

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Background

The Division believes every staff and board member has a role to play in ensuring accurate information is shared with parents and communities about Battle River School Division's activities, programs and decisions.

Procedures

1. General Expectations for all staff and board members
 - 1.1 All Board and staff members will adhere to Labour Relations laws, FOIP legislation, applicable Professional and/or BRSD Codes of Conduct, BRSD Social Media guidelines and confidentiality agreements when speaking publicly.
 - 1.2 Before responding to any information or inquiries received, all Board and staff members must check the background facts and ensure information they are receiving and subsequently sending out is accurate.
 - 1.3 All communication with the public regarding specific issues shall be based on the position of the Board of Trustees.
 - 1.4 If the Board of Trustees has not discussed the issue or developed a position, individual Board members or staff are not to speculate on what the Board's position might be.
2. Specific Responsibilities
 - 2.1 **Board Chair**
 - 2.1.1 Is the official spokesperson for Battle River School Division, on issues that are within the Board's realm of responsibility. This includes governance and policy issues, budget decisions, student affairs and transportation.
 - 2.1.2 The Board Chair is the appropriate person to communicate with the Minister of Education or the MLAs who interact with BRSD.
 - 2.1.3 The Board Chair may delegate responsibility for speaking on a specific issue to any particular Board member, the Superintendent or the Director of Communications.
 - 2.1.4 The Board Chair, in cooperation with the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Communications, may act as a spokesperson when there is a need for crisis communication on any issue.
 - 2.2 **Superintendent of Schools**
 - 2.2.1 Is the official spokesperson for Battle River School Division on issues that are within her realm of responsibility. This includes operational or school-based issues and personnel issues.
 - 2.2.2 The Superintendent, in cooperation with the Board Chair and the Director of Communications, will act as a spokesperson when there is a need for crisis communication on any issue.
 - 2.2.3 The Superintendent may designate a spokesperson on an issue.

2.3 Members of the Board of Trustees

- 2.3.1 In accordance with Board Policy 4, Role of the Trustee, must, upon receiving a complaint from a parent or community member about operations, refer the parent or community member back to the school or department and inform the Superintendent of this action.
- 2.3.2 Work through the Superintendent of Schools, rather than interacting directly with the Administration or staff of a school.
- 2.3.3 Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the Division.
- 2.3.4 Represent the Board at school functions in their area. Advise of attendance in advance.
- 2.3.5 Share Board-sanctioned key messages with school councils in their area and provide Board-approved greetings at school events such as graduations / awards ceremonies.
- 2.3.6 Respond to inquiries about issues in their area, with support from the Director of Communications and the Board Chair or Superintendent.
- 2.3.7 Act as the link between their community and the Battle River School Division.

2.4 Director of Communications

- 2.4.1 Manages the “day to day” messaging for the school division as a whole – sharing updates and information about activities, projects and issues.
- 2.4.2 Provides background information and prepares key messages for use by Board members and the Superintendent / Division Leaders on any issue. May be asked to prepare key messages for use by Principals on specific issues.
- 2.4.3 Acts as the communication manager in a crisis situation, working in consultation with the Board Chair and Superintendent of Schools and, as appropriate, Division Leaders and / or Admin team of a school.
- 2.4.4 Answers general questions and inquiries from media or community members.

2.5 Division Leaders

- 2.5.1 May be designated by the Superintendent of Schools to speak on any issue that is within their field of expertise, such as transportation, finance, technology, the condition of a building, etc.
- 2.5.2 Will refer public inquiries to the Director of Communications and / or Superintendent of Schools in a crisis or controversial situation.

2.6 Principals

- 2.6.1 Share information with families on issues related to their school community. (May seek support and assistance from the Director of Communications as required).
- 2.6.2 Are the point of contact for local media outlets re attending school functions or activities.
- 2.6.3 Will refer public inquiries to the Director of Communications and / or Superintendent of Schools in a crisis or controversial situation.

2.7 BRSD Staff

- 2.7.1 Teachers are the front-line contact for parents and are the best source of information on how students are doing, the purpose of classroom projects, goals and outcomes of a course, etc.
- 2.7.2 All inquiries received by staff are to be referred to their supervisor. Staff will not act as spokespersons for Battle River School Division on any issue.
- 2.7.3 If staff have questions or require clarification of this, or any, procedure, they should consult with their direct supervisor.

3. Safety Issues

In the event there is a safety issue at a school, such as power / water outage, etc. school administration is expected to inform the Director of Communications immediately. She, in consultation with the Superintendent, BRSD Safety Coordinator and the appropriate department heads, will support schools in their response.

4. Crisis Communication

- 4.1 If an incident or threat occurs at a school, or in the local area and potentially impacts the school, school administration is expected to inform the Superintendent of Schools and/or Director of Communications immediately. The Division uses a protocol known as “Hour Zero” to support effective crisis response.
- 4.2 In the event that a crisis communication plan is required, in order to provide information to parents or the broader community, the plan will be developed jointly by the Director of Communications and the school administration, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools.

Amended: December 2022