

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN ONLINE SCHOOL.CA

Staff Communication Policy and Protocol

This document outlines the Heritage Christian Online School's (HCOS) expectations of its staff regarding both email, phone and fax communication.

Rational: Because our school relies almost entirely on forms of communication over large distances it is very important that all HCOS staff follow these policies and protocols for communication. As a Distance Learning school our educational program must rely heavily on the mediums of communication technology. Our parents and students have an expectation and need for timely communication.

Policy: **Communication Policy:** HCOS will make every effort to meet the following protocols in their communication to parents and students as well as between other HCOS staff and administration:

1. Communicate in a positive, polite and supportive manner always keeping in mind the Christian nature of our school, its staff and families.
 - 1.1. In cases where the communication may reflect frustration or conflict then the HCOS staff are advised to include their administration or fellow staff person in the communication.
 - 1.2. This does not preclude communication that may be corrective in nature as a teacher often needs to correct a student. It does mean that such communication will be done respectfully and with positive reinforcement.
2. The school's preference for communication is first email, then phone or fax.
 - 2.1. It should be noted that this is a preference only. If at any time a parent or student cannot make contact via email for technological reasons or for the necessity of clarity that comes with direct voice-to-voice communication, the HCOS staff will indicate an appropriate time to speak on the telephone. If the staff cannot be reached directly then contact will be arranged through the HCOS office.
 - 2.2. It is understood that the HCOS staff receives a telephone allowance for each student or if no allowance is arranged then the staff will be reimbursed for any long distance charges associated with HCOS business.
 - 2.3. All HCOS staff are responsible to manage their email in an organized fashion within their email program. HCOS will supply all staff with MS Outlook for Windows and will support this program.

- 2.4. All email messages sent to an Onlineschool.ca address and all outgoing messages are cc: to archives@onlineschool.ca. This archive is for backup purposes primarily but can also be used to verify that the HCOS communication policies are being adhered to.
- 2.5. All HCOS staff will confine their email communication to their Onlineschool.ca email address and not use private email addresses for school business. If confidentiality is an issue then the preferred mode of communication should be made through phone contact, not email.
3. One day turn around in all communication with the exception of weekends and holidays where the time line will extend to the next working day.
 - 3.1. Each staff will have an expressed time in a day where they commit to download their email. If they haven't communicated a different time then that time will be 4:00 p.m.
 - 3.2. All emails, phone messages and faxes sent before the deadline the day before need to be answered by 4:00 p.m. the next day or the communicated deadline time.
 - 3.3. If an email, phone message or fax arrives after 4:00 p.m. (example: the email was sent at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday) then the staff person is not responsible to return that specific email until the day after the next deadline. (Example: the staff must answer the above email by 4:00 p.m. Thursday.)
 - 3.4. If an HCOS staff can answer the communication sooner the quicker response is always encouraged.
 - 3.5. HCOS staff, parents and students should avoid the use of urgent markers in email (Importance: High !) unless the issue is truly urgent or time sensitive.
 - 3.6. A returned message does not mean that the issue is necessarily resolved within the timeline; it only means that communication has been returned. In the cases of marking papers, sending materials, and resolving tech support, the communication will try to specify projected time lines for resolution.
4. In the case of extended time away from school responsibilities for travel, conferences, or health issues the staff person will communicate to both the HCOS administration first for authorization and then their families and students.
 - 4.1. If necessary the school will provide a "substitute teacher" who will take up the communication responsibilities.
 - 4.2. It is understood that in the case of emergencies grace will be extended to the staff. The HCOS staff should make all efforts to communicate with the office or have someone who can communicate on their behalf. In such cases the HCOS office will notify the families and students of the break in communication.
5. In the case where communication is not being followed through in a timely manner as outlined in the previous points the parent or student should notify the HCOS office that they have not had a timely communication from their teacher.
 - 5.1. Initially this contact should be for the purposes of reestablishing communication and resolving the particular communication need.

- 5.2. If after the first contact with the HCOS office is made and the communication issue is not resolved then the parent or student should make a formal complaint directly to the school administrator through the HCOS office.
6. The Online Courses have forums associated with each class. These are monitored by the teacher and the same rules apply to these forums as per an email.
 - 6.1. Teachers should set up each forum so that they receive email notification when a student makes a post.
 - 6.2. Teachers are responsible to check their student's contributions to the forum and ensure that they meet the appropriate communication standards as outlined in point #1 of this document.
7. Bitwise Chat room protocols should also fit within the guidelines of point #1 of this document. The teacher is responsible to monitor communication within their group discussion.
 - 7.1. Online class teachers will communicate that they are available for chat communication with their students during two separate hours of the week to answer question and give instruction or special help.
 - 7.2. If a teacher cannot make the scheduled time they will email their students that they will be away at that time or post an news item within their course menu.