

Supplemental Documents for Section 2

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Supplemental Information: Risk Oversight

Risk Management in Brief

The Director of Education and staff manage risks by identifying, assessing, measuring, mitigating, reporting and monitoring them.

The risk management process starts with risk assessment. Risks are identified and then assessed based on their likelihood (how likely is this risk to occur?) and their severity (if this risk occurs, how severe would its consequences to our objectives be?)

Reports to the board on the assessment of risks are often in a “heat map” as illustrated below:

RISK		LIKELIHOOD					
		1	2	3	4	5	
		Remote (> 50 years)	Low (10-50 years)	Medium (2-10 years)	High (6 months-2 years)	Probable (0-6 months)	
SEVERITY OF CONSEQUENCE	Extreme	5	C	B	B	A	A
	Major	4	D	C	B	B	A
	Acceptable	3	D	D	C	B	B
	Low	2	E	D	D	C	B
	Negligible	1	E	E	D	D	C
	A	Extreme					
	B	Major					
	C	Acceptable					
	D	Low					
	E	Negligible					

The colours of a heap map indicate the degree of potential exposure to risk. The higher the “heat” the higher the risk.

You may find this tool useful in promoting dialogue and gaining confidence in the process staff uses to assess (estimate) the severity and likelihood of risks.

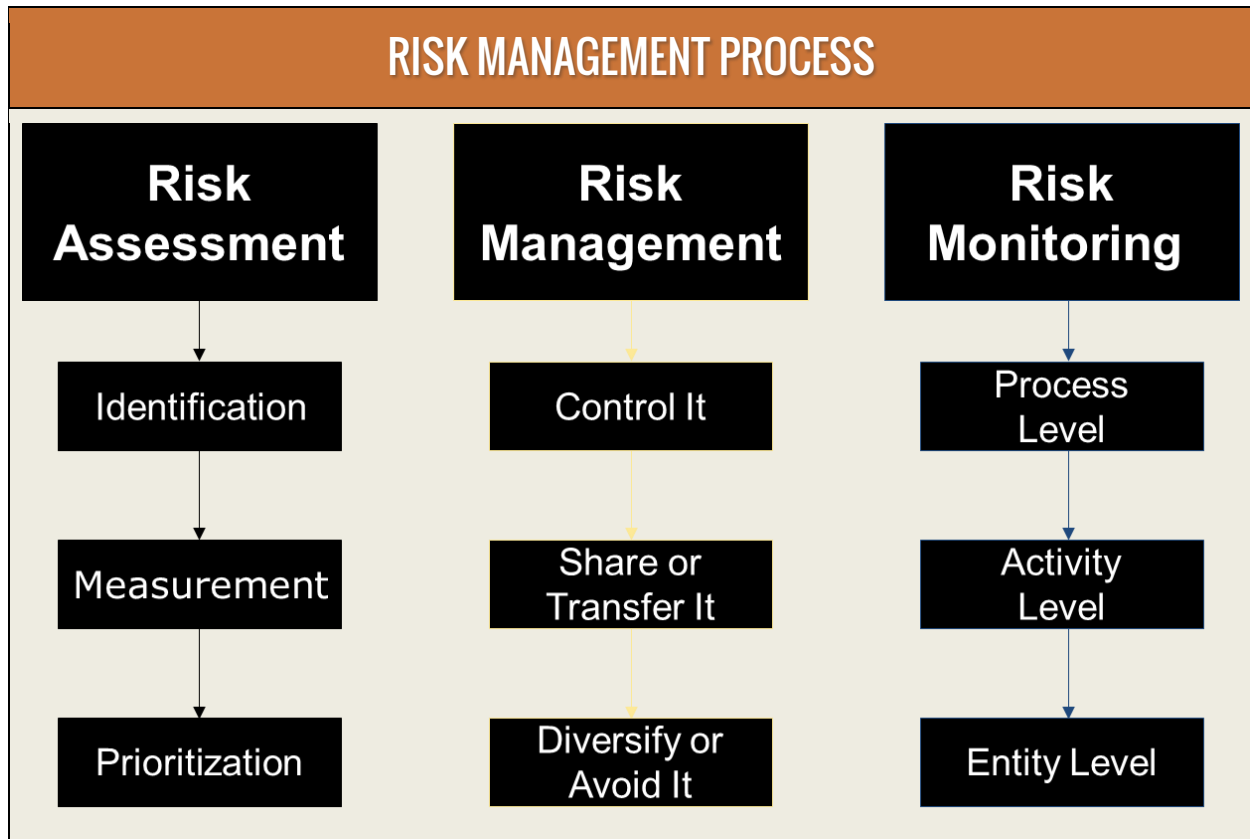
Here are a few practical tips about risk management:

- It is often best to spend time talking about the major and emerging risks one at a time. Schedule time ahead to talk about one per board meeting over the year (e.g. student safety, cyber bullying, cyber security, transportation safety).
- Most risks are affected by other risks – one thing (economic growth) affects another (crowded schools) and another (difficult to find qualified teachers). We call this “interdependence”. Ask about the interdependence of risks and make sure staff considers these.
- It is human nature to underestimate risks that don’t occur very often (why so many young people still smoke). Pay particular attention to the risks in the upper left corner of the heat

map (low likelihood/high severity). When two or more of these occur together, this can be potentially catastrophic for an organization (we call this a "perfect storm".)

- Risk management can never perfectly predict risks, that is not realistic. (We call unknowable risks "black swans".) Understand the limitations of risk management, and use it to learn. Good risk management helps you understand better how the "real world" of School Boards works, and how you can make better decisions.
- Risk management is only as good as its assumptions. You should make sure that you ask about assumptions, and have these tested (varied) from time to time (this is called "stress testing".)

Risk management is both an art and a science so asking questions that promote and provoke thoughtful dialogue helps ensure that reasoned decisions are made in the process of risk management.



Evaluating the Quality of Monitoring Reports

Effective monitoring reports share common characteristics and avoid common shortcomings. You can use this guide to evaluate and receive high quality monitoring reports:

	1 Deficient	2 Adequate	3 Good	4 A Role Model for Others
On Time	The report is not available for the date scheduled.	The majority of the report is received as scheduled, however, the board has to ask for additional information or delays require requests for report from board.	The majority of the report is received as scheduled on the board annual agenda or a short extension is requested.	The complete report is received by the board as scheduled on the board annual agenda.
On Target	No interpretation of the policy is presented.	An interpretation of the policy is attempted.	An interpretation of the policy is presented with a partial rationale.	A reasonable interpretation of the targeted policy is presented with a sound rationale.
Appropriate Language	Lots of academic information is presented without focus on the audience.	The report includes ample information and attempts to focus on key ideas.	The report presents key ideas in a readable style and uses language appropriate for board members.	Most board members can easily read and understand the key ideas and concepts communicated.
Sufficient Evidence	Information is primarily raw numbers, activities and projections.	Several valuable pieces of information from reliable sources are presented.	Focused comparative data demonstrates key trends towards achievement of the desired results.	Abundant evidence is presented to convince the board that reasonable progress has been made toward the desired result.
Implications	Implications are not stated and/or administrative recommendations are made.	Implications are mentioned.	Some governance implications are pointed out.	Governance implications are pointed out to strengthen policy, planning and due diligence.
Resources	No mention of resource allocation.	Resource expenditure is mentioned with no link to results achieved.	Report attempts to describe the link between the expenditures and the results achieved.	Value for money invested is demonstrated by way of describing the relationship between resource allocation and the results achieved.
Type of Knowledge Presented	Data: data entry and raw output	Information: Average's may be calculated when using data	Knowledge: some highlights are noted and observations are drawn	Wisdom: Knowledge is applied – meaning is drawn, applied and organized into action, change is facilitated

Supplemental Information: Confidentiality and Communications

Sample School Board Member Confidentiality Policy

Policy

It is the policy of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] that:

1. Every member of the Board of Directors and its Committees shall respect the confidentiality of information relating to all matters before the Board and its Committees, including, but not limited to, the personnel and student records and all administrative and financial business of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]; and shall not release, copy, discuss or distribute any portion of these records or information unless he/she is expressly authorized to do so by the Board through its Chair and/or the Director of Education.
2. Any individual who breaches these provisions of confidentiality is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including possible removal from the Board.
3. Every member of the Board and its Committees has the right to have all information about him/her kept strictly confidential; and has a responsibility to report and take appropriate action at any time he/she becomes aware that a breach in these provisions of confidentiality has taken place. Personal information will not be released without the consent of the affected individual unless required to do so by law
4. "Confidential", "Personal" and "Internal Use" information is the sole property of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] and may not be used or retained by any director or employee after leaving such capacity with [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] and may not be used for any personal gain or benefit while serving as a director or employer, or thereafter.
5. Information which [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] regards as "Confidential" will not be released unless required to do so by force of law or authority except if [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] chooses to do so.

