

# DeKalb Preparatory Academy Communication Policy Manual

Communication Policy Manual

DPA Policy Number:

Effective:

Approval:

Approval:



Revision Number:

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School Leader and Principal

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Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment

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Director of Finance and Operations



## **DeKalb Preparatory Academy Communication Policy Manual**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The DeKalb Preparatory Academy (DPA) has established this Communication Policy to ensure effective and efficient communication between our media, stakeholders, parents and school staff. DPA will make continual and consistent communication with families and stakeholders through varied media. The primary tools for regular communication to our parents are the school website ([www.dekalbprepacademy.org](http://www.dekalbprepacademy.org)), Class DOJO, EZ text, hard copy communication, OneCall Now, social media platforms, emails and USPS. Infinite Campus is used to provide parents **and students** with grades and attendance tracking. Urgent news and emergency information will be provided by our website, OneCall Now, via email, cell phone, home, WSBTV and text message.

### **MEDIA RELATIONS**

DPA media policy is based on a commitment to provide timely and accurate information for all community stakeholders.

The Head of School, Principal, and the Governing Board Chair will serve as spokespersons to be responsible for any interactions with the news media, including creation and distribution of information and news about DPA.

The authorized spokespersons for DeKalb Preparatory Academy are:

- Head of School
- Principal
- Governing Board Chair

The DPA phone number to be given is (404) 937-2000

## Dekalb Preparatory Academy Communication Protocol

The Dekalb Preparatory Academy (DPA) has established this Communication Policy to ensure effective and efficient communication between our stakeholders and school staff. DPA will make continual, consistent communication with families and stakeholders through varied media. The primary tools for regular communication to our parents are the school website ([www.dekalbprepacademy.org](http://www.dekalbprepacademy.org)), Class DOJO, EZ text, OneCall Now, Social Media, and emails. Infinite Campus is used to provide parents with grades and attendance tracking. Urgent news and emergency information will be provided by our website, OneCall Now, and via email, cell phone, home and text message.

**Teacher communication** – If there is a concern or question regarding classwork, homework, classroom policies, etc., parents MUST first communicate with their scholar's teacher via email or class DOJO. If the stakeholder would like, the principal or assistant principal can be copied on the email for informational purposes. Teachers are expected to respond to all emails and/or DOJO posts within 24 business hours. All teacher email addresses are posted on the DPA website.

**Administration** – If the teacher and/or counselor cannot address the concern, the Assistant Principal or Principal should be notified ([cpettis@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:cpettis@dekalbprepacademy.org) or [ahollis@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:ahollis@dekalbprepacademy.org) ).

**School Secretary**– General Information that cannot be found on the website, DOJO or social media should be addressed by the School Secretary ([bbaker@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:bbaker@dekalbprepacademy.org)) or the Executive Assistant to the Head of School ([arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org)). Infinite Campus access should also be addressed by the School Secretary.

**School Registrar** – Concerns regarding student enrollment (registration, withdrawal, student records, transcripts and attendance) should be addressed by the School Registrar ([mreid@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:mreid@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Counselor**– Behavior, social, and emotional concerns are addressed by the school counselor. In addition to those concerns, please contact the counselor to address attendance issues ([ksims@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:ksims@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Technology** – Computer distribution and technology issues should be addressed by the IT Director ([technology@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:technology@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Textbook**- Textbook distribution or returns should be addressed to the Media Specialist ([ktino@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:ktino@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Bookkeeping and vendor** concerns should be addressed by the Chief Financial Officer ([swright1@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:swright1@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Cafeteria and Meal Distribution** concerns should be addressed by the Operations Director ([swright1@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:swright1@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Dekalb Preparatory Academy  
Communication Protocol**

**Grants and Fundraising** concerns should be addressed by the Director of Development ([twatkins@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:twatkins@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Human Resources** – Hiring and employee concerns should be addressed by the Business Manager ([msimpson@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:msimpson@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Testing and Curriculum** concerns should be addressed by the Executive Director of Curriculum and Accountability ([lstrickland@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:lstrickland@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Head of School** – Regulatory issues should be addressed by the Head of School ([cestes@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:cestes@dekalbprepacademy.org)). Also, in the event that the teacher, counselor, assistant principal and principal are unable to address concerns, the Head of School should be notified through his Executive Assistant ([arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org)). She will assist by gathering all pertinent information, and scheduling meetings for the stakeholder with the Head of School and all appropriate staff. If the concern is confidential, the Head of School may be notified directly. ([cestes@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:cestes@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

**Governing Board** - If there is no resolution after allowing the Head of School an opportunity to address the concern, a complaint may be filed with the Governing Board ([board@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:board@dekalbprepacademy.org)).

