

POLICY: COMMUNICATION and PUBLIC RELATIONS/ADVERTISING and ADVOCACY # 901

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APPROVAL/REVISION EFFECTIVE REVIEW
DATE: February 2021 DATE: February 2021 DATE: February 2026

CROSS REFERENCE:

A: **POLICY**

1. 1.1 The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board recognizes the need for effective and organized communication and public relations among members of the system and within the community at large.
- 1.2 The Board believes that all employees as well as members of the Board of Trustees are responsible for effective and positive communications.
- 1.3 Communication and public relations shall reflect the Catholic faith dimension and exemplify our commitment to schools educating for Christian values and academic excellence.
- 1.4 The Board approves a Strategic Plan for communication and public relations and the identification of employee and Trustee responsibilities.
- 1.5 The Board mandates an internal committee for communication and public relations, out of the Office of the Director of Education, to provide ongoing review of the communication plan.

B: **GUIDELINES**

2. **Committee Mandate and Structure**

- 2.1 As indicated in Board Policy 901, Clause 1.1 "*the need for effective and organized communication and public relations among members of the system and within the community at large*" calls for the Communication and Public Relations Committee to develop a Strategic Plan that:
 - facilitates the promotion of Catholic Education;
 - ensures that communications reflect and promote the Catholic faith dimension of the system; and
 - facilitates the recruitment and retention of students in the system from Junior/Senior Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- 2.2 The Communications and Public Relations Committee will be composed of members who represent:
 - the Office of the Director of Education;
 - the Employee Services Department;
 - the Business and Corporate Services Department;
 - the Secondary School Principals;
 - the Senior Elementary School Principals;
 - the Elementary School Principals;
 - the Chair of the Board; and
 - the Trustee Volunteer (s)

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3. Responsibilities of Employees and Trustees

3.1 It is the responsibility of **all employees and Trustees** to:

- be supportive of the promotional and educational initiatives of the Catholic partners at the provincial level;
- be publicly supportive of the schools, of school programs, of all staff members, and of the Board's mission and policies;
- strive for continuous effective dialogue among all employees and Trustees;
- ensure written contact (i.e., brochures, report cards, information letters, bulletin newsletters) reflect the Board's mission and is of the highest quality;
- be informed about system programs/services, facilities, resources and activities; and
- adhere to Board Policy or Procedural By-laws when handling matters of complaints and grievances.

3.2 **Members of the Board of Trustees** have additional responsibility to:

- ensure that public statements reflect the Catholic faith dimension of the system;
- solicit suggestions/opinions of the system from as many sources as possible, when appropriate;
- assist in the orientation of new trustees; and
- channel information to the Director, and/or appropriate Superintendent, in order that he/she may identify emerging patterns or concerns.

3.3 The **Chairperson of the Board** has additional responsibility to:

- be an effective communicator for the Board;
- maintain good relations with and act as spokesperson to the media, in conjunction with the Director of Education, on Board related matters; and
- assist Trustees in understanding their roles as communicators for the system and encourage Trustees' involvement in professional and faith development activities.

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3.4 The **Director of Education** has additional responsibility to:

- keep Board members fully informed regarding system communications and public relations initiatives;
- assist Trustees in understanding their role as communicators for the system;
- facilitate the orientation of new Trustees and encourage involvement of all Trustees in professional and faith development activities; and
- provide the media with advance notification of Board Meetings with a full complement of agendas, reports, correspondence, and news releases with the material from in-camera sessions excepted.

3.5 The **Superintendents** have additional responsibility to:

- keep the Director of Education informed regarding school-based and system-wide initiatives;
- provide support to Principals ensuring that accurate and consistent information is dispensed to the public, business, industry, Catholic School Councils, parishes, and staff;
- provide the media and staff with accurate information regarding Board policies and activities; and
- ensure Principals are aware of their responsibility to reflect the Catholic faith dimension in information dispensed through school print and non-print communications.

3.6 The **Communications Officer** has additional responsibility to:

- work with the Director of Education to develop and coordinate all public relations, marketing and media activities of the Board;
- oversee the production and distribution of promotional materials;
- lead in the formulation of a Communications Plan;
- participate in and oversee the regular update the Board's website;
- monitor and communicate local, provincial and national media;
- oversee the production of news and feature stories, publicity materials, press releases, photographs, videos, marketing resources and other strategic and targeted communications as required;
- prepare regular reports of the Board's communications activities;
- perform other related duties as assigned by the Director.

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3.7 The **Principals** have additional responsibility to:

- promote public awareness of the school's mission statement, policies, programs, handbook and activities through the implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- become knowledgeable of and establish a relationship with the school community;
- ensure that current, accurate information is provided to Catholic School Councils and staff regarding system initiatives and issues;
- ensure that the Director's Office is aware of school activities appropriate for news coverage;
- ensure all school communications reflect the Catholic faith dimension of the school; and
- encourage Catholic School Councils, staff and clergy to be effective communicators for the school.

4. Advertising

4.1 Principle

Advertising expenditures should be for the purposes of informing and educating the public, as well as creating awareness of education programs, services, issues, events and community activities of specific interest or benefit to students and families.

4.2 Advertising Guidelines

- 4.2.1 Due diligence shall be exercised in determining the advertising medium that maximizes cost efficiency.
- 4.2.2 Appropriate approvals shall support the nature and the extent of an advertising campaign, and reflect Christian values.
- 4.2.3 Advertising campaigns shall be targeted to specific groups that have a demonstrable need for information.
- 4.2.4 Advertising shall present objective, factual and explanatory information based on verifiable facts in an unbiased, fair and equitable manner.
- 4.2.5 Advertising campaigns shall be in compliance with any applicable laws and regulations.
- 4.2.6 Advertising expenditures shall be made in accordance with Board purchasing policies.
- 4.2.7 Examples of **suitable uses** for advertising include:
 - School registration
 - Program offerings
 - Extracurricular activities

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- Public consultations
- Employment opportunities
- Requests for tenders for goods and services
- School board accountability to the public (for example, annual publication of board financial statement)
- Information to the Catholic community about their constitutional rights and the availability of Catholic education in Thunder Bay.

4.2.8 Examples of **inappropriate uses** of advertising include:

- Providing unverifiable or inaccurate information or comparisons
- Using advertising that is not targeted to appropriate groups, for example through widespread phone calls and automatic phone messages

5. **Advocacy**

5.1 **Principle**

Communication with the Ontario government is an important activity to identify, discuss and find solutions to policy and financial issues.

5.2 **Advocacy Guidelines**

5.2.1 Communication with the government should be conducted in a manner that protects the reputation and best interests of the Board.

5.2.2 Focus should be on-ongoing communication between school boards, education partners and governments through established mechanisms and channels.

5.2.3 Maximizing resources for student success and achievement should be a focus.