The decision to release information rests with the Board through its Chair; and/or the Director of Education.

Agreement

As a School Board Member of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], I understand that I may be presented with information that requires strict confidentiality. I have received, read and understand the [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] School Board Member Confidentiality Policy/Agreement and affirm my agreement to abide by its terms.

Dated this _____ of _____, _____
(Day) (Month) (Year)

Name: (Signature of School Board Member)

Sample Communications Protocol for School Board Members

Principles

- Purpose is to ensure effective communication among [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], its stakeholders and the public when speaking on behalf of the school board.
- Provide a clear, consistent protocol for all School Board Members to prevent any damage to stakeholders' and public confidence and uninformed information being released to the public on behalf of the school board.
- Provides the Board with a system to ensure that the Board speaks publicly with one voice on Board decisions made on behalf of the school board.

For the purpose of clarity, this protocol distinguishes between the school board as an institution (the legal entity), and its governing Board (the people elected to govern the entity.) Wherever possible, the entity is not capitalized and its governing Board is.

Maintaining Board Confidences

1. The aspect of confidentiality permeates any interaction a School Board Member may have with others, exclusive of fellow School Board Members. This includes other individuals, colleagues, governments and organizations.
2. All information about the Board and its activities held in closed sessions should be presumed to be confidential. The confidential business of the Board should not be discussed outside the boardroom.
3. Should an instance arise which prompts a Board member to have concern, it should be discussed with the Chairperson of the Board, at the earliest opportunity.

Formal Communications

4. In terms of formal communications the following principles apply:
 - The Director communicates on behalf of, and represents the school board (the institution itself);
 - The Director and/or his/her delegate is the designated spokesperson on behalf of the school board (and Board) to the School Community Council Assembly;
 - The Chairperson communicates on behalf of, and represents the Board (the Board itself) of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]; and
 - Individual School Board Members refer all enquiries to the designated [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] spokesperson, typically the Director; when in doubt, enquiries are referred to the Chairperson for Board matters, and to the Director for all others. This applies to event invitations, media, public, community, management, staff and other stakeholder requests and communications.

Informal Communications

5. As regards informal communications, individual School Board Members will inevitably and legitimately have informal communications with stakeholders of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]. In all these instances it is incumbent upon School Board Members to know and use the approved Board key messages on important issues and be explicitly clear that they are communicating in a personal capacity.

Public Accountability Communications for Elected School Board Members

6. The [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME's] strategic communications and public relations plan is the guiding document for all public communications. Elected officials should use this as their guide at all times when communicating to their constituencies.

Attendance at Events

7. [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] may host events including those of a social, representational and commercial nature which School Board Members are invited to attend. As with all communications with stakeholders, School Board Members are expected to exercise vigilance and tact, referring any sensitive matters to the designated [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] spokesperson(s).
8. There may be instances when School Board Members are requested to participate in various other events by virtue of their association with [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], for example a speaking engagement to a professional organization. In these instances:
 - The School Board Members should advise the Corporate Secretary and/or Director of the request;
 - The request will be considered and vetted by the Chairperson of the Board;
 - The School Board Members may be provided with generic speaking notes for the occasion;
 - The School Board Members will make it clear that he/she is not speaking on behalf of [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], rather in a personal capacity; and,
 - The School Board Members will provide the Corporate Secretary and/or Director with a verbal debrief of the event.

Media Relations

9. The primary media spokesperson for [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] is the Director. In certain circumstances the Chairperson of the Board may also speak, particularly if there is a broader governance issue at stake, including Board matters and questions regarding the Director.
10. In the interest of keeping School Board Members abreast of issues involving [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], the Corporate Secretary or Director will ensure that they receive media clips on [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]'s activities and business which may be of interest to them.
11. In instances where the issues are high profile or contentious, the Corporate Secretary or Director will ensure that School Board Members receive appropriate questions and answers which provide the school board's position and key messages on an issue.
12. School Board Members will refer any requests for media interviews to the Director or designated media spokesperson. In referring a media enquiry, School Board Members should be mindful that:
 - Media requests for information usually require a speedy response and should be handled on a priority basis;
 - By referring the call to the Director or designated spokesperson, School Board Members provide a signal as to the limit of their authority; and,
 - Be careful not to talk "off the record".