All media requests should be emailed to the Head of School or the Principal or mailed to 1402 Austin Drive, Decatur, Georgia 30032

Guidelines for approval of communication with the media are:

1. **Obtain approval from the HOS, Principal or designee before speaking with the media.**
2. Report the name of the media organization, contact information, and the reason for the inquiry.
3. Notify the Head of School or principal with applicable information for follow up.

### **PARENTS/ CLASSROOM COMMUNICATIONS**

Classroom communication at DeKalb Preparatory Academy is coordinated through Class DOJO, phone calls, school website, OneCall Now, DeKalb Preparatory Academy's YouTube channel, and newsletters. Parents will be provided with a welcome email with all login credentials at the start of the school year and are highly encouraged to bookmark the sites and make frequent visits to be well informed of activities at the school.

Teachers will post informational blogs and newsletters on Class DOJO on a regular basis, and will showcase Audio Video Communication Projects and Project Based Learning in action through videos and photos. Teachers are required to communicate with parents through Class Dojo, email, newsletters and in-person conferences. It is the responsibility of the parents to update contact information and to report any technical issues they are experiencing.

Parents are also invited to participate each semester in Project Based Learning Showcases. The showcases will provide evidence of student learning. Parent/Teacher/Students will be held at least twice a year.

Teacher and staff communication is coordinated through the DPA email system, Microsoft Teams, the DPA website, OneCall Now and the DCSD email system. In emergency situations, the staff calling tree may be initiated.

### **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

In emergency situations, where normal school operations must change due to emergency conditions parents will be informed via EZ text messaging system, Class DOJO, OneCall Now and local news outlets. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their contact information is updated in DPA's various communication platforms by notifying your child's homeroom teacher and the Main Office within 24 hours of the change.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND STUDENT RECORDS**

Teachers are to treat all student information as confidential and private (FERPA). Disclosure of student information is governed by Federal FERPA rules and regulations. Only official school documents (i.e., report cards, conference notes, forms, attendance records and disciplinary records) can be released to parents. Student transcripts are managed by the-School Registrar.

In order to release student files to other schools, the school must receive the appropriate, signed request from the school's registrar. If parents request documents from a student's file, they must email the School Registrar detailing their needs. The School Registrar will then file a copy of the request with the student's file.

Faculty and administration must request access to files as needed. Information regarding RTI and IEPs are considered confidential, are kept in a separate file and housed in a secured file cabinet to be accessed only by the Lead Teacher for Special Education. Under no circumstances are student files shared outside of the school without the appropriate, written consent of the parent or permission of the Head of School or Principal.

All communications where decisions are reached regarding a student need to be recorded and placed on file. Copies of the permission form should be placed in the student's file.

### **COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARENTS**

Teachers are responsible for sharing activities inside/outside the classroom with parents through DOJO postings and messaging on a regular basis. The frequency of these communications provides parents with an understanding of the uniqueness and impact of the Audio Video Communication/Project Based Learning environment. Grade level teams will also design and disseminate monthly newsletters for parents.

Parents are expected to communicate questions or concerns regarding their scholar's educational experience to their student's teacher. Teachers are expected to acknowledge the parent's outreach within 24 business hours. This is required to ensure that parent's outreach is recognized, and next steps are articulated.

