

# **Westboro School Council & Westboro Parents' Group Communication Protocol**

## **Preamble**

Though they are two separate legal entities, Westboro School Council (WSC) and Westboro Parents' Group (WPG) often work in unison and as such, both follow the same Communication Protocol.

The Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Communication Protocol For Schools is the basis for the WSC/WPG specific Protocol and serves as a reference attached to this document. Where this protocol adopts content directly from the EIPS protocol, that content is shown in *italics*.

## **Communication Channels**

WSC and WPG seek to communicate in many different ways so as to meet the needs of most parents/guardians. *Generally, the more issues-driven and/or detailed the information is, the more direct the communication channel chosen should be.*

Communication channels include:

- *Face to face communication*: WSC and WPG meetings, events (both formal and informal)
- *Telephone conversations*
- *Hard copy, written communication*: letters sent home
- *Electronic Communications*: email, electronic newsletters, websites, social media

WSC and WPG maintain a separate email distribution list from the school. Parents are invited to join and are at liberty at any time to withdraw consent, at which point they will be removed from this list. WSC/WPG will use this email list to send out meeting minutes and agendas, along with other information as deemed appropriate.

WSC and WPG also maintain a Facebook Group

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WestboroParents/>) The Facebook Group is for parents/guardians/staff. The designated administrator will approve people added by existing members of the group. The administrator will send others wanting to join the group a message asking what class(es) their child(ren) is/are in to confirm they have children attending our Westboro Elementary (people from other areas have asked to join in the past, as there are other schools/establishments named Westboro across North America). Students are not allowed to join, which is in keeping with Facebook's minimum age of 13, as well as, the discussion and subsequent decision when WSC and WPG decided to create the group. WSC/WPF will use the Facebook Group for sharing information and reminders, as well as, for gathering feedback or asking basic questions or clarification. The administrators will delete criticism and negative comments and remove any disruptive or disrespectful members.

WSC and WPG submits a monthly article to the school newsletter as well.

WSC and WPG have an email address: [WestboroParents@gmail.com](mailto:WestboroParents@gmail.com), which is used to send out information to our email distribution list. It is also a way for others to contact us with questions, ideas or concerns.

In partnership with the school, WSC and WPG have a page on the school website ([www.westboroelementary.ca](http://www.westboroelementary.ca)). The Principal, or designate, will post meeting minutes to this page, beginning with the DRAFT minutes and followed by the APPROVED version after the WSC/WPG approves them. In addition, we will post general information about the two groups on this page, along with, names of the Executive, Committee chairs, and meeting dates for the year. The Principal, or designate, updates the information, with input from the Executive.

### **Being Respectful in All Forms of Communication**

*Regardless of the communication channel used or the people involved, all communication should adhere to Board Policy 19, Respectful Working and Learning Environments (<http://www.eips.ca/policies/535>) and Administrative Procedure 490, Respectful Working and Learning Environments (<http://www.eips.ca/procedures/490>). Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, whether it's in a face-to-face meeting, in a telephone conversation, or through email. Both of these documents are attached hereto.*

WSC/WPG will address all respectfully brought forward inquiries or concerns.

### **Addressing Concerns**

If Parents/Guardians have concerns, they are encouraged to address the appropriate person directly. If contact information is not available, email [WestboroParents@gmail.com](mailto:WestboroParents@gmail.com) and we will forward it. General questions or concerns can be addressed to this email as well and we will respond or try to set up a face-to-face meeting to discuss. There is always an Open Questions section on each meeting agenda. Those with concerns are encouraged to try to address any issues directly with the appropriate party; they are welcome to address the concern at a meeting as long as it is done respectfully.

### **Response Time Frames**

WSC and WPG will endeavor to respond promptly and within reason to all inquiries and concerns. Please be mindful, however, that our members are all volunteers and at times have other pressing commitments as well. If not able to respond, they will endeavor to at a minimum acknowledge the inquiry/concern and either indicate when they will be able to respond, or to ask another person to take over the response.

