**OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

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**PROCEDURE PR.538.IT**

**TITLE:**     **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

**Date issued:**     **August 1998**
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**1.0     OBJECTIVE**

To provide guidelines for the use of electronic communications within the Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

**2:0     DEFINITIONS**

2.1     The Ottawa Carleton District School Board Electronic Communications System

This **electronic mail and conferencing system** is designed to provide rapid and efficient communication among staff at all levels in support of the Board's primary directive: To provide a high-quality education for the students of the Ottawa-Carleton region.
All permanent staff will be provided with an account to send and receive electronic mail, transmit electronic documents and files and to provide access to electronic discussion areas (Conferences) intended to promote communication and ensure professional growth.

2.2     Electronic Mail (e-mail)

**Electronic mail** is the electronic transfer of messages to one or more persons. E-mail is typically a one-to-one or one-to-many communication. Mailing lists can be maintained so that repetitive mailings to many recipients can be automated.  E-mail can be of two types:

 a) internal e-mail:  e-mail originating from with in the system, addressed to someone within the system; and

 b) external e-mail:  e-mail which either originates from or is addressed to a person or organization outside the OCDSB, usually sent by means of the Internet.

2.3     Electronic Conference

An **electronic conference** is a folder or directory on a server to which messages may be posted for reading and a response if appropriate.  Responses, if the conference is structured to permit them, are typically public, so that everyone who reads the conference can read both the original posting as well as the response to it.  Conferences normally have different levels of access control, allowing different groups of users to post, read and respond to the postings depending on the intent of the conference and the access privileges granted to the user or group of users. "OSSTF" and "Subject Councils" are examples of conferences.

2.4     For purposes of this policy, an inappropriate message means a statement that it is unsuitable or unacceptable, violent or hateful, for example a negative statement by a staff member about any other staff member, student or Board official.

2.5     Official Board Conferences

**Official Board Conferences** are official communication conferences to which Board business messages and correspondence will be posted by authorized staff only. These messages should be read by the designated school or site staff daily. "OCDSB Communications" and "Director's Notes" are examples of this type of conference. Many of these conferences will not allow the posting of responses as their role is to disseminate information rapidly and efficiently, with no necessity for discussion.

2.6     Mailing List

A **mailing list** is a list of e-mail addresses. When an electronic mail message is addressed to a mailing list, the message is simultaneously transmitted to all those on the list. Users can create custom mailing lists, and if there is sufficient demand and resources permit, some mailing lists may be maintained centrally as public lists.

## 3.0     RESPONSIBILITY

Superintendent of Business & Learning Technologies

## 4.0     PROCEDURES

4.1     Electronic Mail Accounts

4.1.1     Account Entitlement and Update

a)     All permanent staff members are entitled to an account on the OCDSB electronic communications system. Accounts will be created directly from the Human Resources database system, and will normally have a standard user identification number and password determined by information held in that database, such as employee number, first name and last name.

b)     When an employee retires from the Board, he or she may request that a retiree account be created. This account will normally be active for one year and will be extended on request. If there is no activity on the account for a period of six months, however, the account will automatically be deleted.

c)     Accounts for employees who are not permanently employed by the Board will be activated if their supervisor so requests. These accounts will remain active as long as the user has a continuing relationship with the employer. Accounts which are inactive for a period of six months will be automatically deleted.

d)     Part-time employees, occasional teachers, term employees and contractual workers are encouraged to acquire accounts, as the majority of information affecting their work will be distributed through the e-mail system.

e)     An account will be made available to each school council and advisory committee chair. These accounts will be "officeholder accounts" which are designated by the name of the office, for example, "school council chair", rather than in the name of the individual who holds that office.

