

Home Notification System

Administrative Procedure

Status:	Active
Effective:	September 2010, 2016
Revision Date:	February 2025
Review Date:	February 2029
Responsibility:	General Manager of Communications & Engagement Superintendent of Information Services

Intended Purpose

The Halton District School Board is committed to providing timely, effective communication to parents/guardians, students and staff concerning school and HDSB matters. Use of the Home Notification System – an automated system that sends broadcast messages via email to parents/guardians, students and/or staff members – is one method used by the Halton District School Board to support communication.

Procedures

The Home Notification System is available to all schools and the central office of the Halton District School Board. Home Notification System messages can be sent by individual schools and centrally through the HDSB Communications & Engagement Department.

Guidelines for Use of the Home Notification System:

1. **School-based messages** (messages sent by individual schools):

Note: All messages sent from a school through the Home Notification System must be approved by the school administrator.

Nature of message: Messages must be relevant to the entire school community or targeted to a specific audience (e.g. certain grades), as determined by the school administrator or Family of Schools Superintendent.

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Examples of school-based messages:

- School newsletters
- School Council information
- Information and reminders of events at school
- Field trip and/or excursion information and permission forms

Best Practices for School-based Messages:

- Consider sending one weekly newsletter on the same day each week with topical information for families – this consolidates messaging and provides consistency.
- Use the stationery designed for your school by the Communications & Engagement Department.
- Follow the suggested font and size indicated in the template provided to ensure accessibility, consistency and functionality for web and mobile viewing.
- Avoid sending large files and remember to apply alt-tags when using images.
- When possible, link to information on your school or HDSB website.
- Avoid “marketing” of external organizations or services.
- Target the message to the specific audience (e.g., send to Grade 5 parents/guardians only if the message concerns a Grade 5 field trip).
- Consider adding the school’s local Trustee to the distribution lists to ensure Trustees are informed of school events.
- In the event of an emergency or when dealing with a sensitive matter, school administrators should consult with their Family of Schools Superintendent and the Communications & Engagement Department.

2. **System-wide messages** (messages sent through the Communications & Engagement Department)

The Communications & Engagement Department will carefully consider the use of the Home Notification System for system-wide messages. Consideration will be given to whether this is the most effective way to communicate the information,

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alignment with other communication tactics (HDSB website and school websites, social media, school newsletters, etc.) and the timing of messaging.

Examples of system-wide messages:

- System-wide events and opportunities
- Critical or urgent communication (e.g., safety related, school closure or transportation cancellation due to inclement weather, school emergency, etc.)
- Opportunities for feedback (e.g., budget input, Have Your Say, etc.)
- Important information families need to be aware of (e.g., Ministry announcements, public health information, school year calendar, etc.)

Best Practices for System-wide Messages

- Avoid sending multiple messages in a short period of time in an effort to not overload families with information and support the effectiveness and integrity of this communications tool.
- Target message to the specific audience whenever possible.
- Notify administrators, school office staff, Reception, School Operations, relevant department staff and Trustees of system-wide messages. Whenever possible this notification should be provided in advance of the message being sent.

Note: The General Manager of Communications & Engagement, and, where required, the Superintendent of Education for the respective department must approve the use of the Home Notification System for system-wide messages.

3. Training

Training for the Home Notification System is available for school staff. Training information is available for staff through myHDSB → Departments → Information Services → SchoolMessenger Support → Messages

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4. Support for the Home Notification System

For technical support, contact Staff Support at staffsupport@hdsb.ca. For assistance with sending a message, contact the Communications & Engagement Department at communications@hdsb.ca.

Cross-Reference:

Legislation

Ministry Policy & Program Memoranda

Board Policies, Procedures & Protocols

Revision History

- February 2025: Significant updates to align with current practices and technology and updated formatting