### **Referenced Addendum Documents**

EIPS Communication Protocol for Schools

Board Policy 19, Respectful Working and Learning Environments

Administrative Procedure 490, Respectful Working and Learning Environments





## Communication Protocol for Schools

Communication plays a key role in creating and fostering strong, positive relationships between the school and the home. Communication is a two-way street; our schools share information with our families and community, and our families share information with our schools.

The purpose of this document is to guide, manage, and improve school-home communication by offering a standard format, structure, and sequence for regular, ongoing communication.

### Communication Channels

Communication can take place in a variety of formats. The message and the purpose of the communication can help determine which format is most appropriate. Generally, the more issues-driven and/or detailed the information is, the more direct the communication channel chosen should be.

Communication channels include:

- Face-to-face communication – one-on-one meetings, School Council meetings, Parent-Student-Teacher interviews
- Telephone conversations
- Hard copy, written communication – letters sent home from the school, paper school newsletters
- Electronic communication – email, electronic newsletters, websites, social media

When the communication requires a dialogue, such as bringing forward a question or concern or when a discussion is required on a particular topic, the preferred channels of communication are ones that allow for an immediate and ongoing interaction between the people involved. The best formats for this kind of communication are face-to-face conversations or telephone conversations.

Schools and families are encouraged to use these direct channels of communication when a topic is complex or requires a dialogue. These more direct forms of communication also help us establish a personal connection, which helps build relationships that we don't get in other forms of communication.

When it comes to communication from the school to our families, very rarely do we use only one communication channel. Often we use multiple communication formats together with one another to help ensure the message reaches everyone it needs to.

All staff at a particular school are encouraged to collectively select one common communication tool to use as their primary channel when communicating with parents (e.g., email). This will help ensure consistency throughout the school, so parents have a consistent place to go for information. Some staff may then choose to also use other communication tools to supplement the main communication channel, if they wish.

### School and Division Use of Synrevoice

Synrevoice is a communication tool used by EIPS' schools and the division office to provide information to families via telephone and/or email messages (using the contact information families provide during the registration process). Synrevoice is used to share information about:

- Upcoming school and division events and activities
- Community engagement opportunities
- Provincial initiatives
- Emergency preparedness and crisis response



# Communication Protocol for Schools

## The Role of Social Media

Social media is quickly becoming a common communication tool used throughout education and the world. The speed at which we can share information using social media and how easily accessible that information becomes, makes it a valuable tool in our communications toolbox. However, social media has its limitations, and therefore it is just that – one tool in the toolbox.

Some social media channels, such as Twitter, only allow the sharing of very short messages. Therefore, it is difficult to share a complex message via Twitter. Instead we sometimes see Twitter being used to share a link to another communication channel (e.g., a website) where the audience can find the detailed information.

Social media platforms may work well for:

- Sharing snippets of good news stories and celebrations
- Sending reminders of key dates
- Communicating important information during a crisis (however, keep in mind the information can change quickly in these situations and our first priority is always responding to the situation to ensure students and staff safety)
- Providing links to more detailed information or sharing resources
- Asking basic questions of clarification (however, more complex questions may be better asked using email or a telephone conversation when more detail is required in the answer)

## Expectations

### ***Addressing Concerns Directly***

If parents/guardians have a concern about something at the school or in the classroom, they are encouraged to bring the concern forward in a timely manner directly to the appropriate person. These discussions should take place in the following order:

1. Discuss the concern with the classroom teacher to determine if the issue can be resolved at the classroom level.
2. If this issue cannot be resolved at the classroom level, bring it forward for discussion with the school principal or assistant principal. Most concerns can be addressed at the school level when school staff and administration as well as parents/guardians engage in open and collaborative discussion.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved at the school level, bring it forward for discussion with the appropriate Central Administration personnel.

Any level of the above discussions may be initiated by telephone or email, but may evolve into a face-to-face meeting, which allows for the best and most collaborative discussion to take place.

