

Policy Title	Communications–Trustee and Administration Guidelines		
Date of Issue	May 17, 2011	Related Policy	BP 1604-D
Revision Dates	May 2, 2012; June 10, 2015; October 4, 2021 (housekeeping); October 27, 2021	Related Forms	
Review Date		Originator	Administrative Council
References			
AP 1604-D “Communications – Addressing Parent/Community Concerns”; York Catholic District School Board Policy #110 “Communication Protocol: Trustee/Administration”; Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Education Act; Good Governance: A Guide for Trustees, School Boards, Directors of Education and Communities, OESC; BP/AP 1606-D “Consultation”; AP 1602-D “Media Relations”; BP 1106-D “Role Description – Trustee”			

1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 Bluewater District School Board recognizes that providing open, timely, and appropriate communication among trustees, senior administration, and school administrators regarding important matters or issues relating to or impacting on staff, schools, and the community is an integral component of collaboration within our learning community.
- 1.2 The board believes that miscommunication and/or lack of awareness will be avoided by providing direction to trustees and administration regarding fair, reasonable, and effective communication. This procedure will be used in coordination with AP 1602-D “Media Relations”.

2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Bluewater District School Board endeavours to participate in proactive communication and consultation, and therefore, expects that all staff will incorporate the themes outlined within BP and AP 1606-D “Consultation” to facilitate these processes.
- 2.2 The director of education will:
 - i. act as the official spokesperson for the board’s operational items;
 - ii. establish administrative measures necessary for compliance with this policy;
 - iii. advise the board chair, vice-chair, and area trustee on matters requiring the attention, understanding, and sensitivity of the board;
 - iv. develop and maintain effective and consistent channels of communication with all stakeholders in the educational system and the community at large;
 - v. ensure that trustees are consulted with and are kept informed of key messaging when necessary; and
 - vi. inform trustees of all new system initiatives and/or programs for information in advance of implementation unless legislated deadlines or legal requirements dictate immediate action. In cases such as these, email correspondence will be utilized to provide trustees with initial details of the initiative(s)/program(s).
- 2.3 The board chair will:
 - i. act as the official spokesperson for all external communications regarding matters under consideration by the board, as well as explaining board decisions and positions.

2.4 Trustees will:

- i. seek information from the director of education or area superintendent on matters related to a school or school community;
- ii. communicate with superintendents on a regular basis, including the resolution of complaints;
- iii. respond to invitations from a school to special events;
- iv. uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board. Trustees may speak as trustee for their area on issues which have been publicly before the board; however, trustees shall not present an opinion as the position of the board unless the opinion is supported by a board resolution, or they have been authorized to speak on the subject on behalf of the board; and
- v. direct parents/members of their local community to AP 1604-D “Communications – Addressing Parent/Community Concerns”, when/where appropriate, ensuring that the processes outlined within that procedure have been followed.

2.4.1 In accordance with BP 1106-D “Role Description – Trustee”, individual trustees are legally bound by the majority decisions of the Board of Trustees once they have voted, regardless of whether they supported it during debate or voted in opposition. Trustees should be able to explain the rationale for the decision and ensure that it is understood, implemented, and monitored. They may say that they are opposed to the decision, supported by their political opinion, but they must do so respectfully (“Good Governance: A Guide for Trustees, School Boards, Director’s of Education and Communities”, Ontario Education Services Corporation).

2.5 The communications officer will:

- i. assist the chair, trustees, and/or director of education as needed, consistent with their job description.

2.6 Superintendents will:

- i. maintain ongoing communication with trustees related to matters of mutual concern;
- ii. notify trustees of opportunities/activities that are of benefit to student achievement and well-being, including but not limited to, schools visits and dialogue;
- iii. notify the director of education and/or area trustee of:
 - a) any unresolved school issue, e.g., a parental concern;
 - b) school-related incidents including:
 - 1. injuries requiring medical services
 - 2. safety issues, e.g., bomb threats, health issues, evacuations
 - 3. bereavements of staff, students, or parents
 - 4. safe school concerns, e.g., bullying, violent acts, police involvement
 - c) community concerns, e.g., busing, boundaries; and
 - d) any other situation/incident that they believe the director of education and/or area trustee should be aware of.

2.7 School administrators will:

- i. maintain ongoing communication with their superintendent and school trustee on matters that impact the school and the community;
- ii. inform the applicable superintendent in a timely manner on issues (as noted above);
- iii. provide school trustee with copies (preferably electronically) of newsletters, school council minutes, community letters, etc. on an ongoing and timely basis;
- iv. inform and invite the local trustee to all events at the school which are open to parents/community; and
- v. act as the primary spokesperson, under normal circumstances, in the individual schools or departments, unless the situation warrants consultation with the appropriate superintendent to obtain further direction.

2.7.1 School administrators should familiarize themselves with the processes outlined in AP 1602-D "Media Relations".

3.0 SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR – TRUSTEE COMMUNICATION

i. It is important for trustees to establish a relationship with school administrators in their jurisdiction, and for trustees and school administrators to discuss expectations for the sharing of information. A trusting relationship is established when school administrators inform the local trustee of major initiatives, and of school events or decisions that may result in questions or concerns from the community. The trustee should inform the school administrator immediately (either with permission or without permission due to risk to self and/or others) about any complaints, concerns, or questions that they receive from parents, students, staff members, or the broader community.

To ensure consistent communication between trustees and school administrators in Bluewater District School Board, the following guidelines have been established:

- a. Trustees will, where possible, attend school council meetings based on arrangements established with individual trustees; e.g., regular attendance or attendance as requested;
- b. Trustees will make sure they meet all new administrators in their area within the term of the administrator's appointment;
- c. Trustees will call in advance to let the school administrator know they plan to visit the school;
- d. Trustees will follow the same sign-in routines as all other visitors to the school;
- e. Trustees will attend events at the school by invitation or at the will of the trustee;
- f. Trustees will declare any conflict of interest in relation to the distinction between a professional or personal/family role versus their role as trustee;
- g. School administrators will ensure that monthly newsletters are sent to the trustee in their area; and
- h. Trustees will wear their identification badge when visiting schools.

ii. When any school administrator or member of senior staff receives a referral from the trustee, they will complete the communication loop as soon as possible by letting the trustee know the outcome, or what is being done to resolve the issue.

4.0 MEDIA RELATIONS

i. Administrative procedure AP 1602-D "Media Relations" should be followed.