



Communication Policy (including Appeals)

COMMUNICATION QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

“Class Teacher” refers to teachers of classes from Kindergarten to Class 8.
When an administrative role is vacant, direct all inquiries to the Principal.

Questions/Concerns regarding:	Speak to:	Contact information
Curriculum, discipline, homework, progress reports, academic standards, class trips, class meetings, etc. of a routine nature	Class Teacher	Class Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org
My child and his/her educational experience	Class Teacher Education Director	Class Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org ED-
My child’s experience in a subject class	Class Teacher Education Director	Class Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org ED-
My child’s subject teachers or assistants	Subject Teacher Class Teacher Education Director	Subject Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org Class Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org ED-

Nelson Waldorf School

Waldorf education in general	Class Teacher Education Director	Class Teacher firstname.lastname@nelsonwaldorf.org ED-
General information about events, dates or other questions	Front Office Secretary	Simon Bruskowski info@nelsonwaldorf.org
Ministry of Education, policies, legal matters	Principal	Jamie Simon jamie.simon@nelsonwaldorf.org
Finances	Business Director	Lisa Papania lisa.papania@nelsonwaldorf.org
Facility, buildings, grounds, maintenance staff	Business Director	Lisa Papania lisa.papania@nelsonwaldorf.org
Enrolment, withdrawal	Enrolment Manager	Stephanie Delnea registration@nelsonwaldorf.org
Front Office	Secretary	Simon Bruskowski info@nelsonwaldorf.org
Education Director	Education Director Principal	ED- Jamie Simon jamie.simon@nelsonwaldorf.org
Business Director	Business Director Principal	Lisa Papania lisa.papania@nelsonwaldorf.org Jamie Simon jamie.simon@nelsonwaldorf.org
Principal	Principal Board Chair	Jamie Simon jamie.simon@nelsonwaldorf.org Marcelo Porto Gonçalves (interim) marcelo.porto-goncalves@nelso

Rationale

Social health and a positive, creative living and learning environment are the guiding motives for our school policies and rules. A healthy social life is dependent on the cultivation of social responsibility based on individual insight, and sound observation and listening skills.

The health of our school community as a whole is reflected in our commitment to clear, open communication and transparency of educational and organizational structures. At the same time, professional confidentiality according to the law must be maintained.

The Nelson Waldorf School ("the School") seeks to put in place clear guidelines to support healthy adult communication throughout the school community. With this foundation, we are then better able to address issues of grievance and conflict as they arise, and address them in a constructive manner. Thus the adults model a manner of involvement, commitment and communication that can have a positive and motivating influence on the students.

These guidelines serve to facilitate the smooth functioning of the school and to assist parents, students, faculty and staff members to work successfully together. The guidelines complement the regular, informal communications that already take place between members of the school community.

Please note: At no time is aggressive or disrespectful language acceptable by any party in any communication and/or meeting at school. A meeting may be terminated and re-scheduled by either party for another time if required. Support will be brought to the situation through the Education Director.



Policy

Throughout this policy, the term “Class Teacher” refers to teachers that lead classes from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

1. COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO EDUCATION

a. Communication between the Teachers and Students

- i. In the classroom and throughout all school activities, there is an expectation that the communication from any teacher to any student is clear, warm, and with definite and well understood boundaries. In addition, teachers are expected to be sensitive to and able to act upon individual and group needs, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers are held to the standards of the https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teacher-regulation/standards-for-educators/edu_standards_is.pdf
- ii. Students, likewise, are expected to behave respectfully and to communicate clearly to all adults at the school. If and when an infringement occurs, students are guided to understand the full consequences of their actions and given the opportunity to make right any harm done. If necessary the Discipline Policy will be followed.

b. Communication between the Teachers and Parents

Communication between teachers and parents occurs through:



i. **Class Meetings**

Class Teachers will hold a class meeting at least once each term. These class meetings have a clear agenda circulated in advance. Topics may include a report on curriculum, discussion on developmental stages of children, class dynamics and events in the life of the class. Parent-initiated topics for discussion can be decided on and prioritized by the Class Teacher with input from the Class Rep.