### ***Being Respectful in All Forms of Communication***

Regardless of the communication channel used or the people involved, all communication should adhere to *Board Policy 19, Respectful Working and Learning Environments* (<http://www.eips.ca/policies/535>) and *Administrative Procedure 490, Respectful Working and Learning Environments* (<http://www.eips.ca/procedures/490>). Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, whether it's in a face-to-face meeting, in a telephone conversation, or through email.





## Communication Protocol for Schools

### ***Response Time Frames***

Every effort should be made to respond in a timely manner, whether the response is required from the home to the school, school to the home, or among schools and/or departments. While there is no guarantee on the specific time frame for a response, generally families can expect a response within two (2) business days.

Just because a school or teacher uses a communication channel that lends itself well to quick communication (e.g., email or social media), doesn't mean they can always respond just as quickly as that format allows. Schools and/or teachers are encouraged to establish processes or guidelines to ensure those they are communicating with have an understanding of how and when they can expect a response.

### **Other Resources**

Additional information and resources related to home/school communication is also available from Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

Alberta Education: *Working Together to Resolve Differences*

<http://education.alberta.ca/parents/role/workingtogether.aspx>

ATA: *Staying Connected to Your Child's School*

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Teaching%20in%20Alberta/Resources%20for%20Parents/Parent-Friendly%20Articles/Pages/Staying%20Connected%20to%20Your%20Childs%20School.aspx>

ATA: *Preparing for a Parent-Teacher Interview*

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Teaching%20in%20Alberta/Resources%20for%20Parents/Parent-Friendly%20Articles/Pages/PreparingforaParentTeacherInterview.aspx>



# Board Policy Handbook

## Board Policy 19

### RESPECTFUL WORKING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Board is committed to providing a safe, caring, and violence-free environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours. All individuals within the Division have the right to work and learn in settings that promote equality of opportunity, dignity, and respect. The Board is obligated to protect all those involved in the Division from harassment, discrimination, and violence during the Division's work and school-related activities. All those involved with the Division including trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, contractors, and visitors must share in the responsibility for eliminating discrimination, harassment, and violence. The Board prohibits harassment, discriminatory, and violent behaviours and expects the reporting of allegations of harassment, discrimination, or violence to be investigated in a timely and respectful manner.

#### Definitions

1. *Respect* means to show consideration for others.
2. *Discrimination* is refusing to provide an opportunity or benefit with respect to access to any term or condition of employment or access to learning because of:
  - 2.1 *Age* – Age is defined as "eighteen (18) years or older". Persons under the age of eighteen (18) can make complaints on all grounds except the ground of age.
  - 2.2 *Ancestry* – belonging to a group of people related by a common heritage
  - 2.3 *Colour* – colour of a person's skin
  - 2.4 *Family status* – being related to another person by blood, marriage, or adoption
  - 2.5 *Gender* – being male, female, or transgender
  - 2.6 *Marital status* – the status of being married, single, widowed, divorced, or separated or living with another person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage
  - 2.7 *Mental disability* – any mental disorder, developmental disorder, or learning disorder, regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder
  - 2.8 *Physical disability* – any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect, or illness
  - 2.9 *Place of origin* – country of birth
  - 2.10 *Race* – belonging to a group of people related by a common heritage
  - 2.11 *Religious beliefs* – system of belief, worship and conduct, including native spirituality
  - 2.12 *Sexual Orientation* – a person's actual or presumed sexual orientation, whether homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual
  - 2.13 *Source of Income* – any income that attracts a social stigma to its recipients, for example, social assistance and disability pension



The behaviour giving rise to a complaint of discrimination need not be intentional in order to be considered discrimination.

With respect to employment, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification, or preference based on a bona fide occupational requirement. With respect to student placement decisions, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification or preference based on a bona fide educational requirement.

