



BOARD DIRECTIONAL POLICY

DIRECTIONAL POLICY

Positive Communications

DIRECTIONAL POLICY NUMBER

1000

Directional Policy

Positive Communications

Date Approved:

May 2024

Projected Review Date:

May 2029

Policy

The Positive Communications Directional Policy recognizes that communication exists to serve a fundamental common good - to build bridges among people through the sharing of information. The Board prioritizes all communication which supports its mission, vision, and strategic priorities, and respects its duty to ensure public trust and confidence through open, transparent, proactive, and responsive communications with our school communities, staff, parents and guardians, students, trustees, parishes, the archdioceses, media, various levels of government, and community partners. Additionally, the Board welcomes and appreciates opportunities to engage and share perspectives with these entities, and to participate in dialogue in support of the gift of publicly funded Catholic education.

Purpose

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone." – Colossians 4:6

The purpose of the CDSBEO Positive Communications Directional Policy is to establish clear expectations regarding all internal and external communications within the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO). Rooted in tradition of the Catholic faith, this policy

aims to foster healthy school communities by promoting communication that upholds the inherent dignity of each person and serves the common good.

The CDSBEO recognizes that Catholic Education is a collective effort involving trustees, staff, students, parents, parishes, priests, and the broader community. As such, this policy seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Positive and Responsible Communication:** The CDSBEO commits to sharing and communicating in a positive and responsible manner. This commitment aligns with and draws upon the guidance provided by various Catholic documents, including:
 - The **Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations**, which outline the desired qualities and competencies of graduates from Catholic schools. These expectations include student communication skills, ethical responsibility, and a commitment to social justice.
 - The policy draws inspiration from **Pope Francis’ message for World Communications Day (2020)**, which underscores the importance of truthful and compassionate communication. Pope Francis encourages dialogue that promotes understanding, empathy, and unity, especially in the face of misinformation and polarization.
 - Furthermore, the policy reflects the **Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on the Use of Social Media (2024)**, emphasizing the need for responsible and respectful communication in the digital age. The Letter recognizes the impact of social media on individuals and communities and calls for communication practices that reflect Christian values.
2. **Relevant and Accessible Information:** The policy provides direction on how the Board will develop, promote, and maintain relevant, accurate, clear, timely, and accessible information related to Board programs, policies, activities, and services. By doing so, the CDSBEO ensures transparency and facilitates informed decision-making.
3. **Expectations for Staff:** Clear expectations are set for staff regarding internal and external communications on matters impacting students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and school communities. Staff are encouraged to communicate with empathy, respect, and professionalism.
4. **Equitable Participation:** The CDSBEO actively listens to members of its school communities and strives to create equitable participation opportunities. No voices are excluded, ignored, or privileged, ensuring that diverse perspectives contribute to the growth and well-being of the entire system.
5. **Personal Responsibility for Information:** All members of the CDSBEO community bear personal responsibility for information in their care. This includes the responsible use of confidential information, security management, and privacy. By safeguarding information, individuals contribute to the trust and integrity of the educational environment.

Through this policy and its accompanying procedures, the CDSBEO seeks to strengthen its commitment to effective, compassionate, and faith-inspired communication within its educational community.

Administrative Procedures that specify system-wide practices for Communications, operationalize this directional policy.

Alignment with Multi-Year Strategic Plan:

The *Positive Communications Directional Policy* supports our Vision “Inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ, we transform the world with justice and peace through Catholic education.” This Vision calls the Board to these Strategic Priorities:

[CDSBEO Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#)

Alignment with the CDSBEO Framework for Policy Development

The Strategic Plan and goals of the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario must be rooted in the development and maintenance of Board policies and organizational structures that support student achievement, equity and wellbeing, and educational goals. These policies must be monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness in achieving these goals (Good Governance: Guide for Trustees, School Boards, Directors of Education and Communities, 2022).

[CDSBEO Framework for Policy Development](#)

Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Reviewing and upholding the Positive Communications policy in alignment with the Board’s strategic priorities.
- Understanding and communicating the Positive Communications policy to members of the community.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

The Director of Education is responsible for:

- Providing leadership regarding implementation and operational details in the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Providing direction to staff in the development of administrative procedures and practices to ensure implementation of the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Ensuring consistent communication practices across the Board.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Superintendents are responsible for:

- Providing leadership and support for Principals/Vice-Principals, Managers, Executive/Administrative Assistants, and all departmental staff in their knowledge, understanding, and the implementation of the Positive Communications Directional Policy
- Support and guide school-level communication efforts.
- Working collaboratively to develop administrative procedures that align with the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Managers are responsible for:

- Providing leadership, management, and support for the members of their departments in the knowledge, understanding, and the implementation of the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Working collaboratively to develop administrative procedures that align with the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Communications staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring all centrally provided communications activities are compliant with the Positive Communications Directional Policy and provide support to school administration to ensure school level communications are compliant with the Policy.
- Creating and maintaining administrative procedures and practices that support and operationalize the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Developing and implementing communications plans and strategies to support, promote, and bring awareness to the CDSBEO Catholic mission, vision, and strategic priorities.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of their obligations, as well as Board policies, around information privacy under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Education Act, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, and all other applicable legislation governing information privacy.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Principals are responsible for:

- Providing leadership, management, and support for the members of their school communities in the knowledge, understanding, and the implementation of the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Communicate with staff, students, and parents/guardians based on the best practices set out in this policy and its accompanying procedures.
- Upholding the policy within their schools.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Staff are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with colleagues to successfully implement the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Adhering to the administrative procedures that support the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Being proactive and self-directed in building their knowledge and understanding of the Positive Communications Directional Policy.
- Following the policy guidelines in all internal and external communications.
- Safeguarding confidential information and respecting privacy.

Progress Indicators

- 1) All employees are aware of their roles within the Positive Communications Directional Policy and related administrative procedures, and the impact of professional communications practices within school communities.
- 2) Ongoing review and development of Administrative Procedures for Positive Communications which respond to system and legislative needs.
- 3) Ongoing training for staff around responsible use of information, and our legislative and moral responsibilities to communicate effectively.
- 4) The Board's communication strategy remains adaptive to changing technology and new communication tools which may facilitate effective, timely, and accessible communications practices.

References

- [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56](#)
- [Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2](#)
- [Pastoral Letter on the Use of Social Media, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)
- [Pope Francis Message for World Communications Day \(2020\)](#)
- [Institute for Catholic Education: Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations](#)