Requests from the Public

13. Occasions may arise from time to time whereby a School Board Member is approached, either in writing or otherwise, by an individual or organization requesting the assistance of a School Board Member in resolving an issue with [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME].
14. Under these circumstances the request should be directed to the Corporate Secretary or the Director who will route the enquiry or request for appropriate action within [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME].

Failure to meet these requirements has serious implications for the school board as well as its School Board Members and officers and as a result, violations of this protocol may have severe consequences.

Review: Annually by Governance Committee

Sample Email Voting Policy

Principle

The need and advantages to using e-mail voting from time to time is acknowledged, but this is intended solely for the purpose of ensuring efficiency in the board process of decision-making when it is not possible to wait until the next regularly scheduled meeting to make a particular decision or engage in a discussion about a pressing issue.

Policy

Email voting may only be used by the board when an important issue must be discussed and decided upon prior to the next scheduled meeting of the board. All other issues should be addressed at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board.

Email voting may not be used:

1. to revise the bylaws,
2. to change aspects of ownership,
3. to establish or revise the annual budget,
4. to authorize expenditures of more than \$XXXXXX unless such expenditures have already been included in the yearly budget.

Nothing in this policy affects the ability of the board to make decisions by calling a special meeting, by conference call, or by regular postal mail.

E-mail Voting Procedure

- The Chair will be the moderator or will choose another moderator who will proceed to mediate the vote. Usually this would be the Corporate Secretary.
- The moderator will send out an email and put the resolution in the subject line of the email.
- The motion must be seconded by a board member before any discussion will take place. If the original resolution lacks a seconder, a second School Board Member must do so within 72 hours. If no second is made, the motion will be considered to be deferred until the next regularly scheduled board meeting.
- The issue is then open for discussion. Any questions or discussions to follow the resolution should be all under the same subject line as the first email that was sent.
- The originator of the motion may defer the motion to the next regularly scheduled board meeting at any time if the discussion indicates that the board needs more information than can be provided by email, that the issue is controversial, complex or divisive, or that the issues would benefit from face-to-face discussion.
- A deadline should be set to as when the discussion period will end, after which the question is called.
- School Board Members must vote within four days of the call for vote. Each School Board Member must use the [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] email that is given to them for all board related emails. Emails to or from individuals will not be used. Each board member must sign off with their full name to each email they send out.
- The quorum for action by the board via email will be the entire board membership, and the votes needed for passage will be a simple majority of this quorum.
- Passage, denial, deferment, or lack of action on an email motion will not in any way affect the power of the board to address the same issue at future board meetings.

- The moderator will compile the votes and report the result by e-mail to all School Board Members.
- For the record, there will be an official voting form sent out that each School Board Member is responsible for printing, signing and providing to the Corporate Secretary.
- The status of all email motions (passage, denial, deferment or lack of action) will be recorded in the "Outstanding Items" section of the board workplan and minutes at each regularly scheduled meeting of the board.

Review: Annually by Governance and Human Resources Committee

The Communications Plan

Communications and public relations programs require planning and attention: Developing a communications plan helps ensure a systematic, deliberate approach to communications and public relations.

A communications plan is a road map for your communications over a given period of time – for example, a school year or calendar year.

An effective communications plan, should address the following:

- **Research:** review existing communications and gather as much information about the communications need and intended audiences. This helps to target and choose the tools and tactics that will be most effective.
- **Goals:** what you want to achieve through your communications during that time period, with an emphasis on one or two priorities.
- **Objectives:** measurable targets to achieve the goals or priorities.
- **Audiences:** the varied groups within your community that you are attempting to reach and engage.
- **Key Messages:** the information you want to stress with each audience – over the long term and short term.
- **Strategies, Tools and Tactics:** the specific ways in which you hope to reach your goals, connect to your audiences, share information and receive feedback.
- **Responsibilities:** the persons who are charged with implementing various elements of the communications plan.
- **Timelines:** when things need to happen.
- **Evaluation:** Review your communications plan periodically and evaluate its effectiveness. Use this information to strengthen your plan for the coming year.