3. *Harassment* is repeated unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, including harassment that relates to discrimination. Harassment is insulting or intimidating. Examples of harassment include but are not limited to: verbal or physical abuse; threats; derogatory remarks; jokes; innuendo or taunts about appearance or beliefs; display or electronic transfer of pornographic, racist or offensive images; and condescension that undermines self-confidence or is an unreasonable invasion of one's person. Harassment can be bullying or outright physical assault.

The behaviour giving rise to a complaint need not be intentional in order to be considered harassment; it is sufficient that the offender knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the behaviour is offensive and unwelcome.

3.1 *Sexual harassment* is any unwelcome behaviour that is sexual in nature. Unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual acts, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

3.1.1 Such conduct undermines another individual's personal dignity by causing embarrassment, discomfort, humiliation or offence; or

3.1.2 Such conduct interferes with an individual's work performance or learning opportunities by creating an intimidating or hostile work or learning environment; or

3.1.3 Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or of educational services; or

3.1.4 Submission to or rejection of such conduct affects decisions regarding that individual's employment or educational advancement including matters such as promotion, salary, benefits, job security, grades, or employment references.

Sexual harassment includes such things as unwanted touching (e.g. pinching, patting, rubbing), leering, sexist or dirty jokes, the display of sexually suggestive material, derogatory or degrading comments, sexually suggestive gestures, and unwelcome propositions, innuendos, demands or inquiries of a sexual nature.

3.2 *Bullying* is the hurtful and repeated mistreatment of people by yelling or ridiculing, undermining an individual or group with vindictive or humiliating words or acts and any acts of intimidation including stalking.

4. *Workplace violence* is the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury. Examples include, but are not limited to:

4.1 Threatening behaviour such as shaking fists, destroying property, or throwing objects,

4.2 Verbal or written threats that express an intent to inflict harm,

4.3 Physical attacks, or

4.4 Any other act that would arouse fear in a reasonable person in the circumstances.

4.5 *Respondent* is the individual the complainant alleges has engaged in prohibited behaviour. This would include discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, or violence.

### Specifically

1. Application of this policy includes, but is not limited to, trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, and contractors. This policy covers behaviour not only at Division schools and offices, but also at any Board or school-related function including field trips, conferences, training sessions, work done off site, and social functions. This applies whether the contact is face-to-face, by phone, fax, e-mail, Internet or Intranet, or by any other means of communication.

2. The Board acknowledges its responsibility to support and assist any employee, volunteer, person providing goods or services, or student who is subjected to harassment or violence within its schools or workplaces.

3. The Board encourages reporting of all incidents of harassment or violence, regardless of the identity of the alleged harasser or offender.

## References

Sections 12, 18, 20, 24, 25, 45, 50, 105 *School Act*

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Criminal Code

*Alberta Human Rights Act*

*Teaching Profession Act*

© Elk Island Public Schools, 2015





# Administrative Procedures Manual

## Administrative Procedure 490

### RESPECTFUL WORKING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

#### Background

As per EIPS Policy 19, Respectful Working and Learning Environments, Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) is committed to providing environments where individuals have the right to work and learn in settings that promote equality of opportunity, dignity and respect. The Division prohibits harassment, discrimination and violent behaviours and expects reporting of such to be investigated in a timely and respectful manner. This administrative procedure applies to employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors and contractors.

#### Definitions

**Complainant:**

is the individual who makes a complaint.

**Respondent:**

is the individual who the complainant alleges has engaged in prohibited behaviour such as discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying or violence.

#### Procedures

**Responsibility**

1. The Superintendent, Principals and Supervisors shall:
  - 1.1 Inform all employees, volunteers, parents, students, and where appropriate contractors and vendors about the Board's policy, including procedures for investigating complaints
  - 1.2 Promptly investigate complaints
  - 1.3 Support and assist employees, volunteers, persons providing goods or services or students who complain of harassment or violence.

