

SD 42 POLICY: 2410

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

PURPOSE

The Board of Education ("The Board") has established the following policy regarding the process of handling electronic and paper correspondence ("correspondence") addressed to the Board of Education and individual trustees.

The Board's goal is to ensure that such correspondence is dealt with in an expeditious, fair and thorough manner.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Correspondence specifically addressed to the "Board of Education" or "Board of Trustees" or addressed to School District No. 42 and related to the governance function shall be included on the appropriate Board agenda.

The item will appear under correspondence on the appropriate Agenda where it is either received or moved from correspondence to an appropriate location on the Agenda where some direction can be given. Direction can be:

- a simple referral to staff to respond directly to the inquiry; or
- a request to staff to provide additional information and a recommendation if required;
- a decision at that time if the subject is relatively clear.

If the correspondence so addressed is a complaint the Chairperson, Superintendent of Schools, Secretary Treasurer or designate may contact the complainant to determine if they wish the matter to be dealt with at a Public Board meeting (that may not have been their intent).

2. Correspondence in response to a Board Inquiry (i.e. letters from the Ministry of Education) shall be included on the appropriate Board agenda.
3. For correspondence addressed to the Chairperson (may or may not be copied to all Trustees) the Chairperson shall exercise some discretion on the matter in consultation with the Vice-Chairperson and/or Senior Staff as to how the response should be handled.

If the correspondence is an operational complaint the Chairperson may respond with direction on the appropriate person to talk to at the staff level (in accordance with the appeals policy and guidance on the website about how to resolve disputes). The Chairperson will provide "direction but not a position" on the matter maintaining sufficient distance to allow for a later appeal to the Board if required. The response from the Chairperson will be copied to all Trustees and the Senior Staff. Once the matter is dealt with by staff the disposition will be shared with the Trustees via email. The principle is that everyone who is notified about a complaint should be apprised of the resolution or outcome.

If the correspondence is requesting clarification of an existing policy the Chairperson can respond with the required clarification copying all Trustees and Senior Staff in the process. If the correspondence is requesting a change in policy it should be referred to the Board Policy Development Committee to determine if further work is warranted.

4. Correspondence or verbal comment or question addressed to one or more but not all Trustees – Trustees receiving formal input should refer the item to the Chairperson and copy to All Trustees. The Chairperson will respond in accordance with the guidelines noted above.

It is understood that all Trustees will be approached from time to time by constituents who know them and that they will receive input on emerging issues primarily through incidental discussion. It is not anticipated that all such input will be formalized and shared however, at the point the communication is moving toward a more formal concern or complaint the individual making the comment should be encouraged to follow the protocols noted above and senior staff and the rest of the Trustees should be informed.

5. Invitations to all Trustees – will not be included in a Board Meeting Agenda. The correspondence shall be forwarded to the Office of the Secretary Treasurer for event attendance coordination purposes.
6. Correspondence the Board has directed the Chairperson to send on the Board's behalf – During the course of a Board meeting, resolutions may be passed directing the Chairperson to prepare and forward correspondence expressing the Board's congratulations, thanks or an opinion on a subject.

If the subject is relatively straight forward (a thank you letter) the Chairperson can either prepare a draft and ask the Executive Assistant to prepare the formal letter for signature and send it out or ask the Secretary Treasurer to arrange for the letter to be written for the Chairperson's signature.

If the letter is more sensitive in nature (ie. a letter to the Minister of Education and Child Care) expressing the Board's opinion on a matter a draft should be prepared either by the Chairperson or Secretary Treasurer (at the Chairperson's discretion) and reviewed and edited as required in a meeting involving the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary Treasurer. In the absence of the Secretary Treasurer, the Superintendent of Schools will be asked to assist. The final version will be copied to all Trustees and all other appropriate parties as determined by the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary Treasurer. It is noted that the Board may choose to request the opportunity to review a draft letter before it is sent out providing such request forms part of the resolution directing that the letter be prepared. Since this will slow the process down for conveying the Board's position it is anticipated this approach will be requested on very rare occasions only.

While transparency and sending copies of letters to a standard list of interested parties will generally be the practice it is understood that who the Board copies its correspondence to constitutes part of the message being sent and may have a bearing on the ongoing relationship with the intended recipient. Since maintaining positive working relationships is critical to the Board achieving its goals some consideration should be given to what the Board is trying to achieve in both the drafting of the letter and the list of persons and agencies letters are copied to.

UPDATED: April 12, 2023