While the class meeting is also an opportunity for parents to share experiences, it is not the appropriate forum for resolving individual, student-specific concerns and, relatedly, naming other parents' children. Parents must bring these concerns to the teacher privately.

ii. **Class Letters**

Teachers provide regular letters to the class parents throughout each term. These communications provide families with updates on class activities (i.e., "what we are doing"), while also, when appropriate, reinforcing the pedagogical rationale and benefits for their childrens' classroom experiences (i.e., "why we are doing what we are doing"). In this way, class letters serve an important educational purpose *between* scheduled class meetings.

iii. **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

In-person formal parent-teacher conferences are conducted once per year (twice in the Kindergarten) to exchange information about the progress and qualities of each child and to set mutually agreed upon goals. These interviews are undertaken with the interests of the child as the focus and are an essential part of the school assessment and reporting procedures in accordance with the Ministry of Education. As such, they are conducted professionally and with documented feedback on each child's development.



iv. **Parent-Teacher Meetings (routine nature)**

Parent-teacher meetings over the course of the year are part of regular communication. Each teacher provides class parents with teacher communication guidelines for availability and how to best arrange a mutually convenient time. Note: It may not be possible to give proper and respectful consideration in the time before and after class, including dismissal times. Please check with the Class Teacher's individual plan.

c. **Question/Concern or a Complaint?**

The School differentiates between "questions/concerns" and "complaints" and accordingly handles them differently. The distinction can be determined with support from the Education Director or Parent Liaison. In general:

"Questions/concerns" are those enquiries for which one seeks clarification, support or further information.

"Complaints" relate to matters about which one wishes to register dissatisfaction or a higher level of grievance. The School takes complaints seriously and is committed to comprehensive follow-up. Since complaints are often symptoms of an underlying issue(s), they are viewed as opportunities for professional and organizational learning.

If parents or guardians have a question/concern or a complaint about another student (i.e., not their own child) about an in-school situation, this must not be communicated directly to the other student. Such concerns must always be directed through the Class Teacher. Parents are asked to advise Class Teachers of any circumstances that may affect the child's in-class experience.



d. Question/Concern Procedure:

If parents have a question/concern about their child and/or their child's education, the first step is to speak directly with the Class Teacher or Subject Teacher.

The procedure for this is as follows:

- i. Parents may request a meeting with the relevant teacher either via email (*see Section 4 for School Email Communication Protocol*) or by leaving a message with the Front Office to be passed on to the teacher. This meeting can include the Education Director at the request of the teacher or the parent.
- ii. For many teachers, it is not possible to give proper and respectful consideration to meeting arrangements in the time before and after class, including dismissal times. Parents should, instead, request that the teacher arrange an individual meeting at a mutually convenient time. Indicate the issue to be discussed as some lead time provides an opportunity for the teacher to give prior thought to the matter. Unless deemed necessary by the teacher, it is generally not appropriate for children to be present when discussing questions/concerns with the teacher.

For any matter pertaining to a child's safety and wellbeing (i.e., instances of continued teasing or bullying), parents are asked to copy any correspondence sent to the Class Teacher to the Education Director so that it can be followed up.

- iii. If a parent is dissatisfied with a communication regarding a question or concern, the process is to write to or email the Education Director, stating the issue and requesting that a facilitated meeting be set up with the teacher.



- iv. The Education Director is responsible to ensure that this facilitated meeting (see below) occurs within five business days from the request being received.

e. Complaint Procedure:

Respectful communication, with the child's needs always at the centre, is required at all levels of these processes.

The Complaint procedure is used when there is a high degree of seriousness to the issue or when the questions//concerns procedure was unsuccessful. The Parent Liaison (Board delegated) is available to help parents make the decision to use this procedure, and to support the process. The name and contact information for the Parent Liaison may be obtained from the Secretary. A complaint is recorded and tracked by the administrator receiving it. The Principal and Board Chair are advised.

The Complaint Procedure is as follows:

- i. Complaints should be made in writing to the Education Director.
- ii. The Education Director will request permission that the written record of the information provided be shown to the teacher(s) concerned and that the complainant be identified. The Education Director cannot process anonymous complaints except in cases of suspected physical, emotional and sexual abuse, in which case the school follows the School Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy for Employees and its protocols.
- iii. The Education Director may then appoint another staff member to assist in the process of response. The appointment of this staff member is at the discretion of the Education Director and may, if appropriate, be the mentor of a teacher involved, another staff member or the Principal.



- iv. The Education Director and the nominated staff member will assess the complaint and on that basis may:
 - a) Set up a preliminary meeting with the parent(s) to find out more about the complaint and the context.
 - b) Address the complaint directly, providing a clear description of the assessment of the matter, the response to be made and the reasons for that response.
 - c) Share the content of the complaint with the teacher(s) concerned and determine follow up.
 - d) If appropriate, redirect the complaint to the right person. This may include the Board Chair or an external authority such as the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- v. If necessary, a facilitated meeting may be set up to further address the complaint (*see section f p.8*).

f. Facilitated Meetings

- i. These meetings occur between the parent and the teacher and are facilitated by the Education Director. Another staff member may be called in for this meeting. The parent may also bring a support person to this meeting.
- ii. The purpose of a facilitated meeting is to ensure that:
 - a) The parent has the opportunity to accurately convey their concerns to the teacher.
 - b) The teacher fully understands the issues and that the communication has been witnessed and recorded by another senior member.