**Reporting Complaints**

2. The principles of fundamental justice shall apply when reporting complaints.
3. Complainants shall:
  - 3.1 advise the respondent that the behaviour is unwelcome and must cease
  - 3.2 maintain a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, the names of people who may have witnessed the incidents and the action taken to address the harassment or violence
  - 3.3 promptly report the incident to an adult, Principal or Supervisor and follow the procedures to make an informal, verbal or formal written complaint.
4. Teachers may wish to contact Member Services, Alberta Teachers' Association for advice before taking action to ensure

compliance with the Code of Professional Conduct.

5. Other Division employees who have codes of conduct related to their professions are advised to consult with their associations when appropriate.
6. Students/employees who believe that another person has experienced or is experiencing harassment or violence shall notify the Principal or Supervisor.
7. In the case of harassment or violence toward an employee by a community member, the following procedures may be considered:
  - 7.1 a meeting with the Principal/Central Services Supervisor and/or Superintendent
  - 7.2 establishing contact and/or communication in the presence of or through the Principal/Supervisor.
8. Failing resolution, an "Access to Property" letter and/or a "Cease and Desist" letter shall be sent (contact Human Resources for support).
9. The Superintendent may determine the necessity of involving the police.
10. In the event that the Superintendent is the respondent, the complainant shall inform the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources.
11. This administrative procedure does not prohibit a complainant from making a complaint directly to the police if the matter is perceived to be of a criminal nature.
12. The complainant may also seek civil or criminal redress through the courts, or file a complaint with an Occupational Health and Safety officer or the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission:
  - 12.1 Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission  
Phone: 427-7661 or call toll-free within Alberta, dial 310-0000 and then enter the area code and phone number.
  - 12.2 Any complaint filed under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* must be lodged with the Alberta Human Rights Commission within one year of the alleged incident.

#### **Time Limitation**

13. The complaint procedures do not place stringent time requirements for reporting allegations. Delays in reporting may result in delayed knowledge and increased difficulty in resolving the problem satisfactorily, or reduced access to other options.
14. Generally, complaints brought one year or more after the alleged incidents shall not be considered actionable.

#### **Terms of Confidentiality**

15. Confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the complaint procedure and information relating to the complaint, including the identity of the parties involved, and only be disclosed to the extent necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint, and as required by law.
16. Anonymity and complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed once the respondent's behaviour is determined to be unlawful.
17. While the expressed wishes of the complainant regarding confidentiality shall be seriously considered, those wishes must be weighed against:
  - 17.1 the responsibility of the Division to investigate a charge and take collective and preventive action where appropriate
  - 17.2 the right of the respondent to know the nature of the allegations, the name of the individual bringing the allegation and their right to respond.

#### **Complaint Process**

18. Complaints of harassment may be verbal or written.



19. If informal resolution fails or is impractical considering the circumstances, the initial recipient of the complaint shall refer the complaint to the Supervisor or if necessary, the Superintendent.

### **Formal Complaints**

20. Complainants shall submit a written complaint to the Principal/Supervisor or the Superintendent. All formal complaints should contain:

- 20.1 the identity of the respondent
- 20.2 the nature of the incident
- 20.3 the location and time of the incident(s)
- 20.4 other agencies who have been contacted (police, social services)
- 20.5 identity of witnesses (if any).

### **Investigation**

21. The Superintendent shall investigate the complaint, interview parties involved, recommend solutions or take appropriate action.

22. At any time, the Superintendent may close or suspend the investigation if the complaint is without merit or the issue has been resolved.

### **Decision of the Superintendent**

23. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Superintendent shall prepare a report which shall be shared with the complainant and respondent.

24. The respondent's current supervisor shall be notified of the result of the investigation and any sanctions imposed on the respondent.

25. The report shall indicate the validity of the complaint and actions taken including referral to outside agencies where appropriate, and avenues for appeal.

### **Retaliation or False Allegations**

26. Retaliatory actions shall be deemed as harassment.

27. False allegations shall be subject to disciplinary action and documentation shall be retained on the individual's personnel or student file.

## **References**

Criminal Code

*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

*Alberta Human Rights Act*

*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

Sections 18, 19, *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

[< All Administrative Procedures](#)