

Parent Engagement and Communication Guidelines
Halton Waldorf School
2026

Parents and caregivers play an important role in their children's education and in the life of the Halton Waldorf School community. A strong partnership among students, parents, teachers, staff, and school leadership depends on mutual respect, compassion, openness, and a shared commitment to the well-being of all students.

These guidelines are intended to support positive parent engagement, clear communication, and a safe and respectful environment for everyone at HWS.

Parent and Caregiver Responsibilities

Parents and caregivers support their children and the school community by:

- Taking an active interest in their child's learning, development, and progress.
- Ensuring their child attends school regularly, arrives on time, and is prepared for the day.
- Reporting absences or late arrivals promptly.
- Ensuring their child is appropriately dressed and equipped for school.
- Becoming familiar with and adhering to school policies, procedures, and expectations.
- Supporting their child in following the Student Code of Conduct.
- Working collaboratively with faculty and staff to address academic, social, behavioural, or disciplinary concerns.
- Treating all students, families, faculty, staff and volunteers with respect.
- Respecting the privacy and confidentiality of students, families, and employees.
- Raising questions or concerns directly with the appropriate person and following the communication guidelines outlined below.

Parent Association (PA)

The PA is supported by a core group of PA representatives coordinated by the PA Chair who work collaboratively with faculty, staff, school leadership, and the Board of Directors to foster positive parent involvement in school life.

Members of the PA are expected to:

- Promote welcoming, inclusive, and constructive parent participation.
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with members of the school community.
- Strengthen relationships among students, parents, caregivers, faculty, staff, leadership, and the Board.
- Uphold the same standards of respectful conduct and confidentiality expected throughout the school community.

Communication Guidelines

The relationship among students, parents, caregivers, teachers, staff, and leadership is critical to a healthy school community. Productive communication requires respect, honesty, compassion, openness, and a willingness to listen.

Parents and caregivers are expected to:

- Communicate respectfully, even when raising concerns or expressing disagreement.
- Direct questions or concerns to the teacher, staff member, or school leader most closely connected to the matter.
- Seek clarification before drawing conclusions.
- Focus on the facts, the concern, and possible solutions.
- Allow reasonable time for school employees to review and respond.
- Request a meeting when a matter is complex, sensitive, or unlikely to be resolved by email.
- Discuss important or confidential matters privately, rather than in hallways, parking lots, at community events, or in the presence of students.
- Respect employee working hours and understand that faculty and staff may not be available during instructional time, evenings, weekends, or school holidays.
- Use school communication channels, rather than social media or informal messaging platforms, to discuss school-related concerns.

Parents and caregivers should not:

- Discuss concerns within earshot of students.
- Engage in speculation, gossip, or third-party discussions about another student, family, employee, or school matter.
- Use group chats, social media, WhatsApp, or other online platforms to criticize, target, shame, or organize opposition against an individual.
- Share confidential information, private correspondence, screenshots, or personal information about students, families, or employees without permission.
- Attempt to resolve a concern by confronting another person's child.
- Record meetings, telephone calls, or conversations without the knowledge and consent of all participants.
- Contact multiple employees about the same matter in an effort to bypass the established communication process or seek a different response.

Standards of Appropriate Conduct

HWS welcomes questions, disagreement, and constructive criticism when they are communicated respectfully. A parent or caregiver will not be penalized for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

However, abusive, threatening, intimidating, discriminatory, or harassing conduct will not be tolerated. This applies to communication in person, by telephone, by email, through social media, in online meetings, or through any other form of communication.

Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Swearing at, insulting, belittling, mocking, or personally attacking any student, parent, employee, volunteer, or Board member.
- Yelling, aggressive behaviour, hostile gestures, or conduct intended to intimidate, threaten, or humiliate.
- Threatening physical harm, retaliation, reputational or professional harm, or damage to school or personal property.
- Discrimination, harassment, or derogatory comments based on any protected ground under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Repeated or excessive communication after a matter has been addressed or reasonable communication boundaries have been established.
- Following, monitoring, or approaching any member of the school community in a manner that causes them to feel unsafe.
- Sharing or distributing false, defamatory, malicious, confidential, or private information.
- Encouraging or organizing others to target, pressure, harass, or exclude an individual.
- Disrupting classes, meetings, school events, or the normal operations of the school.
- Entering restricted areas or refusing to leave school property when directed by an authorized school representative.
- Any other conduct that compromises the safety, well-being, or dignity of a member of the school community.

School Response to Inappropriate Conduct

When communication becomes disrespectful or unproductive, a school employee may pause or end the conversation and arrange for it to continue at another time, in another format, or with an additional staff member present.

Depending on the seriousness or frequency of the conduct, the school may:

- Issue a verbal or written reminder of these guidelines.
- Require future communication to occur in writing or through a designated school representative.
- Require meetings to be scheduled by appointment and/or attended by an additional staff member.
- Limit the method, frequency, timing, or recipients of communication.
- Direct an individual not to contact a specific student, parent, employee, volunteer, or Board member.
- Require an individual to leave school property or limit their access to school property.
- Restrict or suspend participation in school activities, volunteer opportunities, or community events.

- Contact emergency services or law enforcement where there is a threat to safety or a potential violation of the law.
- Take any other reasonable action necessary to protect the safety, well-being, and orderly operation of the school community.

Where possible, the school will respond proportionately and seek to restore respectful communication. Serious threats, violence, harassment, or conduct that creates an immediate safety concern may result in immediate action without prior warning.

Raising a Question or Concern

Questions and concerns should normally be addressed at the level closest to the situation.

Step 1: Speak with the appropriate teacher or employee

The first point of contact is generally:

- In Early Childhood: your child's lead teacher.
- In Grade School: your child's class teacher or the relevant subject teacher.
- In High School: your child's class advisor or the relevant subject teacher.
- For an operational or administrative matter: the employee responsible for that area.

Step 2: Contact the appropriate Section Chair

When a concern has not been resolved after direct communication, or when the concern relates more broadly to a section of the school, the parent or caregiver may contact the appropriate Early Childhood, Grade School, or High School Chair or Co-Chair.

Step 3: Contact school leadership

If the matter remains unresolved, it may be brought to the Administrative Director or Pedagogical Director.

School leadership may review the matter, gather relevant information, facilitate a meeting, or determine the most appropriate next step. Parents and caregivers should provide a clear summary of the concern, the steps already taken, and the resolution they are seeking.

Step 4: Board involvement

The Board of Directors is responsible for governance rather than the day-to-day management of the school. Operational, instructional, personnel, or student-related matters must first proceed through the appropriate school communication process.

A matter may be brought to the Board only when it falls within the Board's governance responsibilities or when a formal appeal is permitted under an applicable school policy.

Confidentiality and Privacy

The school will make reasonable efforts to review concerns fairly and discreetly. However, confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. Information may need to be shared with those responsible for reviewing the matter, responding to safety concerns, or carrying out the school's legal and operational responsibilities.

To protect privacy, the school may not be able to share information about another student, family, employee, disciplinary process, or personnel matter.

Shared Commitment

Every member of the school community contributes to its culture. By communicating directly, listening carefully, respecting appropriate boundaries, and approaching concerns with a shared desire to find a constructive path forward, parents, caregivers, faculty, staff, and school leadership help create a safe and supportive environment for all students.