



## **Mountain Song Community School Communications Policy**

### **Purpose**

MSCS seeks to create a reverent school environment in which every member of the community is treated with dignity and respect. When we remember that we all share the common goal of providing an effective, holistic education for our students, we promote an environment of trust in which criticism may be made and received constructively. This policy aims to establish the principles and procedures that MSCS Board Members, Staff and parents shall follow in their interactions with one another, with the goal of maintaining a positive and constructive school environment. Any Board Member, Staff Member, or parent who does not follow policies, procedures or standards or who acts in any manner that negatively impacts the learning environment may be subject to the procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy.

### **Guidelines for Interactions Between Members of the Community**

- All members of the community shall respect the right of students to learn and educators to provide effective education. Behavior by any educator, staff member, or parent that fails to respect these rights shall constitute a breach of this policy.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the community to familiarize themselves with and abide by the provisions of all policies, as well as all supporting procedures, standards, and guidelines. Policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines will be available in the school office and on MSCS's website.
- It is the responsibility of all parents and staff to assist the students to become aware of and abide by the provisions of all policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines.
- Communication between parents and staff shall follow the channels of communication stipulated in the Grievance policy. Staff shall practice a 48-hour-response policy. Although the response may vary according to the nature of the query made, staff shall at least acknowledge receipt of the query within 48 hours, unless the query is received on a weekend (which starts at 4:00 p.m. on Friday) or holiday, in which case staff shall respond within 48 hours from the beginning of the next official work day.
- Communication between parents and staff shall be conducted at a time and in a manner that allows full and proper discussion of the issues under consideration.
- Board Members, educators, administrative staff, and parents shall treat one another with respect. Harassing or discriminatory conduct towards any community member is prohibited.

- If community members use social media to discuss school-related issues, MSCS encourages respectful dialogue. Any grievances should follow the official procedures outlined in the Grievance Policy. Please see Staff Social Media Policy for staff expectations.
- The unauthorized access to, and/or the communication of any information owned by or under the control of the school, may constitute a breach of confidentiality and/or the right of protection from the unauthorized disclosure of private personal information. Any member of the community aware of such abuse is encouraged to report it to the Executive Director. Appropriate action may be taken against any members of the community in breach of their duty of confidentiality or privacy of personal information.

### **Board Communication with School Community**

The Board will send regular updates to the community at least monthly. These may cover the topics of finances, governance, and academics. This may be incorporated into part of the weekly school newsletter or as a separate communication from the Board.

School-issued Board Member email addresses shall be posted publicly on the school website. Any community member may email any or all Board Members with questions or comments regarding the school's mission, vision, governance, or finances. However, no Board Member has the authority to act individually on behalf of the Board. The Board can only take action as a whole, through open, noticed public meetings. How the Board decides to respond to any particular communication or address a specific issue will depend on whether the matter falls within the Board's role and if so it will follow the Grievance Policy accordingly.

Each Board Member is free to provide a personal point of view and interact as an individual as their schedule permits, but discussions, opinions, views, statements, and explanations of any kind, whether verbal or written, expressed by any individual Board Member should be considered to be the personal opinion of the Board Member, may not be representative of the Board, and are not binding on the Board or MSCS. Any interaction with individual Board Members is simply informative and exploratory conversation. Speaking with one or more Board Members does not constitute bringing an issue to the Board. This must be done formally in writing addressed to the Board President, or the entire Board and shall follow the Grievance Policy as applicable. When a Board Member is speaking as an individual, with a perspective that may differ from the voice of the Board, this must be fully disclosed; e.g. "This is my personal view and not necessarily the view of the Board or School." Bear in mind that it is important that the Board maintains "one voice" in speaking with the public.

Board Members shall exercise due care in expressing their personal opinions, and shall otherwise communicate regarding MSCS matters in accordance with this policy. All communication from individual Board Members and the Board must consider individual rights of privacy and be in compliance with FERPA and all other applicable laws and statutes, and be in accord with the Board Member Agreement

If an email is sent to multiple Board Members, the Board Secretary (or designee) shall be the point of contact and will respond to the sender within 48 hours of receipt of original email and cc the rest of the board. It is imperative that the full body of the Board has access to all of the same

information that pertains to school business that any/all individual members do. If any Board Member receives written communication addressed to the Board from a member of the community or staff and any other Board Member(s) are not copied on it, they are to forward it to any and all other Board Members. Any other Board Member may, but is not required, to respond to communication addressed to the Board, but should exercise care as noted above.

If a question or comment received is regarding a specific operational matter the query will be redirected to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in accordance with our Grievance Policy as applicable. If a Board Member receives a complaint regarding a staff member, the Board Members shall direct that person to that staff member or ELT if appropriate. If that has already been attempted, the Board Member shall follow up with the ELT to confirm if this has happened and to gain a clearer picture of the their perspective of the situation before deciding whether further action is necessary on the part of the Board. (re: Grievance Policy)

### **Internal Board Communication**

Board communication via email must be limited in the following ways to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Law:

- Logistical emails regarding coordination of time and dates of meetings, etc. may be cc'd to the entire Board and discussed between any number of members.
- All other email communications involving school business must be limited to no more than 2 Board Members.
- A Board Member shall bcc all Board Members (to prevent reply all) to ask questions of the group or provide information or perspectives, however no Board Member shall respond to more than the single original sender.

### **Urgent Matters / Matters Requiring a Quick Response**

In cases of urgent matters such as potential danger to students or staff, or other matters requiring immediate response, a team consisting of a minimum of three Board Officers (or if officers are not available, at least one officer and two other Board Members) will immediately confer on how the matter will be communicated to the public. However, their response will not be considered the Board's view or decision unless a majority of the Board has approved it. The ELT shall be consulted as well as MSCS's legal counsel as necessary.

### **Media Communications**

Response to media inquiries should be handled as soon as possible to build positive relationships with the press as well as to avoid the media making assumptions based on an unreturned call. To aid in this the front office staff and anyone with the potential to answer incoming phone calls (e.g., Registrar) should be trained to take a message and ask reporters what their deadline is and the nature of the call. At that point the message should be given to the ELT immediately. In addition, sensitive/potential legal matters should be discussed via phone and should never be communicated via email, text, social media, etc.

All media inquiries should be directed to the ELT and Board President or Designee. No other MSCS employees or volunteers are authorized to speak on behalf of the school without prior written approval by the ELT or Board of Directors. If you receive a media inquiry that requires a comment on behalf of the school let the reporter know who the appropriate person is to respond. In the event of a crisis or negative media attention the rapid response team outline above and ELT should immediately gather to discuss messaging. (See above for team make-up.)

Should a reporter arrive at the school without advanced notice, the front office staff should notify the ELT immediately and direct the reporter to wait at the perimeter of the facility off school property for the safety of students and staff. The ELT is responsible for notifying the Board President immediately and then gathering information about the story from the reporter. Approved media spokespersons include the following based on the topic of the story:

- Board President, or designee, if the Board President isn't available
- ELT

## **Revision History**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Approval Status</b>	<b>Change Description</b>
2018-11-26	DRAFT	Convert to new format. Change “Executive Director” to “Executive Leadership Team” or “ELT”
2018-12-11	APPROVED	Approved by Board