Chairs may designate a member of their council or committee to manage correspondence through these accounts.  Additional accounts with similar privileges may be made available if requested through Senior Staff.

f) The B&LT Management Committee, acting on a request from the community, Senior Staff or the Board, may occasionally make accounts available to members of organizations within the community whose interests complement those of the OCDSB.  Privileges for these accounts will be assigned so that the confidentiality of internal correspondence is maintained.  (The Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) is an example of such an organization.)  The B&LT Management Committee will rule on the acceptability of these accounts on a case-by-case basis.

g) The B&LT Management Committee may also make accounts available to selected outside suppliers of goods and/or services in order to facilitate support for users within the Board. While these account-holders represent commercial enterprises, the defined purpose of the account will be to support their products, not to market them.

h) All staff will be given external (Internet) e-mail addresses attached to their internal mail accounts.  Staff should be aware, however, that the reliability of external mail is frequently beyond the control of the OCDSB.

i) Every effort will be made to preserve channels of communication among the Board, management, teachers, support staff and their federations and unions.  The value of clear and open communication is understood by all, and access will not be withdrawn or limited unless abuse occurs.

### 4.1.2   Account Holder Responsibility

a) Account holders must abide by the guidelines for this system, the policies and procedures of the Board, and other legislated guidelines concerning communication, information-sharing and confidentiality.

b) Account holders must be professional in their conduct when communicating within this system.  Proper etiquette should be observed.  Slanderous, abusive, **violent or hateful** language directed towards individuals or the Board or its policies is unacceptable.  Account holders should also be aware of, and conform to, any standards of professional communication and etiquette upheld by their unions and federations.

**Revised**  c) A forum will be maintained for users of the system to advertise the sale of **personal services or goods** within the Board and the local community. **Any such advertisements may only be placed in the "Classified" folder.** The sale of weapons as described in Board Procedure PR.525.SCO sections 2.1 and 2.2 is prohibited.  Account holders described under section 4.1.1(f) above may communicate regarding staff purchase programs if it is considered to be in the best interest of the Board to do so.  Such postings must have the prior approval of the B&LT Management Committee.

d) Account holders are solely responsible for the maintenance of their personal mailboxes, including filing, printing, organizing and deleting messages, saving and printing of attachments, and tracking messages for which they are accountable, as well as for maintaining their resumés to reflect their current location and assignment.

e) Account holders should check their mail box as frequently as possible, and promptly delete messages from their account. This will improve system performance and responsiveness. Important messages and attachments should be filed locally, on the user's hard drive or local server drive.

f) Confidentiality of messages on this system is limited by the willingness of the user to treat their passwords with respect. Passwords should:

   i) never be shared with a friend or family member;
   ii) be changed frequently;
   iii) be arbitrary combinations of letters and numbers;
   iv) not be the name of a son, daughter or favourite pet; and
   v) not be saved under the "Setup" screen of the client software, especially on a computer located in a shared environment or school.

g) Account holders will be held responsible for all violations of these procedures occurring while they are logged into the system, including activities carried out by anyone else using their account as a result of account holder negligence or with their knowledge.

h) There is no ultimate guarantee of confidentiality of messages on this (or any other) e-mail system. Despite the best technical efforts, messages can be inadvertently forwarded, copied inappropriately or indiscriminately replied to using the "Reply All" function. All account holders should assume that the contents of their messages may at some point be public knowledge, and treat their correspondence accordingly.

i) Messages and attachments should be printed only if absolutely necessary. Printing uses paper unnecessarily and adds to the risk of a confidential message being made public. As well, a primary goal of this system is to eliminate paper to the greatest extent possible. Printing messages defeats that purpose.

### 4.1.3 B&LT Responsibility for System Availability, Reliability and Quality of Service

a) The OCDSB internal electronic mail and conferencing system will be considered a mission-critical system, with a seven-day, 24-hour service availability with the following exceptions:

   i) daily backups performed during the period from 0100 to 0700;
   ii) monthly scheduled maintenance (usually carried out on Saturdays);
   iii) occasional downtime, always pre-announced, required for critical upgrades; and
   iv) circumstances beyond the control of staff, such as power failures, equipment failures or disasters.

b) Internet mail depends on many factors beyond the control of the OCDSB. While every effort will be made to ensure its reliability, it cannot always be guaranteed to function with the same reliability as internal systems.

