

## Communications

The School Committee affirms that it has an obligation to receive and review communications from district staff and the greater community, via email, hard copy, phone, text and social media posts. The purpose of this policy is to create a set of consistent practices to respond to communications from the community. These policies also address public records concerns; and are consistent with our obligations under the open meeting laws.

1. *Massachusetts' Public Records Law* covers "all documentary materials or data created or received by any officer or employee of any governmental unit, regardless of physical form or characteristics." To that end, text, SMS and other forms of electronic messages constitute a public record.
2. The School Committee recognizes that any communications received via their district email address are public documents. Communications pertaining to school committee business received on private email, via Facebook, or any other electronic means are also considered a public record and should be handled as such. Communications related to the school experience of School Committee members' children are not considered a public record.
3. Communications can become part of public comment if the sender labels it as such. These communications will be added to the meeting packet once it is posted to the district website.
4. The format for a School Committee member response to a constituent should contain the following elements - an acknowledgement of receipt, a recommendation to the communicant to follow the district chain of command practice, and a disclaimer as described below. It is not the School Committee member's responsibility to solve all constituent problems, but it is important that we help all voices be heard and acknowledged.
5. All School Committee members should have a disclaimer in their electronics signature, stating "The opinions expressed within this email are my own and do not reflect those of the School Committee as a whole. The School Committee has no involvement in matters of personnel. Complaints of this nature should be directed through the district chain of command (teacher, principal then Superintendent)."
6. Emails, texts, or any other communication by committee members about school committee business should be conducted via members' district email accounts or forwarded to those accounts for public records' sake. Constituents should keep in mind that all emails sent to School Committee members about School Committee business

are public records regardless of which email address they are sent (School Committee member private account versus official account).

7. It is the expectation that the chair or vice chair is acknowledging communications sent to the entire school committee. Communications that are focused on school operations and / or personnel will be exclusively handled by the Superintendent and/or their designee.
8. Any information or allegation regarding the behavior of a district staff person will be forwarded to the Superintendent and the principal of the school for appropriate action. No School Committee member will respond directly to that email, beyond sending a pro forma email that thanks the sender, and indicates that they have referred their concerns to the Principal and the Superintendent.

## Social Media

When engaging in social media use, School Committee members should always preface comments about school committee business with a disclaimer that they speak for themselves and not for the whole school committee.

School committee members should be aware that “liking” a post of or with another school committee member or commenting on posts with other members of the committee is considered a legal quorum if four members are involved. Every effort should be made to avoid this situation.

## Version Control

Action	Date
First Reading	6/7/2021
Second Reading	6/21/2021
Adopted	6/21/2021