

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 strive to communicate in languages that best represent our community whenever possible. The district will identify spokespersons to facilitate communications and disseminate information with the media (digital, print, radio and television) 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 Marketing & Communications department. The department will develop information processes for sharing with the district's stakeholders. All news releases will be forwarded to the media and key contacts in the district by the Marketing & 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 stakeholders 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 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. District website is available for translation via the language drop down menu on the home page.

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).

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:

- District-wide: Director of Marketing & Communications
- Building site: Principal
- District activity: Activities director or administrative designee
- Community education services: Director of Community Education and Strategic Partnerships

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 media (digital, print, radio and television).

The approval may be given to an employee to maintain direct media connections when appropriate (e.g, sports season, ongoing activity). All media requests to the school board will be forwarded to the superintendent or director of marketing and communications.

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 406 (Public and Private Personnel Data)
- Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Student Records)
- Policy 616 (School District Accountability)
- Policy 634 (Electronic Technologies Acceptable Use)

Policy
adopted: 10/22/07
amended: 09/24/12
revised: 06/17/19
revised: 01/09/23

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 273
Edina, Minnesota

Appendix I to Policy 107
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 marketing & 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 marketing & 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., 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) within one duty day 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.

EMAIL

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 preferably the Edina Defining Excellence logo, 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 (see responding to email below). 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.
- **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 48 hours of the duty day. Administration and support staff are expected to respond to inquiries within 48 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.
 - **Time-sensitive emails** – School administration will inform families that time-sensitive emails and calls should be directed to the school office.
 - **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 school emergency situations, administrators

will contact employees 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:
 - **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.
 - **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.
 - **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.
 - **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 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** – With the exception of district approved home/school messaging applications, employees are discouraged from using text/SMS as a standard communication tool with parents, families and students, unless there is a special circumstance.
 - **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.

WRITTEN (PRINT) CORRESPONDENCE

Similar to email correspondences, employees will 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.
 - **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.
 - **Response Time** – Employees are expected to respond to written correspondence of significance (colleagues, parents, students) within one duty day. If a response requires additional information gathering, employees are expected to communicate to the sender to let them know of the status of their request.
- **Public Data Requests** – The director of marketing & communications 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 marketing & communications who will work with 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**
 - **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 in the appendices of Policy 634.
 - **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.
- **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.
 - **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 must refrain from including confidential data in social media posts and communications.
 - **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.

Policy
Established: 9/24/12
Updated: 8/15/16
revised: 1/9/23

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 273
Edina, Minnesota