



School Council *School Messenger* Communications Protocol

Objective

To provide a clear process and identify best practices for school councils to communicate directly to families and parents¹ through school board² online school messenger platform, to facilitate communication and increase engagement by the school councils within the school community.

Communication Tools

School Messenger is an automated communication (phone messages, emails and text messages) system that allows to deliver high volumes of messages quickly and efficiently. The *School Messenger* system enables quick school notifications to and sharing information with families and parents via voice, email or text messages. It is used as a communication tool centrally by the school board and locally by schools to communicate with families and parents. *School Messenger* is a one-way communication tool that does not share email addresses that families and parents provide to the school.

School councils can only use *School Messenger* for general messages (i.e. newsletters, event information) and not for emergency messages or attendance notifications. School councils should consider how information shared via *School Messenger* can also be shared with families and parents who do not have access to *School Messenger*.

Electronic mail (email or e-mail) involves two-way communication with families and parents. All school council co-chairs are required to use the school council chair email account to communicate with families and parents by email. This email account can be activated by contacting the school principal.

Via the School Principal. School councils presently sending out communications/messages via the school principal may opt to transition to *School Messenger* or continue existing communication practices.

¹ In this protocol, the term parents refers to parent(s) and guardian(s).

² In this protocol, the terms school board, board and Board refer to Toronto District School Boards (“TDSB”).



Communication Best Practices

1. Provide regular and ongoing communication with families and parents.
2. Tailor the information to the school community.
3. Provide timely details on upcoming events, opportunities to get involved or share voice and relevant information to families, parents and students at both the local and school board level.
4. Provide information through multiple channels, if necessary, to reach all families and parents.

Responsibilities of *School Messenger* Users

Access to *School Messenger* is available to school councils to facilitate communication with families and parents and to increase engagement with the school community.

Messages sent by a *School Messenger* user on behalf of the school council in their professional capacity are considered to be the official school board records and must, therefore, comply with the [Code of On-line Conduct](#) and all other applicable school board policies and procedures, as may be amended from time to time, that govern the school board operations. .

The use of *School Messenger* by school councils should be consistent with any applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to, the *Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19 (“OHRC”), the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, S.O. 2001, c. 32 (“ODA”) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, c. 11 (“AODA”) and their respective regulations, the *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.2 (the “*Education Act*”), and regulations made thereunder, *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter M.56 (“MFIPPA”), the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, S.O. 2017, Chapter 14, Sched.1 (“CYFSA”), *Copyright Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-42), Ontario Ministry of Education policies and guidelines applicable to the school board operations.

All school council messages and ways of communicating these messages must align with Ontario Regulation 612/00: School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees under the *Education Act*, the *Ontario Ministry of Education School Councils: A Guide for Members, 2001 (Revised 2002)*, the school board Policy P023: Parent and Community Involvement, the school board Operational Procedure PR558: Parent and Community Involvement and other TDSB policies and procedures including, but not limited to, [Board Code of Conduct](#), [Code of Online Conduct](#), [Dealing with Abuse and Neglect of Students](#), [Equity](#), Human Rights, Workplace Harassment Prevention, Respectful Learning And Working Environment, Parent Concern Protocol, [Caring and Safe Schools](#), Promoting a Positive School Climate,



[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy](#), [Accessibility](#), [Excursions](#), [Fundraising](#), [Advertising](#), [Employee and Community Partners Conflict of Interest](#), Media Relations, [Community Use of Board Facilities \(Permits\)](#) and [Purchasing](#).

All email correspondence, messages and notifications must comply with *Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation* requirements when sending promotional emails and commercial electronic messages. The email/message recipients must provide proper consent to receive such emails/notifications and have an option for unsubscribing in these emails/messages. For more details, see Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation ("CASL") Compliance.

All users of *School Messenger* are:

1. required to respect confidentiality, privacy, legal/professional privileges and the rights of others and to ensure that the content and dissemination of messages does not jeopardize those protections.
2. expected to respect the standards of courtesy and professionalism that apply to all school board communications and to avoid aggressive or abusive messages, messages that could reasonably be viewed by others as offensive or objectionable, or messages containing content that is obscene, libelous, defamatory, discriminatory or harmful.
3. bound by this protocol and its associated policies and procedures and understand that access to *School Messenger* will not be granted until this protocol has been carefully reviewed.