Teachers shall maintain and file documentation on all questions or concerns as well as actions taken and include notes from meetings and sensitive conversations. Important emails with parents should be stored and archived. Accident reports should be filled out immediately after a child receives care from the school nurse or other medical assistance by the teacher or staff member witnessing the accident. Incident reports should be filled out immediately after a student is referred to the counselor for follow up from the counselor or social worker. The incident report is to be completed by the teacher or staff member witnessing or noticing the incident.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ROOM PARENT COMMUNICATION**

Homeroom parent volunteers serve as conduits between the school and parents within their child's class. Through Class Dojo, the homeroom parent volunteer coordinates communications within each homeroom teacher and classroom such as class specific celebrations or activities. Homeroom parent volunteers should attend the DeKalb County Volunteer Training and then provide documentation to the Parent Liaison each academic year.

### **I**

#### **SSUE OR CONCERN RESOLUTION PATH**

In situations where concerns or situations arise related to the educational experience of a student, families should try to resolve the issue by proceeding through the following staff members until the issue is resolved:

##### **Step One**

###### **Homeroom teacher, subject teacher, counselor**

If the homeroom teacher, subject-matter teacher, counselor, the Assistant Principal or Principal should be notified at that time.

##### **Step Two**

###### **Assistant Principal**

If the Assistant Principal cannot resolve the concern, the Principal should be notified.

##### **Step Three**

###### **Principal (or Designee)**

If the principal cannot resolve the concern, the Head of School should be notified.

##### **Step Four**

###### **Head of School**

In the event that the concern cannot be addressed using steps 1-3, the Head of School should be notified through the Executive Assistant to the Head of School. The Executive Assistant will gather pertinent information, and schedule meetings for the stakeholder with the Head of School and all appropriate staff.

Regulatory issues should be addressed by the Head of School.

If the concern is confidential, the Head of School may be notified directly.

##### **Step Five**

###### **Governing Board**

If there is no resolution after allowing the Head of School an opportunity to address the concern, a complaint may be filed with the Governing Board.

## **POINTS OF CONTACT AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Parents may refer to the chart below to identify the appropriate point of contact to help answer their questions or concerns.

**Teacher**

- Class communications and blog
- Teaching and learning in the classroom

**School Counselor**

- Students of the Month
- Career Day
- Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)
- Attendance
- Counseling or mental health concerns
- 

**School Nurse**

- Monitor student health
- Provide first aid to injured students
- Organize and monitor student health files
- Medication administered to students during the school day

**Assistant Principal**

- Academics and program structure
- Subject and Project Based Learning/AVC
- DPA implementation in the classroom
- Homework policy
- Scope and sequence of subjects
- Planning of field trips and service learning
- Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Reporting
- Scheduling
- Assessment and Report cards
- Behavioral issues
- Support Services and Resources
- Case Management (academic, language, social and emotional learning needs)

**Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment**

- Testing and Curriculum concerns should be addressed by the Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment
- Special Education
- Academics and program structure
- DPA implementation of Audio Video Curriculum and Project Based Learning in the classroom
- Homework policy
- Scope and sequence of Georgia Standards of Excellence
- Assessment in conjunction with Head of School

**Principal**

- Academic council



- Professional Learning Communities
- Curriculum Administration
- School Assessments
- Issues not resolved or addressed by instructional Leadership Team, teachers or staff of the administration team in absence of Head of School
- General school policies
- General operations
- Report card logistics and assessment
- School counselors
- Behavior
- Support Services and Resources
- Issues not resolved or addressed by teachers or staff

#### **Head Of School**

- General school policies and procedures
- Strategic Plan
- Accreditations and authorizations
- Physical plant growth plan
- Serious disciplinary incidents
- Issues not resolved or addressed by faculty or other members of the administration team
- Issues not resolved or addressed by principal, teachers or staff

#### **Governing Board**

- Issues or concerns not resolved by the Head of School
- Report and issue or concern you have experienced or may be experiencing at DeKalb Preparatory Academy

### **OTHER POINTS OF CONTACT AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **Business Manager**

- Hiring and employee relations concerns
- Human Resources
- Payroll
- Receipt, collection and distribution of mail and packages

#### **Director of Finance and Operations**

- Point of contact for billing inquiries
- Advise HoS in all financial matters
- Physical plant needs, expansion and maintenance