- c) The teacher has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns.
- d) The nature of the teacher's response has been heard and understood by the parent.
- iii. A clearly articulated action plan will be made. Facilitated meetings will be minuted and the meeting minutes will be shared with the parties involved.
- iv. If the results of a facilitated meeting do not result in a satisfactory outcome:
 - a) The parent(s) or teacher may address their concerns in writing to the Education Director. It is not appropriate to use email for this purpose.
 - b) The Education Director will then determine the most effective process to resolve the concerns. This may include another facilitated meeting or mediation where both parties agree to work towards a solution to the problem.
 - c) If the issue is not resolved at this stage, please refer to Section 7, p14 below for appeal procedures.

2. COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND BOARD

The school welcomes feedback and information on any aspect of school operations as a part of a philosophy of overall accountability, responsiveness and transparency. Communications received will always be acknowledged in writing and confirm the course of action that has been followed. *Please refer to Quick Reference Guide/Communication Chart for Questions/Concerns.*



Note: The use of email is solely for the purpose of relaying general information pertaining to school and class business and for making meeting arrangements. (see Section 4 for School Email Communication Protocol.)

a. Communicating with the Board of Trustees

- i. Parents, faculty and staff members may communicate in writing directly to the Board of Trustees through correspondence to a Board member of their choice.
- ii. The Board Chair considers the communication and, if appropriate, ensures that the correspondence is included on the agenda at the next meeting of the Board.
- iii. Members of the Board are available for discussion through pre-arranged meetings. Persons may request a meeting with a board member either via email (*see Section 4 for School Email Communication Protocol*) or by leaving a message with the Front Office to be passed on to the Board.
- iv. Communication to Board members regarding questions, concerns or complaints requires a meeting to be arranged. A request for a meeting should give advance notice about what it is to be discussed so that adequate preparation can be made.

b. Communicating with Administration Staff

Parents wishing to give feedback about aspects of school administration should initially contact the relevant director as follows.

- i. The first step is to speak directly or to write a note/email to the:
 - a) Education Director - with general concerns and suggestions about aspects of the school educational delivery, students, or teachers.



- b) Principal - with specific questions or clarifications about any aspect of the education relating to the Ministry of Education or other external licensing/regulatory body, as well as any concerns with potential legal implications; or with the Secretary, the Education or Business directors.
 - c) Business Director - with concerns or clarification with fees or fee statements, school finances, school facility or school daily administration or about the safety or aesthetic of the school grounds and facilities.
 - d) Enrolment Manager- with feedback or concerns about enrolment, probation or withdrawal.
 - e) Board Chair - with concerns about the Principal.
- ii. Parents may request a meeting with the relevant administrative staff. In planning this meeting parents should give advance notice about what it is to be discussed so that adequate preparation can be made.
 - iii. A written record will be kept of any such meeting with a parent.
 - iv. Confidentiality is an absolute priority in communications related to school fees or school finances. These meetings and conversations must be carried out in a suitable meeting space.
 - v. If a parent or staff member is unsatisfied with the outcomes of this initial meeting / communication, the person should write the concerns to the Principal, stating the issue and requesting that a facilitated meeting be established. (See "Facilitated Meeting" Section 1. f above.)
 - vi. The purpose of this facilitated meeting is to ensure:



- a) That the concerns or feedback raised by the parent are accurately conveyed to the school.
 - b) That the school's staff member fully understands them and that they have been witnessed by another member of the management team.
 - c) That the school's staff member has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the parent.
 - d) That the Principal takes responsibility to support a clearly articulated action plan for taking any next steps.
 - e) Facilitated meetings will be minuted and the meeting minutes will be shared with the parties involved.
- vii. Should this process be unsuccessful, please refer to the school's Appeal Procedure, section 7 p.14 below.

c. Communication with the Front Office

The front office Secretary supports the faculty, administrative staff and children of the school every day. It is important that the secretary is not regularly repeating information which is already available to the school community in the usual communication channels.

Parents have a responsibility to read communications from the school, such as class letters, school bulletins, website messages, school policies. All information regarding the daily operations of the school can be obtained from the office which is managed by the Secretary.