4.2 Official Board Conferences

4.2.1 As these conferences are official distribution channels for conducting Board business, the creation of new Official Board Conferences must be approved by Senior Staff. The purpose of these administrative conferences, and the assignment of access privileges with regard to who can read, post and reply to these conferences, should be well defined as part of the request to create them.

4.2.3 Messages posted to these official conferences must include the intended recipient's position, as well as the sender's name and position.

4.2.4 Principals, managers and supervisors must ensure that the administrative conferences for their area or group are checked and read daily.

4.3 Conferences

4.3.1 Conferences are intended to provide resources or a discussion forum in support of the Board's mission and goals. New conference requests must be submitted by e-mail to the Administrator, who will co-ordinate the fulfillment of these requests by Business & Learning Technologies, subject to the approval of the B&LT Management Committee. New conferences will be created based on resource availability and level of benefits to the Board. Other related committees and Senior Staff may be consulted if necessary. As with Official Board Conference requests, the audience and purpose of these conferences should be closely specified, along with a clear description of access privileges. In general, conferences should be as open as possible, allowing the widest possible spectrum of distribution and input through them.

4.3.2 Schools or outside organizations operating their own e-mail and conferencing systems are welcome to establish gateways to the Board system if they wish, on condition that:

i) the school-level system is administered completely by staff;
ii) Business & Learning Technologies is satisfied that the gateway does not present a breach of security or confidentiality, when operated under normally foreseeable conditions; and
iii) such a gateway has been approved by the B&LT Management Committee.

4.3.3 Some conferences (such as **ott.forsale**) will originate from and feed back to news groups on the Internet. Where this occurs, the OCDSB cannot be responsible for offensive or inappropriate postings originating from outside the system. When such postings are found, staff should notify the Hotline by phone or e-mail, and the offending postings will be removed immediately.

4.4 <u>Governance</u>

4.4.1 A Business & Learning Technologies Management Committee will be established to deal with decisions regarding day-to-day operation and management of the system. It will consist of representatives of the user community and will meet according to need as determined by the Administrator.

4.4.2 Decisions regarding direction and long-term operation of the system will be made in conjunction with Senior Staff, the Principal's Advisory Committee and user committees, co-ordinated by Business & Learning Technologies.

4.5 <u>Misuse And Consequences Of Misuse</u>

4.5.1 Misuse which may lead to disciplinary action includes:

a) accessing another person's account without his/her permission;

b) editing messages and issuing them under someone else's name;

c) mischievous behaviour that affects the performance of the system (for example, the distribution of system-wide chain letters or mass-mailings and spreading computer viruses);

d) posting or sending inappropriate, slanderous, violent or hateful messages;

e) sending Internet e-mail which might bring the Board into disrepute;

f) violation of Board Policy P.049.IT or this procedure governing the Board's electronic mail and conferencing system, or of any other Board policies and procedures;

g) violations of civil or criminal law; and

h) advertising the sale of weapons as set out in 4.1.2 c).

4.5.2 Possible disciplinary actions are as follows:

a) temporarily or permanently removing offending postings;

b) restriction or cancellation of account privileges;

**Revised**      c) **for employees,** disciplinary letter or actions governed by Collective Agreements and employment standards and practices;

**New**      d) **for students, suspension from school and/or use of school computers, in accordance with Board Procedure PR.511.SCO: Student Suspension**

e) civil actions; and

f) actions under the Criminal Code.

4.6 <u>Replacement of Prior Policies and User Agreements</u>

4.6.1 This procedure and its associated policy replace all previous related policies of the former Carleton and Ottawa Boards of Education.

## 5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

*The Education Act*, **2000**, ss. 170, 171, **307**
Ontario *Teaching Profession Act*
**New**    **Board Policy P.020.SCO: Student Suspension**
**New**    **Board Procedure PR.511.SCO: Student Suspension**
Board Policy P.049.IT: Electronic Communication Systems