information Sharing

A. Coordination of Communications

The district will coordinate information sharing at the district, school site and education program levels through the communications department. The department will develop information processes for sharing with the district's publics. All news releases will be forwarded to the media and key contacts in the district by the communications department. The superintendent or designee will oversee district communications and public relations.

B. Regular Communications

1. The district, school sites and district programs will provide regular communications to their publics by sharing information about their activities, happenings, curriculum, assessments and goals.

2. The primary source of regular communications will be electronic with the recognition that the district, school site, or education program levels will be responsible to ensure that families, community members and employees who do not have access to electronic sources will receive the shared communications.

3. The primary source of district communications will be the district's website.

C. Communication Standards

The superintendent, in collaboration with the administration, will establish communication standards for employees, recognizing the primary means of communications will be electronic. These standards will include effective internal and external use of electronic mail (Appendix I).

D. State of the School District Report

The school district will also provide regular communications to the entire community, 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
- Other pertinent information

IV. District Spokesperson and Key Contacts for Media

A. Official Spokesperson

The superintendent is the official spokesperson for the school district. The superintendent will appoint additional spokespeople as appropriate, including but not limited to:
- Building site: Principal
- District activity: Activities director or administrative designee
- Community education services: Director of community education services

The superintendent, or designee, is responsible for coordinating the information sharing with the media. The superintendent, or designee, will work with each school site or program's designated administrator when it is necessary to share information with the media.

District employees will receive approval from the superintendent or designee prior to sharing school district information with the print or broadcast media.

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

V. Media Communications with Students

The media may not contact or interview students on any of the school campuses or at school-related events without verbal permission of the district, school site, or program's spokesperson. Parent/guardian permission may be required and determined by the spokesperson.

Cross Reference:
    Policy 616 (School District Accountability)
    Policy 634 (Electronic Technologies Acceptable Use)

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

PURPOSE
To develop a standard set of communication expectations for employees and community members to ensure timely, meaningful and relevant communications are occurring in ways that encourage engagement and advance the mission of the district.

COMMUNICATION STANDARDS
Employees should use appropriate, professional language, understanding that they are representing the district in their written and oral communications.

MONITORING OF COMMUNICATION STANDARDS
An employee's direct supervisor will be responsible for monitoring adherence to the communication standards. Failure to follow the standards may result in disciplinary action.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS
District staff will employ a variety of communication tools and strategies in an effort to enhance partnership and involvement among all stakeholders. The following protocols and expectations are intended to serve as minimum guidelines to help staff manage communications while also promoting manageable expectations for and responsiveness with stakeholders.

WEBSITE
All websites are to be maintained in accordance with Policies 107 (Public Relations and School Communications) and 634 (Electronic Technologies and Acceptable Use)

- **District web presence –** The district media and technology services department will manage the website software and infrastructure. The communications department will oversee and manage the content of the district website. Updates to content will be done in accordance with the district's strategic communication plan.
- **School/Program web presence –** Each school site / program will maintain a web presence utilizing the district's website platform. Support for school sites on managing the public facing pages will be provided by the district communications department in accordance with the district's website standards and strategic communication plan.

CONTENT	UPDATE FREQUENCY
Teacher Contact Information and Communication Expectations	Annually
Calendars/Announcements	As needed
Schedule/Syllabus	Each school term
Assignments/Homework Information	As Needed
Newsletters / Parent Communications	Determined by site
Grades	Determined by site

- **Teacher/Classroom web presence –** Teachers are encouraged to maintain a classroom or program web presence, utilizing one of the district's approved website platforms (e.g. Schoolwires, Google, Schoology, etc.).

PHONE / VOICEMAIL
- **Voicemail greeting** - Employees with a district-assigned phone number will create a standard voicemail greeting. If the employee's position requires him or her to be away from the phone at certain times of the day, the employee will include in the message (1) the times they are available by phone, and (2) an alternate contact for immediate assistance during business hours.