You can ask these questions about the Communications Plan and Policy/Protocol:

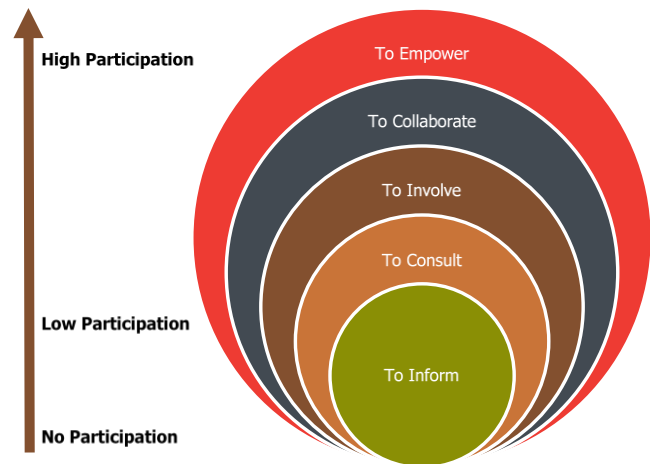
- Is there a strategic communications plan for the organization?
- Is there alignment with the overall plan?
- Are there communication protocols established?
- Have members of the community, in person or through brief surveys, been asked whether they feel that appropriate information-sharing is taking place?
- Who are the spokespersons within the organization?

What is the complaint mechanism The Participation Spectrum

Many governance failures begin with a communications breakdown, and many communications breakdowns begin with different expectations of levels of engagement and participation. Ambiguity is

not your friend in governance or communications! It is important for the School Board to agree and be clear ahead of time which level is intended:

- Sometimes all that is needed is to inform, this is one-way communications with no participation (e.g. snow day!);
- Sometimes you want to listen to community members or the public – to consult or to involve them, but then to make decisions internally afterwards (e.g. curriculum changes);
- Sometimes it is going to be important to more fully engage the community or groups in a sensitive and important decision – to collaborate with them, or even to bring them into the decision itself.



Fundamental issues that should be the subject of public dialogue include:

- setting direction and establishing school division priorities
- allocating resources
- introducing major new initiatives or projects
- improving student achievement
- reporting outcomes or results in any of these areas

Public dialogue during policy development and decision making can occur in several ways. Facilitated meetings for specific stakeholder groups, focus groups, open public meetings, written surveys, tear-out forms in the local newspaper, making use of websites, social media and other modern technologies are a few ideas.

Public Engagement

The School Board's communications and public relations program is a powerful tool to increase the public's understanding of and appreciation for education. It can enhance public understanding of the many competing and sometimes contradictory demands on the education system.

Public engagement is an ongoing dialogue among all members of a community for the benefit of students, families and the community as a whole. Public engagement

occurs when the school board, the school staff, students, and members of the school community are working together, sharing ideas and information.

- Public engagement is integral and fundamental to a school board's operations. It is a way of doing business.
- Public engagement is broader than parental engagement. It makes a special effort to reach groups not directly connected to the school system.
- Public engagement uses many different methods depending on the purpose – one size doesn't fit all.
- Public engagement is all about building community. It's about creating bonds between people and groups that enable them to feel connected, to share, and to pull together toward common goals. It's the board's responsibility to see that this community building occurs.

You should ask questions to evaluate how well your School Board's public engagement is:

- **Making schools a better place:** Public engagement is a process that helps school boards accomplish your most important goal – ensuring high levels of achievement for all students. Student achievement is at the centre of every School Board's work. Academic achievement is important, but achievement has other dimensions as well. Achievement includes achieving a safe, orderly school environment that is conducive to learning; achieving equality of opportunity and of outcome for all students; and achieving the vision and goals of the School Board.

EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS

There's lots going on in Sunny Valley School Division:

- Mrs. Krause, the school board chairperson, is making a speech to the Chamber of Commerce. She talks about the importance of education in today's world and emphasizes that employers depend on the schools to develop an educated, technologically literate workforce.
- Parent and community volunteers are working in most of the schools in the division. They are doing arts and crafts activities with the kids, helping out at track meets, sewing costumes for school plays, publishing school newsletters, and doing dozens of other interesting and useful jobs.
- The school board is leading a public dialogue on community use of school facilities. The board is developing a policy on this topic and wants to involve the community. The board held a series of public meetings to get people's ideas on the topic, wrote a first draft of the policy, and circulated the draft. Right now, the board is getting feedback on the contents of the draft. The next step is to write a second draft of the policy.
- A group of parents (six mothers, two grandmothers, two fathers) are gathered in the parents' room at the school for their weekly get-together. They chatted about their kids and enjoyed coffee and cookies. Right now they're having a discussion about what's normal behaviour for six- to eight-year-old kids. The local public health nurse is the resource person for their discussion.

- **Increasing support for education:** Public engagement increases community members' understanding of what's happening in their local schools and the education system generally. With increased understanding comes increased support. Remember – people won't support what they don't understand.
- **Raising student achievement:** When families are involved in their children's education, the children achieve more. In addition, children whose families are actively involved in their schooling tend to have better behaviour and fewer discipline problems. This is true regardless of the family's socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level. A huge body of research proves that family involvement makes a difference.
- **Increasing awareness about the strong link between education and economic success:** Education is the key to success for the individual, our province, and our country. It is sometimes said that we live in a "knowledge economy" because knowledge is a very marketable commodity. The best jobs go to people with high levels of education and our province needs an educated, skilled workforce for prosperity.
- **Making individuals and communities stronger:** When individuals participate in discussion, decision making and action relating to education, they learn new skills and develop increased confidence. They may gain experience speaking in public, chairing meetings, writing, and working with young people. These skills benefit them as individuals and also make them stronger contributors to their community.
- **Involving people who are historically underrepresented in educational decision-making:** For most of Saskatchewan's history, Aboriginal people and poor people have been pushed to the sidelines. They have had little or no say in how their children are educated or how the school system operates. The result has been alienation and low student achievement. Public engagement can include processes to involve these groups and to increase their participation in educational decision making.
- **Increase opportunities for public participation in education:** The public can participate in education in dozens of ways ranging from volunteering at school to helping shape educational decisions. Generally, when people are involved in something and participate in making decisions that affect them, their sense of commitment increases.
- **Building a community of relationships:** The school system must create opportunities for stakeholders within the system to interact and build relationships. When people get together in meetings, on the playground, or in school they start to know each other and feel comfortable working together. They develop a community of relationships.
- **Building a community of minds:** The school system must create opportunities for conversation between the system and its stakeholders. People won't support what they don't understand. The more people learn about the school system, the more likely they are to support it. When people share ideas, learn together and understand each other's principles and priorities, they develop a community of minds.
- **Building a community of memory:** The school system must come together in support and celebration. Over time, these events become the nostalgic "good old days" – days that people can remember and talk about fondly. When people have fun together in school and community events,

and celebrate the achievements of students, teachers and the school system as a whole, they develop a community of memory.

Tools for Effective Communication

Keep the following tips in mind when planning your communications:

- Clearly designate the communications responsibilities to particular individuals or subcommittees.
- Use a variety of information-sharing approaches, including public meetings, letters, newsletters, phone/e-mail networks, an Internet website, radio, community access television, and print media.
- Prepare key messages and information sheets on timely topics.
- Be aware of communications barriers, such as language and culture.
- Be mindful of “who needs to know,” and their timelines.
- Focus on listening as much as telling. Explore two-way communication, feedback and input throughout the community.
- Be informative, but do not impose your views. Welcome a range of viewpoints, and seek the common ground.
- Design committee structures that allow for maximum participation from School Community Councils, parents, and other community groups.
- Involve community members in the initial planning of major initiatives.

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

Every school board needs a spokesperson who represents the board to the community and the media. The spokesperson’s role may include doing interviews, making formal presentations and responding to spontaneous questions.

Public speaking is a learned skill – a skill that is strengthened through study, observation and practice. Opportunities exist in every community to learn public speaking skills.

All speakers – even the most experienced – need to prepare when they give a speech or presentation. Thorough planning and practice are essential for a confident, effortless presentation.

Communicating for Better Understanding

The school board is responsible for ensuring there is public understanding and support for the school program – Use your public relations program to build the public’s understanding about the positive results you want for students, about the programs you have implemented to achieve those results, about the challenges you face.

