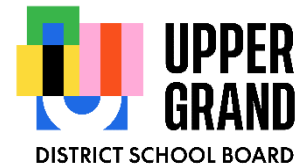# Communications
Policy 216

Category: Community Relations
Administered by: Director of Education
First adopted: February 2024
Revision History:
Next Review: 2028-29 School Year

1.   Policy Statement

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) is committed to accessible, effective, positive, timely, accurate and consistent communication with school communities and the public, both on a regular basis and in response to emergent situations.

The UGDSB provides information to maintain connections with education stakeholders (e.g., students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff, trustees, school communities, the media, and the public), advance student success and well-being, and build awareness and public confidence in board priorities and initiatives. Guidelines for effective communication help assist staff, and trustees in managing the dissemination of information. This includes ensuring the information that is communicated is appropriate, accurate, timely, based on the board's priorities, goals, and standards, and managed through a safe and secure system.

The UGDSB as a community partner supports the communication of appropriate materials and/or information (digital and print) in its schools from external organizations. The board recognizes its right and responsibility to limit this type of access to students, staff, and parents/guardians/caregivers based on the board's priorities, goals, and standards for such information.

The UGDSB recognizes that using a common and consistent brand identity in communications across departments and schools and within the community will help students, parents/caregivers, staff, and the community identify the board's programs, services and initiatives while strengthening the board's visual image and public recognition.

2.   Definitions

Anti-oppression (refer also Oppression)
An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes.[1]

Anti-racism
Anti-racism is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.[2]

Inclusive Education
Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.[3]

Oppression
Oppression refers to prolonged, systemic, abuse of power or control by one group of people (the dominant group) at the expense of others (the oppressed) and maintains a cultural imbalance of power which socially supports mistreatment and exploitation of all groups of 'less powerful' individuals. This results in unjust advantages, status and benefits for one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs, economic and institutional structures and subtle and overt cultural practices. Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often face barriers and limitations in many aspects of social participation i.e. school, health care, social services, employment, parenting, housing, etc. Oppression actively provides unearned privileges and protections to some members of our community, allowing them to ignore the presence of discrimination and or barriers to fair and equal access and opportunity such as classism, racism, ableism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia.[3]

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[1] Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Teaching human rights in Ontario - A guide for Ontario schools, Appendix 1 - Glossary of human rights terms*

[2] Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, *Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, Glossary*

[3] Adapted from Toronto District School Board, *Policy P037 - Equity*

Brand Identity

Brand identity refers to the visual and verbal articulation of a brand or group including all appropriate design applications, such as logos, signage, print advertising, school and department websites and other forms of electronic communication, business cards, letterhead and other stationary, brochures and other publications, and promotional materials.

3. Details

3.1   This policy shall apply to all UGDSB websites, including, but not limited to, department websites, school websites, school messaging accounts, teacher websites, and program websites.

   3.1.1   Approved digital platforms for students (e.g., Google Classroom and Brightspace) are considered extensions of the classroom learning environment and are not 'board websites' under this policy.

3.2   It is expected that UGDSB communications by staff and/or trustees shall:

- align with the UGDSB multi-year plan including the board's purpose, vision, and strategic priorities

- be reflective of the board's commitment to fairness, equity, and inclusive education as essential principles of our school system

- adhere to the principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression

- uphold protection of personal and confidential information as per legislation and board policies

- be provided in a timely manner to ensure prompt access to relevant information

- incorporate plain and clear language and accessibility standards[4]

- be carried out in a professional manner.

3.3   All schools, departments, and staff must use board-approved third-party tools/apps/services and follow the guidelines for safe use.

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[4] Accessibility standards are outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards, and UGDSB policy 214 Accessibility Standards.

3.4   All schools must maintain and utilize the board-approved messaging tools/apps/services, as directed by the board, to provide consistency in communication throughout our school communities.

3.5   Materials and/or information approved for distribution in schools in digital and/or print form will inform, educate, and/or create awareness of issues, events, and community activities of specific interest or benefit to students and families.

    3.5.1   Printed and/or digital materials and/or information approved for distribution to students will be limited to those from the school, the school board, local municipalities, the provincial government (including health units), the federal government, or any organization with whom the school has a community partnership (e.g., Canadian Mental Health Association, neighbourhood groups).

    3.5.2   The board will not allow the distribution of materials and/or information that is politically partisan in nature, or that promotes a particular religion or faith, or that fosters or promotes hatred, violence, prejudice, discrimination or bias against any groups or individuals.

    3.5.3   Materials approved for distribution do not suggest support or endorsement by the Upper Grand District School Board.

3.6   Any third-party use of the UGDSB brand identity (i.e., board logo) must be approved by the board.

3.7   There are four procedures to help administer this policy. The central principles of each are identified below:

    3.7.1   Crisis Communications

    These procedures outline how communications are managed when responding to crisis or emergency situations at UGDSB schools or offices. These communications should align with the school's or board office's Emergency Response Plan.

    3.7.2   Website and Social Media Management

    Board and school websites and social media accounts/sites, when used according to standards set out by the board, are

effective tools to highlight initiatives and events, and make important information readily available across the board. These procedures outline expectations and protocols for both internal and external communications including the style of communications, frequency, and target audiences.

3.7.3 Distribution of Materials/Information in Schools from External Organizations

Materials and/or information from external organizations shall be limited to those listed in 3.5.1. Once these materials are approved by the Executive Superintendent of School Services, principals may distribute these to their school communities.

3.7.4 Brand Identity

The board commits to the use of a consistent, unified image and identity when representing the school board both internally and externally. The UGDSB Brand Identity Usage Guidelines assist and enable schools and board departments to use and apply brand identity standards for both print and electronic materials.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Director of Education or designate will manage all emergency and crisis communications.

4.1.1 The director, communications manager or designate shall be the spokesperson to the public and media on behalf of the UGDSB.

4.1.2 The principal, vice-principal, superintendent or designate shall be the spokesperson for their school.

4.2 The Chair of the Board of Trustees or designate shall act as spokesperson to the public on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

4.3 Principals and supervisors are responsible for all information posted to websites and communication platforms that are within their scope of authority, including the school website, school messaging accounts, teacher websites, department websites and program websites.

4.4 Principals shall distribute all essential materials and/or information directed for distribution by the Executive Committee or designates.

4.5   All UGDSB staff and trustees are expected to exercise good judgment and professionalism while using digital communication tools, including websites and social media accounts.

4.6   The communications department shall maintain Brand Identity Usage Guidelines that includes proper usage of:

- board logo and tagline
- typography
- colours
- electronic and printed materials
- accessibility measures

4.6.1   All UGDSB staff shall adhere to the Brand Identity Usage Guidelines to promote consistency in the board.

5.   References

This policy operates in conjunction with the following:

- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- Policy 300 Emergency Procedures
- Policy 315 Privacy Protection and Information Access
- Crisis Response Manual (for UGDSB administrators and Crisis Response Team)
- UGDSB Brand Identify Guidelines
- Police-School Board Protocol (P09)
- STWDSTS Policy 024 Inclement Weather Bus Cancellations