

<b>HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION</b>  <b>POLICY HANDBOOK</b>	<b>Policy Code:</b>	GBB
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Right to Disconnect
	<b>Cross Reference:</b>	
	<b>Legal Reference:</b>	Education Act,
	<b>Adoption Date:</b>	August 2024
	<b>Amendment or Re-affirmation Date:</b>	<b>November 26, 2024</b>

**POLICY**

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION SUPPORTS AND ENCOURAGES STAFF HEALTH AND WELLNESS BY FOSTERING A WORK ENVIRONMENT THAT MAINTAINS A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE, INCLUDING THE FREEDOM TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK OUTSIDE OF REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

**DEFINITIONS**

Disconnecting from work - not engaging in work-related activities or communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

Regular Hours of Work - the normal hours of work for the Employee as determined by their immediate supervisor and the respective collective agreement, terms and conditions of employment, or employment contract. It is understood that Employees may have different Regular Hours of Work depending on their position and the Board facility in which they work.

Despite the establishment of normal working hours, all employees of the Board recognize that there may be busier periods or other circumstances where work must be completed outside of normal working hours.

Scheduled Time Off - is time that an employee has scheduled and been approved to be absent from the performance of their duties, including sick leave, personal leave, lieu time, vacation, etc.

**GUIDELINES**

1. Where possible, work-related communications should be checked or sent only during regular working hours. Due to differing/non-standard patterns of work in the organization, some employees may send communications at times which are inopportune for other employees, such as evenings or weekends. The sender should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance. The recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond to the communication until their working time recommences (or unless otherwise required and stipulated within the communication per the circumstances as outlined within this Procedure).
  - 1.1. Where possible, employees should avoid sending work-related communications after-hours (between the hours of 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Monday to Friday and all-day Saturday and Sunday) unless the matter can be reasonably constituted as an emergency or a significant event that calls for immediate action.

- 1.2. Schools should annually send communication to families that encourages communication during the workday and that such communication to staff will not receive a response after-hours.
2. If a manager/supervisor sends communications outside applicable normal working hours and it requires immediate or prompt response, the response expectation should be set out in the communication.
  - 2.1. Points to consider when sending electronic communication outside of the workday
    - 2.1.1. Be mindful and respectful of personal time
    - 2.1.2. Be aware of your audience - Who needs this information and when do they need it?
    - 2.1.3. “Reply-All” - Does everyone need the response or just the sender?
    - 2.1.4. Is the message better received in person, via phone, or another form of e-communication?
    - 2.1.5. What reasonable e-communication guidelines should we aim to establish when communicating with parents?
3. Employees should continue to expect system communications / automated alerts to be delivered outside of regular work hours, such as emails that are quarantined, etc. These messages do not require a response from employees and therefore employees may read them during regular working hours. Similarly, schools may send out routine communications outside of regular working hours, such as staff updates and newsletters. As these communications do not require a response from employees, they too can be read during regular working hours.

## **REGULATIONS**

1. Employees may disconnect from work outside of their Regular Hours of Work.
2. Employees are encouraged to send emails and voicemails, and otherwise perform their work, during their Regular Hours of Work.
3. The Board wishes to provide Employees reasonable flexibility for when work is completed and so does not prohibit from contacting colleagues, other employees, students, and/or families outside of their Regular Hours of Work to meet work requirements; however, asks that all Employees:
  - 3.1. be aware that the recipient(s) may feel compelled to answer “right away” outside of their Regular Hours of Work and thus encourages that realistic response time expectations be conveyed to the recipient(s);
  - 3.2. be aware that Employees may have disconnected, and therefore may not review a message left outside of that Employee’s Regular Hours of Work; and

- 3.3. be aware that the monitoring of emails after Regular Hours of Work is at the discretion of Employees and there is no expectation that Employees respond to emails after Regular Hours of Work; and
- 3.4. consider using the Schedule Send feature in email so the email is received by the recipient(s) during their Regular Hours of Work.
4. Employees should be mindful of scheduling meetings with colleagues that are outside of their Regular Hours of Work; however, in exceptional circumstances, meetings outside of an Employer's Regular Hours of Work may be necessary.
5. There will be circumstances when Employees are required to respond to communications outside of their Regular Hours of Work due to critical or time-sensitive operational issues.
  - 5.1. Although all employees are asked to be mindful of the right to disconnect, it is important that employees are also mindful that there will be situations that arise where it is not possible to deal with matters solely during regular working hours.
  - 5.2. If during their workday an Employee is aware, or is made aware, of a critical or time-sensitive operational issue that may require attention after the end of their workday, the Board requires that the Employee remain available and monitor their work communications after the end of the workday and respond as appropriate to ensure operational needs are met.
6. If that an Employee will be unable to monitor their work communications for one (1) or more business days, they are expected to enable an out-of-office notification in their Board email and voicemail systems.
7. Employees in administrator and management positions or in positions that specifically require additional hours during specified times generally are expected to monitor their email outside of their Regular Hours of Work or be available by phone in order to ensure that all matters are managed within an appropriate time frame, considering the nature and urgency of each issue.
8. This policy does not restrict the Board's right to schedule and modify the hours of work of Employees, nor does it prohibit Employees from working outside of their Regular Hours of Work.