

MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

#900 COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

1.0 PURPOSE

Effective communications are essential for the continued success for the Minnetonka School District. The purpose of this policy is to ensure effective, results-oriented, two-way communication that increases awareness, understanding, interest in, and support for the students, staff, programs, and goals of the District – a learning community that inspires all people to excel.

2.0 GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Effective communications in the District focuses on building relationships between an educational organization and its internal and external publics. It is a planned and systematic management function, grounded in ethical practices, and designed to help improve the programs, services and the reputation of the District. It relies on two-way communication with the goal of stimulating better understanding of the objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization in fulfilling its mission for students. It requires interpreting public attitudes, opinions and beliefs, so that the School Board and Administration can identify and help shape programs, policies and procedures that will gain widespread understanding and support, thereby supporting student achievement.

Every decision and every action in the organization has the potential of impacting the relationship the District has with its stakeholders, thereby improving or damaging the District's ability to fulfill its mission for students. The District's Communication Plan can only be effective if everyone in the organization accepts responsibility for communicating effectively, building relationships, marketing the organization, and serving as ambassadors of the District as they meet and greet people during their daily work.

3.0 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

A planned, systematic, continuous program of two-way communication is a shared responsibility among all board members and employees of the District.

3.1 The School Board is responsible for ensuring a planned and effective two-way communications program. The Board will adopt and maintain a vision, mission statement and strategic plan for the School District. The School Board will maintain a communications office to ensure communications goals and activities are consistent with the Board's Vision and the District's Strategic Plan and annual goals. The School Board will authorize the expenditure of public funds to support the goals adopted.

The School Board communicates through a vote or public consent of the majority of the Board. The School Board Chair, or designee, is the spokesperson for the Board. School Board members should make every effort to advocate for District students, champion the success of the District, maintain high visibility and availability to constituents, ensure open and timely communication with the Superintendent, and inspire others through words and actions.

- 3.2 Development and implementation of the District's communication program is the responsibility of the Superintendent and/or designee. The Superintendent is the primary communicator with the School Board. The Superintendent ensures openness and responsiveness to the public, maintains high visibility and availability among staff and community, serves as the primary communicator of School District's vision, mission and goals, and meets regularly with parent, student, staff and community leaders to facilitate two-way communication.
- 3.3 The communications director serves as the primary spokesperson for the District as designated by the Superintendent. The communications staff is responsible for operational development and implementation of District communications plans, particularly related to complex or controversial issues. The communications office ensures consistency, timeliness and accuracy of District communications.
- 3.4 The responsibility for building level or department level communications lies with the principal or department supervisor. Principals and supervisory personnel set the tone or culture for communication and relationships in a school or department. They serve as primary communicators of information for employees and constituents. The staff in each school or department will engage in timely and effective communication with employees, students and families.
- 3.5 All school employees serve as representatives of the District during their daily work. Employees have a responsibility to communicate accurately and effectively about their school, the District, or issues within the realm and scope of their professional responsibility and knowledge. They should not attempt to answer for others, discuss topics with which they are not familiar or topics which are outside the schools' or departments' scope of responsibilities. District employees should make appropriate efforts to be knowledgeable about the District, its programs, services, accomplishments, challenges, plans and priorities.

4.0 REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 All District communications will adhere to the highest standards of effective communications.
 - 4.1.1 Communication will be guided by the pursuit of truth, accuracy, and fairness. Misinformation shall never intentionally be released. Unintentional release of misinformation shall be rectified immediately upon discovery.

- 4.1.2 The privacy and reputations of students, families, and employees will be respected and protected. Information which might damage the reputation of students or staff members shall not be released, except as provided by law or by other Board policy.
- 4.1.3 Behavior, attitudes, and actions of District employees and School Board members will be conducted in concert with high ethical standards (in public and in private).
- 4.1.4 Positive language, face-to-face dialogue and personalized communication will be employed frequently as the most effective communication practice for bringing about desired attitudes and behaviors.
- 4.1.5 The District will leverage appropriate communication technologies to effectively communicate with and engage stakeholders.
- 4.1.6 The District will strive for openness in decision-making, provide appropriate access to public information, and respect the ideal of free inquiry and the opinions of others.
- 4.1.6 All major communication, change initiatives or new programs will have a written communications plan, which anticipates constituencies' issues, needs, and expectations in addition to District needs.

4.2 Objectives of the communications program.

- 4.2.1 To engage employees and stakeholders as ambassadors for the Minnetonka School District.
- 4.2.2 To actively engage parents, students and staff in the learning process.
- 4.2.3 To gain the awareness, understanding, and support required for the achievement of the District's mission, goals, and objectives.
- 4.2.4 To ensure two-way communications, interpreting the organization to its publics and interpreting the public (values, opinions, and attitudes) to the District.
- 4.2.5 To celebrate the success and contributions of students, staff, and community members.
- 4.2.6 To market Minnetonka Public Schools as a world-class district, and as one of the top school districts in Minnesota and the nation.
- 4.2.7 To ensure that effective communication strategies are employed throughout the District.

Cross References:

Policy #205: Open Meetings & Closed Meetings

Policy #206: Public Participation in School Board Meetings

Policy #307: Access & Dissemination (Compliance with Data Practices Act)

Policy #406: Records of Employees—Policies Regarding Collection, Maintenance and Release Thereof

Policy #428: Respectful Workplace Policy

Policy #470: Employee Use of Social Media

Policy #515: Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records (Compliance with Data Practices Act)
Policy #524: Electronic Technologies Policy Acceptable Use Policy
Policy #525: Web Site and Intranet Policy
Policy #806: Crisis Management Policy
Policy #906: Mass Communication & School Announcements
Policy #910: Media Relations
Policy #913: Closing of School in an Emergency

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