- Oversee information technology infrastructure
- Oversee Building/Facilities Operations
- Supervise, implement and monitor all after school program funding
- Responsible for managing and coordinating all human resources initiatives; recruitment, retention, compensation, benefits, training and employee relations
- Ensure policies, procedures and HR programs
- Coordinate hiring and orientation of new staff
- Custodial services
- Cafeteria and Meal Distribution
- **HR Grievances**
- School Nurse

#### **Director of Development**

- Cultivation of donors and acquisition of major gifts for the school
- Supervision and implementation of marketing
- Advise HOS in all fundraising matters

#### **Director of Technology**

- Informational Technology
- Technology Issues
- Infrastructure

#### **Instructional Coaches**

- Coaching Support
- Modeling of effective instructional research-based practices
- Lesson Planning
- Collect and analyze data
- Professional Development

#### **Registrar**

- Admission and enrollment of new students
- Re-enrollment of returning students
- Marketing of the school to meet enrollment goals
- Guidance of new families through school induction
- Process records requests
- Maintenance and security of Permanent Student Records

#### **School Secretary**

- Main Office security, arrivals and departure
- Planning and executing the logistics of schoolwide events
- Answer all incoming calls
- Make sure all messages are sent to appropriate party
- Help set up for events as necessary
- Organize and administer lost and found area

#### **Executive Assistant to the Head of School**

- Acts as the liaison for the Head of School with the school community.
- Types, edits and proofreads correspondence, reports, memoranda and contracts.
- Receives and screens phone calls, greets visitors and reviews incoming mail to the HOS.
- Facilitates communications to Head of School in emergency situations.
- Assists in investigating and resolving issues or concerns.
- Provides customer service to visitors, parents and staff; schedules meetings, appointments.
- Assists with constituent services for school representatives as directed by the Head of School.
- Works collaboratively with or independent of the DPA communications team.
- Keeps Board members and the Head of School informed about programs, events, accomplishments, and concerns in the school and community.
- Refers community and stakeholder inquiries and serves as a point of contact for the school.

### **ISSUE OR CONCERN RESOLUTION**

Parents may request individual conferences with teachers to discuss their child's progress or challenges, and for other issues related to education. And teachers may arrange individual conferences with parents with academic and/or social concerns arise. Teachers and parents are responsible for working together to schedule a conference or meeting. Teachers should communicate with the front desk where the meeting will takeplace in order to direct parents.

### **GENERAL EMAIL/MESSAGING ETIQUETTE FOR DPA TEACHERS/ STAFF**

- Include a subject line, with the topic of the message
- Use a DPA approved signature including disclaimer
- Use spellcheck
- Group messages are to be sent without recipient addresses being visible/accessible
- In sensitive situations consider an alternative method of communication (phonecalls, or a personal meeting).
- Proofread message before sending to check for appropriate tone. Electronic messages lack the verbal or facial cues of other communication tools.
- Print and/or file messages that refer to a decision, particularly in relation to students
- During periods of absence (vacation, personal leave, etc.), teachers and staff must set up an out of office message to include dates of absence and point of contact(s) through absence.

### **MESSAGING/GOOGLE MAIL AMONG TEACHERS/ STAFF**

To ensure a strong culture of communication internally at DPA, teachers and staff are expected to respond to emails from colleagues within 24 business hours.

All messages to the entire faculty and staff must be pre-approved by the Principal (or designee). Therefore, please send the communication to the principal who will either approve or disapprove the communication.

If approved, the Principal arrange to have communication sent to all staff, as appropriate. If you need to send weekly emails to particular groups please follow the same procedure. *This will also be used for the Faculty and Staff weekly Bulldog Blast. All faculty and staff are required to read the Bulldog Blast.*

### **PURPOSE**

- Disseminate school related information to and from the Faculty, Staff, Administration, and DPA
- Group messages are intended to enhance communication efforts of the school as a whole and provide a convenient service to notify parents and faculty of upcoming events and deadlines.

### **GROUP MESSAGING GUIDELINES:**

- Where possible, general information should be included in the Monday Bulldog Blast Announcements
- All information must be school related and of general interest to the majority of recipients.
- All group emails to parents must be revised and edited as needed. The Principal will make all final decisions regarding appropriateness of content.

