

Springfield Public Schools

Chain of Communication FAQs

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT UPDATED 11.1.23

DO'S

- **Do start with the person closest to the student or issue.** Use the charts to identify who that might be, and use the district website to get direct contact information.
- **Do expect that the individuals in the school system want the best for every child in the district.** Demonstrate your understanding by using respectful language and avoiding personal attacks.
- **Do review our website and district policies** related to your concerns. They are available and updated regularly.
- **Do provide an appropriate amount of time during working hours for a response.** If two working days have gone by without a response, and it is not an emergency issue, please send a follow-up message before escalating the communication.
- **Do ask questions from the district before repeating information heard from a second- or third-hand source.** Repeating unfounded rumors hurts our school community.
- **Do understand that your rights related to personnel records, other student's information, or other parents' information is limited by law.** Any communication that we share is governed by state and federal law.
- **Do share ideas and opportunities that will help our district work toward our vision and mission!**

DON'TS

- **Don't start with social media.** You may be violating your own, your child's or another individual's right to privacy. Social media will not make a difficult situation better- only directly reaching out to the school and leaders will result in an appropriate response.
- **Don't be disrespectful or use personal insults.** If the tone of the email is disrespectful, a teacher or administrator has the right not to reply.
- **Don't expect an immediate response.** A wide variety of factors go into responding to individuals. Some answers are easy, some are more complicated and require research. If it is an emergency, please let us know.
- **Don't expect a response over a weekend or outside of working hours.** You may get a response during those times, but it is not guaranteed. If it is an emergency, please let us know.
- **Don't post a staff member's message meant for an individual response to a social media feed.** It creates a lack of trust that impacts future communications.
- **Don't malign the district for following laws, especially related to privacy.**
- **Don't be quiet about wonderful experiences your students have had in Springfield Public Schools!**

WHEN DO I REACH OUT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT?

Any person can reach out to the Superintendent at any time, and communication will be most productive if you have used the communication chart process to answer school or student-specific questions. If the Superintendent is copied on an email, they may not respond but will follow up with other individuals on the email to ensure the concern was handled appropriately.

If you have a specific request or would like to schedule a meeting, the Superintendent will work to respond or share your question with the appropriate administrator. In addition, the Superintendent has multiple venues for communicating questions beyond email including public “Office Hours” and Board of Education meetings.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS?

The Board of Education (BOE) is the last step in the communication chart, primarily because they do not function as administrators. Ultimately, if an issue comes to the BOE for resolution, it is essential that they are able to make an impartial judgment on the concerns presented.

When presented with a concern at a public meeting, the Board will ask the Superintendent whether the concern had been shared using the appropriate communication process. Frequently, these concerns have not been brought to the school leader or the Superintendent prior to the Board Meeting, and will be sent through the communication process before coming back to the BOE. One of the purposes for developing the communication charts and the FAQ is to address the appropriate way to ask questions of the district and venues for gaining accurate information.

[New Jersey School Boards provides a helpful FAQ on the role of the BOE.](#)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SEND AN EMAIL TO THE FULL BOARD?

Due to rules regarding public meetings, any discussion of board-related business with more than 4 members of the board must follow the rules of the Open Public Meetings Act. As a result, when an email is sent to all nine members of the board, individuals will receive a response that only includes the Board President. It is the responsibility of the Board President to relay or share any responses in an appropriate form with the members of the Board. [New Jersey School Boards provides a thorough description of these practices.](#)

WHY DOESN'T THE DISTRICT RESPOND ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

There is no question that social media has become one of the most essential communication tools used by the district. With a newly updated website, ongoing use of Facebook and Instagram, and an email and text program, schools and the district work to provide ongoing communication about the news and events in our schools.

While social media is a terrific tool for sharing information, it is also used as a tool for posting questions, open public discussion and criticism, and unfortunate misinformation. In an effort to limit this, neither the Superintendent, school, or district administrators will comment in their capacity on social media threads on issues related to the schools. School Board members may choose to make comments in their role as parents or community members on social media, but their statements are their own, and do not represent the Board as a whole or the district, unless the message explicitly includes language indicating that representation.