- i. The office is open from 8.00 am to 3.00 pm. Emergency issues will be attended to until 3:30.
- ii. Parents can communicate with the Secretary via the phone, email or with a note which their child can drop off at the front office.
- iii. It is essential for parents to read the school's weekly bulletin and mailchimp communications regularly as these are important channels for the school to communicate information and dates for up-and-coming school or class events.
- iv. The Secretary's role does not include dealing with complaints of any kind.

Note: The use of email is solely for the purpose of relaying general information pertaining to school and class business and for making meeting arrangements. See Section 4 below for School Email Communication Protocol.

3. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

Respectful communication between all employees is expected at all times.

- i. Subject teachers and assistants are requested to take any issues they have with a student, a class, or parent:
 - a) Directly to the Class Teacher;
 - b) then to the Educational Director if the issue is not resolved.
- ii. Any employee who wishes to discuss an issue involving their child with his or her teacher must do so via a note/email and/or at a pre-arranged time in a private



setting away from other colleagues. **It is not appropriate to convey such issues without advance notice and in a non-private manner.**

- iii. Any employee who wishes to discuss an issue involving another employee's child must do so via a note/email and/or at a pre-arranged time in a private setting away from other colleagues or children. **It is not appropriate to convey such issues without advance notice in a non-private manner.**
- iv. Staff use the whiteboard and calendar in the staffroom to keep up to date with school events.
- v. All employees are responsible to uphold the confidentiality agreement on their job descriptions.

a. Should a communication problem arise between employees:

- i. The first step is always to go directly to the person. Communicate the issue to the person/s concerned in a space and at a time which allows for respectful exploration of the concern. An employee may ask for a third person to attend to support the meeting process.

If the issue relates to an issue of workplace violence or harassment please refer directly to the *Employee Bullying and Harassment Policy*.

The school will not tolerate reprisals against any persons who raise legitimate concerns through either this or the Employee Bullying and Harassment Policy. Such actions will incur professional penalty.

- ii. If an employee is dissatisfied with a previous communication, the next step in the process is to clearly outline the concern in writing to the Education Director (if it



involves teaching staff) or the Business Director (for non-teaching staff), requesting a facilitated meeting. If the concern pertains to the Education Director or Business Director, then the concern should be directed to the Principal. The employee in conflict and the appropriate administrator will be present at this meeting, the purpose of which will be to ensure:

- a) that the concerns raised are accurately conveyed,
- b) that each of the employees in conflict fully understands the concerns,
- c) that the employee has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the other,
- d) that the administrator manages a clearly articulated action plan for taking any future steps, and
- e) that all such meetings are fully documented.

If the issue is not resolved at this stage, please refer to Section 7, p14 below for appeal procedures.

6. SCHOOL EMAIL COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

All communication, including email, requires professionalism and courtesy, bearing in mind that relationship for discussion regarding questions/concerns begins **when we talk in person.**

Email communication is used solely for:

- relaying routine information pertaining to school and class business



- requesting to meet in person or for a phone conversation
- making practical arrangements and disseminating information

School personnel will acknowledge receipt of the email within 48 hours. Emails received after 4 pm on Friday will be responded to Monday by 4 pm, or Tuesday by 4 pm if Monday is a statutory holiday.

Communication of an urgent nature during school hours should **not be relayed through email**. Please call the school office.

Further email guidelines, such as how a parent may be in touch with their child's teacher, will be set by the Class Teacher and varies from teacher to teacher.

7. APPEALS

a. Appeal Process

- i.** Requests to the Board for appeals must be in writing and state the basis for the appeal.
- ii.** The Board will normally only deal with matters of procedure, not the content of complaints. However, the Board may in its absolute discretion consider an appeal of a decision on its merits. In the case of an appeal, the Board would strike a committee to consider the content of complaints.
- iii.** Appeals will normally be considered only where there was an apparent failure to follow the Complaint Procedure, where there is new information available, or where the complainant offers new options for consideration.



- iv. The Board may consider an appeal if in its judgment, failure to do so would put the School at risk.

b. Ombudsperson

In the case of an appeal by a parent, if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal process above, the School will provide the name and contact information for the ombudsperson available through the Associate Member Society of the Federation of Independent Schools BC. Should the parent wish to pursue the involvement of the ombudsperson, his or her role will be limited to a review of the procedures followed by the original decision-maker to ensure the School correctly and fairly followed the appropriate procedures. The decision of the Ombudsperson will be final and binding on all parties.