

9290 COMMUNITY STANDARD RESPONSE TIME

This Policy provides guidance on the manner and timing in which to respond to questions or inquiries from the community. Generally, this would pertain to a student's "parents and/or guardians" as may be relevant. A primary duty of the Watchung Borough School District is to be responsive to the needs of our students and their parents and/or guardians. Fundamentally, this can often be achieved by being responsive to questions and/or requests in a timely manner. The following are best practices which shall be followed in order to achieve this shared goal.

The Policy applies to Members of the Watchung Borough Board of Education ("BOE"); Superintendent of Schools; Principals; Full and Part Time Teachers ("Educators") and School Administration of Bayberry and Valley View Schools (collectively, the "Watchung Borough School District").

Standard Response Protocols

The following response protocols apply to responding to parent and/or guardian questions or inquiries during in-session school days/hours (e.g. non-weekend, non-holiday).

- A response to a parent and/or guardian shall be made within two (2) school days of the receipt of the communication (e.g. email, voice-mail, written communication) or sooner wherever possible¹.
- A "response" is defined as a courtesy communication back to the parent and/or guardian that the communication was received and the actionable steps that are being taken (or planned to be taken) with regard to answering the question or inquiry in the event such response will require more than two (2) school days.
 - An initial response communication to a parent and/or guardian may not necessarily result in addressing the parent and/or guardian's question or inquiry within two (2) school days in all cases. This is particularly true if additional effort is required to research and respond back to the parent and/or guardian in a complete and thorough manner. However, best efforts shall be made to resolve the question or inquiry expeditiously, especially for matters which are time sensitive and/or can be resolved through a brief response.

Best Practices

- The person receiving the question or inquiry should follow-through on responses promptly and manage expectations on what/when is to be provided.

¹At times, there may be unforeseen and/or uncontrollable delays in providing a timely response to a parent and/or guardian, such as in situations where members of the Watchung Borough School District are on sick-leave, vacation or otherwise unreachable due to an unexpected conflict.

- Responses should be plain-spoken, professional and complete.
- Certain questions or inquiries may be sensitive or personal in nature regarding a student. The Educator or Administration member should use discretion and consider which medium is best suited for providing a response (e.g. a phone call or in-person meeting may be more appropriate than an email depending on the topic).
- If an Educator or Administration member is planning to not be available, such as for vacation or extended sick leave, an Out Of Office (OOO) message should be enabled on emails and/or voice mail to alert parents and/or guardians. An alternate contact person should be referenced in order to provide assistance.
- In the event a response to a question or inquiry will not adequately address the parent and/or guardian's question or inquiry within two (2) school days because more time is required to research the matter, or to coordinate with others who can assist in providing a response, the Educator and/or Administrator shall use best efforts in providing the following information to facilitate full transparency:
 1. General steps being performed to obtain the information needed to respond fully.
 2. The individual who will be responding back to the parent and/or guardian that submitted the inquiry (if the person is different than the Educator or Administrator who received the inquiry).
 3. If available, a general time frame when a response may be forthcoming.

Special Circumstances

The two (2) school day response time is intended for standard day-to-day questions or inquiries. In the event a communication is a time sensitive material issue (e.g. student health, safety, legal issue etc.) the matter must be promptly reported to the appropriate school administrator for additional guidance and direction.

Complaint communications levied against an Educator or School Administrator (inclusive of a complaint communication received by the recipient against themselves) shall be escalated to the person's supervisor for awareness. Complaint communications levied against the Superintendent shall be escalated to the Superintendent (if not received directly) and to the President of the BOE.² In the case of a complaint against a specific BOE member, the complaint shall be raised to the BOE President. In the event the complaint is against the BOE President, the complaint shall be reported to the BOE Vice President.

Adopted: 11 December, 2019, with an effective date of 19 December 2019

²The Superintendent may facilitate the reporting of a complaint against him/her to the President of the BOE directly (instead of by an Educator and/or member of School Administration who received the complaint), as part of the School District's internal chain of command protocols.