Remember that public relations includes every communication and interaction you have with students, staff, parents and the community. Here are lists of tools you can use to foster understanding about the school system and its work. Each of these tools may have a role to play in your public relations program.

Internal Communications and Interactions	External Communications and Interactions
Faculty/staff meetings	Incoming/outgoing phone calls
PA system announcements	Visits to/from parents
Employee/student handbook	Brochures/pamphlets
School and office bulletin boards	Bumper stickers, buttons, t-shirts
Incoming and outgoing e-mail	Incoming and outgoing e-mail
Internet web page	Internet web page
Policy manuals	Interviews with the media
Student assemblies	School newsletters
	TV/radio public service announcements and interviews
	Local newspaper ads and news stories
	Information pages sent home with students
	News releases to the media

Tips for Better Writing

Writing for the media and the public is a specialized skill – The school board will probably delegate the writing of news releases, school board newsletters and similar materials to a staff person at the board office. Even so, school board members must be prepared to judge the effectiveness of the written communications going out under the board’s name. Writing for the media and the public is quite different from writing essays or letters.

- Write the way you speak. Use a conversational tone.
- Avoid jargon.
- Keep it simple. Readers tend to be turned off by long, complicated text.
- Include only one idea per paragraph.
- Be selective about what you print. You don’t have to include all the background details.
- Don’t assume your readers have the same knowledge as you.
- Be careful not to break copyright laws when reproducing materials.
- Be positive. Present the school board in the best light.
- Include a “call to action”. Make it clear why you are writing and what you want from your reader.
- Have several people proofread your material to be sure it is understandable and free from distracting errors.
- Reply promptly to concerns and requests for information.

Working with the Media¹

Many people learn about schools through the media. School boards need to ensure their local media have the information they need to present a balanced picture – This is an achievable goal. In spite of what many people think, the media generally try to present a fair picture of a situation or event.

Taking a Story to the Media

Parents are interested in a great deal of information. But reporters are interested in news. News is judged by assessing the impact of the story on a reader or viewer:

- **Is it new?** Does it highlight new people, new programs, new ideas or new ways of teaching and learning?
- **Is it timely?** Stories about school safety, for example, may be “in vogue” this year but not next year.
- **Is it superlative?** Does your story illustrate the fastest, highest, smallest, or biggest of something? What credible, third-party evidence exists to back up your claims?
- **Does your event tie into a major news story?** The media are constantly looking for ways to bring a local perspective to major national or international news stories.
- **Are there interesting visuals?** What visual appeal does your story offer? Does it have the potential for interesting photographs or television footage? The most appealing visuals involve students and teachers doing things.

Making the Reporter’s Job Easier

Most reporters are dedicated, well-meaning individuals who are usually facing tight time pressures. They may well be pursuing several stories in a single day, against the clock – with hourly or daily deadlines. Your story may be one of several the reporter is following on a particular day.

As a result, it is essential that you make it easy for the reporter to tell your story. Provide written fact sheets about your school board and its work, contact numbers for individuals designated to work with the media, and lively picture possibilities. In short, you need to think of ways to help the media do the best job they can within their time constraints.

Responding to the Media

If a reporter comes to you with questions about a current issue or event, don't panic. Follow the tips provided earlier in this chapter. Be ready.

- Be sure your board has a designated spokesperson.

¹ This section has been adapted from: Ontario Public School Boards Association. (2003). *Educating Together*. A handbook for trustees, school boards and communities. Toronto, ON

- Never turn down a reporter’s request for an interview. If you say no, the reporter will get information elsewhere.
- Be sure you understand what the reporter wants and how the material is to be used: a 30-second clip on the nightly news, a feature radio documentary, an analysis piece for the newspaper.
- If you receive a call unexpectedly, ask for reasonable time to gather information and prepare your thoughts.
- Agree in advance about the conditions of an interview. The most satisfactory condition for both parties is “on the record”. The reporter can use and quote anything that you say. If you are acting in your official capacity as a school board member, it is expected that you will speak openly and on the record, particularly in a crisis situation.

Maintaining a Working Relationship with the Media

The best way to develop a working relationship with the media is to be an accurate source of information. This does not mean that you must tell reporters everything you know or answer all their questions. It simply means that the easier you make their job, the more likely they are to return to you for information, quotes, and your opinion on issues. And every time you speak to the media, it’s an opportunity to communicate your message on the issue of the day and the importance of education.