- **Monitoring voicemails -** Employees will monitor voicemail messages on a daily basis (on duty days) and direct callers to another source if they are not monitoring the voicemail account during a period of absence.
- **Responding to voicemails -** Employees are expected to return or respond to calls of significance (e.g., colleagues, parents, students) <u>within one duty day</u> and, in unique circumstances, within two duty days. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to reply to the caller letting them know of the status of their request.

<u>EMAIL</u>
Employees will use district emails in accordance with Policies [107](#) (Public Relations and School Communications) and [634](#) (Electronic Technologies and Acceptable Use) and their appendices.
- **Email standards** – Employee email accounts provided by the district are to be used for district-related business only and are subject to district review.
   - *Content* – The employee should use appropriate, professional language, understanding that they are representing the district in their communication.
   - *Public Data* – The content of district email accounts are public information except where allowable by law to be private (see Policies [406](#) and [515](#)). Employees should refrain from including confidential student data without permission of the student's parent/guardian.
   - *Signature/Confidentiality Notice* – Staff should include a signature in their email correspondences that include their name, position, contact information and a confidentiality notice, similar to the following:
   If the information in this email relates to an individual or student, it may be private data under state or federal privacy laws. This individual private data should not be reviewed, distributed or copied by any person other than the intended recipient(s), unless otherwise permitted under law. If you are not the intended recipient, any further review, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this electronic communication or any attachment is strictly prohibited. If you have received an electronic communication in error, you should immediately return it to the sender and delete it from your system.
- **Monitoring emails** – Employees will monitor their email messages on a regular basis on duty days (at least twice daily). Employees will inform families of and post their communication expectations (teachers/administration) as it relates to responding to emails in a timely manner.
   - *Out of Office* –
      - ▪ *Vacation / Illness / Professional Leave -* Employees will create an "Out of Office response when they are away from the classroom/office for the day. Auto-reply messages should include the dates the employee will be absent and include an alternate contact for immediate assistance during business hours.
      - ▪ *Instruction Day (Teachers)* - Teachers will minimize responses to emails during the instructional day and are encouraged to use their "Out of Office Assistant" with a response similar to the following:
      I am currently involved with my instructional responsibilities and will not be reviewing emails until after the school day. Please contact the school office if you are seeking an immediate response to this email. Thank you.
- **Responding to emails** – Employees are expected to return or respond to emails of significance (e.g., colleagues, parents, students) within a reasonable amount of time. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to reply to the message letting them know of the status of their request. However, depending on the employee's role in the district and the person inquiring, response times may vary.
   - *Response time* – Teachers / educational assistants should respond to parent/guardian inquiries within one duty day. Administration and support staff are expected to respond to inquiries within 6-24 hours (during duty days).
   - *Articulate expectations* – Employees should be clear about their monitoring and response plans. Teachers should post their communication plans on their website (see above) and include in their auto-response.

- o **Time-sensitive emails –** School administration will inform families that time-sensitive emails and calls should be directed to the school office.
  - o **After Hours –** In an effort to promote a healthy work-life balance, employees are not expected to monitor or respond to district emails messages outside of the duty day, except in the case of an emergency. In emergency situations, employees should be contacted by text/SMS or phone to alert them to an important email message. Staff are encouraged to use discretion when communicating outside of the duty day.
- ● **Email Best Practices / Employee Limitations –** The following best practices should be considered when utilizing district email accounts:
  - o **Message Content** - Keep messages brief and to the point.
    - ▪ To conserve district electronic resources, to be consistent in communications, and to maximize efficiencies, employees should limit the use of unnecessary punctuations, emoticons/emojis, fonts, pictures, etc.
    - ▪ Do not put information in an email that you would not put on district letterhead.
  - o **Intended Audience** - Employees are to keep email informational and directed only to the intended recipient. Employees should be considerate about email clutter and limit "reply all" and "cc" functions only when necessary.
  - o **Distribution Lists** - Email distribution lists are intended for educational purposes only; employees are not to solicit sales or services. As noted above, employees should limit the use of distribution lists to messages of importance to all list members and should limit the use of the distribution list for sharing of "interesting" information or opinion.
  - o **Confidentiality** - Do not use email to communicate about confidential student information unless the parent or guardian has requested the communication. Emails containing student information should be sent to the parent or guardian's personal email address unless requested otherwise. A phone call is the best means for sharing confidential student information. Do NOT leave voicemail messages containing confidential information.