School Messenger Communication Workflow

School Council Chair/Co-Chair/Secretary

A chair or co-chair of a school council, secretary where feasible, and/or another member of a school council will:

1. Notify the school principal or their designate in writing of their intent to send out a message to families and parents at least one (1) week prior to the message .
2. Use the school council template, visual identity, and signature, including their full name and title, at all times for school council messages.



3. Draft and review the message prior to its distribution, ensuring adherence to all relevant school board policy and procedures, including but not limited to, Board Code of Conduct, Equity Policy and all applicable school's policies and procedures.

Share a draft of the message with the school principal or their designate for review and feedback a minimum of seventy-two (72) hours prior to the distribution of the message to families and parents.

Following the school principal/designate review and incorporating the feedback, if applicable, distribute a message to families and parents.

School Principal or their Designate

The school principal or their designate will:

1. Respond to the school council's (co/chairs, secretary or member) notification of intent to send out a message to families and parents within forty-eight (48) hours.
2. Review and respond to all messages for content, as it relates and aligns to school's School Improvement Plan (SIP), all relevant school board and school policies and procedures, including the Board Code of Conduct.
3. Respond to a message within a minimum of seventy-two (72) hours and a maximum of one (1) week where feasible and provide feedback with recommended revisions, if required.
4. Work with the Superintendent of Education if conflicts around the distribution of a message occur. The Superintendent of Education will make the final decision.

Confidentiality

School Messenger is not a confidential medium. Authorized TDSB and/or school staff may access, monitor, copy or disclose communication when: there is a substantial reason to believe that a violation of the school board policy, procedure or applicable law may have taken place, required by law, information is required to meet time-dependent, critical needs, or information is needed in order to carry on the normal operations of the school board.



Misuse of *School Messenger*

All *School Messenger* users must be aware that the school board will consider incidents of unacceptable use or misuse of the school board information and communication technologies (e.g. *School Messenger*) as serious and ensure that allegations are addressed fairly, expeditiously and respectfully. The school board may resort to withdrawal of access to or use of *School Messenger*, or reporting to law enforcement agencies, or taking such other steps or actions as it may reasonably deem appropriate in the particular circumstances. The school board may also deny or withdraw access to its electronic mail services when required by law, or if there is a substantial reason to believe that a violation of law, school board policy, procedure or protocol has taken place.

Examples of inappropriate use of *School Messenger* include but not limited to:

1. Discussion of issues/content of families, staff or students.
2. Promotion of views and ideas which are likely to promote discrimination, contempt or hatred for any person on the basis of race, ethnic origin, place of origin, citizenship, colour, ancestry, language, creed (religion), age, sex, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, membership in a union or staff association, receipt of public assistance, level of literacy or any other prohibited grounds under the provisions of the OHRC..
3. Sending a message prior to review of the school principal.
4. Constructing and transmitting a message so that it appears to be from someone else.
5. Sharing confidential files or files of a sensitive nature (personal, business or commercial).
6. Providing a third and/or unauthorized party with access to school board supplied username, password or identification details.
7. Other uses that may be deemed inappropriate under the Board Code of Conduct or other applicable school board or the Ministry of Education policies, procedures, guidelines and protocols.

Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation ("CASL") Compliance

CASL compliance is an important component in the use of *School Messenger*. CASL regulates the distribution of commercial electronic messages, which are those that encourage participation in a commercial activity, regardless of whether or not there is an expectation of a profit. When a parent provides their email address through completing the student registration form there is an option to subscribe to commercial type messages. The contact information is then fed through to *School Messenger* if the parent checks a box on the student registration form that they wish to receive



commercial electronic messages. If a parent decides later that they wish to receive or wish to unsubscribe from receiving commercial electronic messages they can make these changes in the Preferences section at any time through *School Messenger*.

Please contact the PCEO at michelle.munroe@tdsb.on.ca for information