



## **School Councils Email Access**

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 4 June, 2019

**Report No.:** 06-19-3671

### **Strategic Directions**

- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the report on School Councils Email Access, in response to a recommendation presented at the May 1, 2019 Program and School Services Committee meeting, be received.

### **Context**

The Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) has requested the email addresses of parents/guardians from each school be made available to the School Council Chair(s) of each respective school for the purposes of School Council related communication directly to parents/guardians of the respective schools. This report outlines the steps and considerations in making this available (a) for School Council Chairs, and (b) for PIAC members.

Today, parent/guardian email addresses are requested, but they are not mandatory to provide, on either the paper or online student registration method. Any email addresses provided are stored in our Student Information System (Trillium). Some schools make additional efforts to capture parent/guardian email addresses early in the school year. These email addresses are available to Principals and Vice-principals to communicate either through email or the Board's current parent/guardian messaging platform, School Messenger.

Other Ontario school boards responded via survey that they do not provide parent/guardian email addresses to School Council Chairs and that communication to

parents/guardians is handled by the Principal. Ten different districts responded to the questions.

Providing email addresses to School Council Chairs would require adjustment to the current Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) Notice of Collection posted on the public website. As some School Council communication may involve commercial items, Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) compliance would need to be considered in the plan.

## **Considerations**

**(a)** If staff was directed to provide parent/guardian email addresses to School Council Chair(s), the following steps would take place:

Currently the Board utilizes a communication tool, School Messenger, for Principals, Vice-Principals and Office Administrators to communicate with parents/guardians through broadcast message via phone or email. School Messenger is fed information nightly by Trillium and contains up-to-date email addresses collected through student registration or directly by the school.

Email addresses of parents/guardians would continue to be collected through the student registration process. The online registration form would need to be modified to capture parent/guardian email addresses with clear communication around the purpose and MFIPPA notice of collection statement. Email addresses would continue to be stored in Trillium and would be kept with the student record for five years after the student has left the Board.

The Board could provide School Messenger accounts to the School Council Chair(s) at no additional cost. This would provide both access to parent/guardian email addresses and a mechanism to write and send email messages all in one tool. It is anticipated that accounts for School Council Chair(s) could be provided around mid-October 2019. Information Technology (IT) Services would provide the accounts and work with Communications and school Principals and Vice-Principals in raising awareness of this option along with online training resources to support the use of School Messenger.

School Messenger offers individual parents/guardians the ability to set personal preferences for the types of messages they wish to receive:

- School Hours Emergency
- Non School Hours Emergency
- Attendance
- General
- Phone Only
- Commercial Message (provides CASL compliance)
- Safe Arrival

These preferences can be updated at any time. Please note that the current contract with School Messenger expires August 31, 2019. A tender process has concluded and bids are being evaluated. It is not known at this time if School Messenger will be the tool selected.

(b) Providing the same type of access to PIAC members would be more involved as a group containing all parent/guardian email addresses does not exist today in the same way as school groups do. This would need to be created along with accounts for PIAC members with the necessary permissions. If staff was directed to make this available to PIAC members, staff could create a group containing all district parent/guardian email addresses available by late October 2019.

## Further Considerations and Resource Implications

- CASL compliance is an important component of this plan. Today, when a parent provides their email through student registration there is an option to subscribe to commercial type messages, those that may involve an offer or request for funds. This information is then stored in Trillium and fed through to School Messenger. Only if the parent checks this box on the student registration form will they receive commercial messages. If a parent decides later they wish to receive or not receive commercial messages they can manage and change these preferences at any time through School Messenger. A revised Notice of Collection would be required to be compliant with MFIPPA:

“The Toronto District School Board (the “TDSB”) collects, uses, retains, and shares personal information for the purposes of planning, administering, and delivering its educational programs and services. The purpose of this collection is to permit the school’s parent council to communicate with parents and/or guardians through email correspondence or phone number, regarding school events, meetings and the distribution of newsletters. The collection, use and disclosure of personal information for these purposes are expressly authorized under the authority of sections 58.5 and 169.1 of the *Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2*. The information is retained in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56*. This information will be shared solely with parent council members in order to administer the above noted purposes. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office at 416-394-2344 and [FOI.Privacy@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:FOI.Privacy@tdsb.on.ca).”

- Monitoring of the emails. This level of access could contain tens of thousands of parent email addresses, perhaps more. Managing the flow as well as potential improper material would be key and potentially time consuming.
- The largest staffing impact would occur at schools, mostly with Principals, Vice-Principals and office staff. These staff members would be communicating with School Council Chairs, sharing information and answering questions about the School Messenger platform. It is anticipated there would also be questions from

parents/guardians about receipt of these new messages. It is also anticipated that office staff may have more interaction with parents/guardians about their email addresses, including corrections to previously used addresses and entering and updating this information in Trillium.

- IT Services staff would likely experience an increase in support calls to the Client Service and SIS Support Desks from school staff about entering and updating parent/guardian email addresses in Trillium, use of School Messenger and its training material. There would be additional work for IT Services accounts team in granting messaging platform access to School Council Chairs.

## **Communications Considerations**

A communication plan would be required for Principals, Vice-Principals, office staff and School Council Chair(s) outlining several items including:

- Importance of collecting parent/guardian email addresses;
- Understanding that parent/guardian email addresses are to be stored in Trillium only;
- How School Council members access School Messenger; and
- School Messenger training and support materials available.

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

P094 - Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

PR676 - Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

## **Appendices**

Not Applicable

## **From**

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