TEXT/SMS COMMUNICATIONS
Similar to email correspondences, employees will use respond to correspondences via text/SMS in accordance with Policies 107 (Public Relations and School Communications) and the district's District Cell Phone Guidelines.
- ● **Responding to Text/SMS Communications** – Employees are discouraged from using text/SMS as a standard communication tool with parents, families and students, except as utilized through the parent notification system (mass communication) or through special circumstances. Recognizing that text messaging has become a common internal communication tool, employees utilizing text messages for district business are expected to return or respond to messages of significance from colleagues within a reasonable amount of time.
  - o **Public Data** – The content of district communications via text messages are public information except where allowable by law to be private (see Policies 406 and 515). Employees should refrain from including confidential data.
  - o **Response Time** – Employees are expected to respond to text messages from colleagues within one to four hours. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to reply to the message letting the sender know of the status of their request.
  - o **After Hours –** In an effort to promote a healthy work-life balance, employees are encouraged to limit text/SMS messages for district business unless expected to do so or in emergency situations.

WRITTEN (PRINT) CORRESPONDENCE
Similar to email correspondences, employees will use respond to written correspondences in accordance with Policies 107 (Public Relations and School Communications).
- ● **Responding to Written Communications** – Employees are expected to return or respond to written correspondences of significance (e.g., colleagues, parents, students) within a

reasonable amount of time. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to contact the sender to let them know of the status of their request. Depending on the request, response times may vary.

- o *Public Data* – The content of district communications are public information except where allowable by law to be private (see Policies 406 and 515). Employees should refrain from including confidential student data without permission of the student's parent/guardian.
- o *Response Time* – Employees are expected to respond to written correspondence of significance (colleagues, parents, students) within one to two duty days. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to reply to the message letting them know of the status of their request.

- **Public Data Requests** – The director of communications and community engagement will coordinate response to requests for public data made under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Questions about public data requests should be directed to the director of communications and community engagement or legal counsel.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Employees will use and respond to correspondences via social media in accordance with Policies 107 (Public Relations and School Communications) and 634 (Electronic Technologies and Acceptable Use) and their appendices.

- **Using Social Media**
  - o *School/Program Social Media Use* - Individual schools and departments may choose to establish an official presence on public online social media sites with prior administrative approval. Guidelines are established the appendices of Policy 634.
  - o *Employee/Classroom Use of Social Media -* Teachers may elect to use social media tools for the purpose of instruction in accordance with Policy 634 and its appendices.
    - ▪ *District sponsored social media* – The district provides teachers with password-protected, online social media tools that can be used for instruction.
    - ▪ *Non-district sponsored social media* – If a teacher elects to use a non-district social media tool, the teacher must build a separate page in that social media tool from his or her personal online presence. Content and use must adhere to district policies and guidelines. Content and use must not violate the "terms of service" for the social media tool.
- **Responding to Social Media Communications** – Employees are encouraged to use caution when using social media as a standard communication tool with parents, families and students, unless otherwise noted above.
  - o *Public Data* – The content of district communications via social media are public information except where allowable by law to be private (see Policies 406 and 515). Employees should refrain from including confidential data in social media posts and communications.
  - o *Response Time* – Recognizing that social media has become a common communication tool, employees utilizing social media for district business are expected to respond to social media messages (e.g. comments, questions) within 12-24 hours (on duty days). If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to notify the message sender of the status of their request.
  - o *After Hours –* In an effort to promote a healthy work-life balance, employees are encouraged to limit social media communications for district business except in emergency situations.

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