### **APPROPRIATE USE OF GROUP MESSAGING INCLUDES:**

- School meeting announcements
- Parent education events at school
- Emergency information
- Student events at school
- Athletic programs
- School Division announcements
- School Community Service information
- Changes in schedule

Group messages cannot be sent with personal announcement information unrelated to being a parent or a student at the school, or advertisements unrelated to approved fundraising for the school, unless authorized by Principal/Head of School. Email addresses cannot be used for any commercial, political, or advocacy purposes.

### **Emails for Instructional Purposes**

Faculty may use email to communicate with students and vice versa in the Middle School grades. Emails should be strictly academic. Nonacademic emails sent by students should be responded with a copy to parents. Faculty should not email students for behavioral or personal matters.

### **Types of emails that are not acceptable:**

- Anything not directly related to a DPA sponsored activity or event
- Notices with a narrow audience sent to the entire school
- Communicating anything that could be viewed as excluding or hurtful to any individual or group
- Discussing or expressing opinions about school policies, curriculum, discipline or disciplinary actions, or students/faculty/staff/ administration/trustees as a group or individually. These opinions should be pursued through regular channels
- Being the source or vehicle for the exchange of gossip and rumors about the school
- Providing a forum for debate regarding world, national, local current events or politics

- Advertising or promotional messages for individual participants' personal "causes" or self-interests.

### **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

The DeKalb Preparatory Academy's goal is to communicate effectively within the local, national and international communities to expand awareness and recognition of the school's unique educational experience.

This will result in attracting families who fit our target profile, faculty and staff who will contribute to our learning and management objectives and partners who can support our strategic vision financially and in other ways.

The DeKalb Preparatory Academy has adopted publications and graphics standards that allow the School to have an image and style that is immediately recognizable. We have worked hard to present a single, consistent image to parents, students, donors, and the national and international community in which we operate.

All printed items such as the brochures, posters, clothing items, invitations, event notifications including logos, colors and general presentations must be approved by the ~~Prin~~ <sup>Principal</sup>. This ensures that the content is approved by the school and that we have consistency in terms of message and brand standards.

### **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

The following guidelines have been set to ensure that all DPA correspondence (letters, memos, flyers, invitations, notices, etc.) have a consistent and easily recognizable style, and also to help to prepare the composition that will be immediately identifiable as a DPA communication.

It is the responsibility of the Executive Assistant to the Head of School to proofread and keep a record of all external communications that are distributed and sent throughout the year and are needed for regulatory or accreditation purposes. To facilitate this, staff and faculty need to prepare correspondence 3 business days prior to the event or mailing. This helps to avoid scheduling conflicts among all the many activities and events taking place at and around the school.

**When sending an DPA communication internally or externally, please keep the following guidelines:** When referring to DPA with its full name, the correct form is "DeKalb Preparatory Academy, **not** "Dekalb Preparatory Academy,

1. All documents, if for external use, **must** have the DPA logo.
2. For formal letters please use letterhead provided by the School Secretary.
3. The approved font is Times New Roman (as used here), preferably in size 12.
4. Students are referred to as scholars.
5. Please note that most abbreviations are used without periods, eg.
  - a. Dekalb Preparatory Academy - DPA
  - b. Audio Video Communication – AVC
  - c. Project Based Learning - PBL
  - d. Elementary School-ES

- e. Middle School = MS
  - f. Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act - FERPA
  - g. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 = HIPAA
6. Letters: It is very important that at least one person proofreads your letter/document.  
Creating your own Document

**Virtual DPA letterhead has the logo, school address, telephone numbers, and website address imprinted.**

### **SELECT STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION**

**School Secretary**– General information that cannot be found on the website, DOJO or social media should be addressed by the School Secretary ([bbaker@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:bbaker@dekalbprepacademy.org)) or the Executive Assistant to the Head of School ([arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org](mailto:arodgers@dekalbprepacademy.org)). Infinite Campus access should also be addressed by the School Secretary.

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