

SAFEGUARDING LEARNER WORK LIFE EXCELLENCE

Background:

Foothills School Division believes that promoting work life excellence is in the best interest of all stakeholder groups. When our staff team members are supported in their work, they are able to provide the highest quality support to their students, their colleagues and their school communities. We believe that it is our responsibility to create organizational structures that promote individual wellness and wellbeing and offer clear boundaries between excellence in work life and excellence in home life.

Core Beliefs:

- The Foothills School Division believes in the importance of wellness and wellbeing in body, mind and spirit.
- We believe that supporting healthy school communities is essential for supporting the growth and development of each learner.
- We recognize that the dimensions of our personal wellbeing do not exist in isolation – but are each a part of the integrated whole.
- The relationship between and interconnectedness of our learners' mental health and physical wellbeing are well supported by both research and our own lived experience.
- We recognize that wellbeing is both an individual and collective responsibility and are committed to ensuring that staff and students are provided with the support they need to be well.
- We believe that wellbeing is a precondition to excellence in teaching and learning and excellence outside of the workplace.
- We all have a role to play in supporting wellness and wellbeing within our school division and our community.
- We commit to implementing, reviewing and maintaining organizational structures that support this work.

Work Life Excellence:

We are called to create environments that support the wellbeing of each learner so that our staff and students can experience the highest quality of teaching and learning and professional relationships. In ensuring learner wellbeing is a division priority, staff have an increased capacity to take care of our students, one another and their community. In addition, the organizational value of a healthy workplace is integral to a vibrant and productive workplace culture and to supporting healthy work life excellence:

“To meet professional practice standards, all educators and system leaders need to be well. The role of system leaders includes supporting leaders and teachers. A comprehensive and integrated workplace wellness plan will address the wellbeing needs of all involved in supporting optimum learning for students.” *CASS Workplace Wellness for Alberta School Authorities: A Planning and Implementation Guide*

Six systemic conditions have the potential to create and sustain a positive workplace wellness and wellbeing environment that contributes to work life excellence.

1. Shared vision, leadership, and commitment
2. Evidence and research
3. Comprehensive and integrated approach
4. Systemic Systems and Structures
5. Individual and collective roles and responsibilities
6. Systemic professional learning

Appendix A

Safeguarding Division to School Calendar and Schedule Boundaries

Schools are busy places, and attending to the needs of students and staff can be complex and time consuming. We recognize that there are certain times that need to be prioritized for school-based activities. Schools will continue to manage their own meetings. As a result, Division personnel will schedule meetings with school-based personnel within the following parameters:

- As a rule, Division directed meetings will not be scheduled before 11:00 am on Mondays (Tuesdays if Monday is a Holiday or Learning Day)
- As a rule, Division directed meetings will not be scheduled after 12:00 pm on Fridays (Thursdays if Friday is a Holiday or Learning Day)
- On student attendance days Division directed meetings will not be scheduled before 9:00 am and will conclude before 5:00 pm
 - Some Division directed meetings are the exception as they need to be scheduled after school or we will incur further guest teacher costs (i.e. New to FSD Teacher Cohort, Learning & Leading)
- On professional learning days, both local and Divisional, learning will not begin before 9:00 am and will conclude at 3:30 pm
- By mutual agreement school-based personnel and Division office personnel can coordinate meetings as necessary

Appendix B

Safeguarding Email and E Communication Boundaries

One issue related to learner wellness and wellbeing is the blurring of boundaries between what it means to be “at work” and not “at work” that results from 24/7 access to mobile technologies and electronic communications which can connect employees to work related correspondence.

FSD supports an environment where all non-emergency e-communications (texts, emails, etc.) are limited to weekdays between 6:30am and 6:30pm. This prioritizes evenings and weekends as not being “at work” for our employees. We trust that an emergency can be defined by each individual’s professional judgement about the situation and circumstances. Typically, an emergency is primarily addressed via a telephone call and not through written communications.

Moving forward the Division suggests, promotes, and supports all employees in adhering to this guideline. We respect the need to disconnect and be fully attentive to your obligations away from the workplace.

- **6:30 am – 6:30 pm weekday limits sending or responding to e-communications**
- **Weekend free e-communications for sending and responding**
- **Response times within a 24 to 48-hour window for non-urgent communications**
- **Auto Replies that speak to the points above**

It is recommended that the sending of all internal e-communications be limited to the hours between 6:30am and 6:30pm. This does not suggest that the expectation is for employees to be responding to all communications during this window. It is expected that if a response is required employees will respond within a reasonable time that is defined within 24 to 48 hours for non-emergent correspondence.

Strategies to support a 6:30am – 6:30pm digital communications culture:

1. Use Outlook Delay Delivery function – [Click here](#)

We understand that flexibility for employees to choose to attend to work in the evenings or on weekends supports many employees in their own professional life. For example, as professionals Teachers have always attended to their professional responsibilities at times of their choice and the inclusion of assignable time limits support this understanding. This may include preparing emails for communication to colleagues etc. in the evening. All staff are still encouraged to have this autonomy. However, we are advising that that you set delivery delays to send emails between 6:30am and 6:30pm on such communications so that personal time is respected and others do not feel compelled to respond.

2. Set Automatic replies in Outlook email for times you are unavailable to respond – [Click here](#)

A challenge in modern communications is the expectation for quick or immediate replies. Teachers and other educational staff often are not able to respond to emails during the day when they are working with students. Here are suggested automatic replies that can be set in Outlook while you are away from your computer or workplace:

Some suggested examples:

Example 1

“Thank-you for your email. Currently I am working with students. I endeavor to check my email 1 -2 times per day outside of instructional time. I commit to getting back to you within 24-48 hours.”

Example 2

“Thanks for the message. I am currently working on priority projects and assignments with our team. I will be checking email once or twice per day. I will aim to get back to you within 24-48 hours.”

Example 3

When contacted outside of usual working hours by parents, clients, external colleagues etc.....

“Thank-you for your communication. I check my email once or twice per day during working hours. When I am back at (school, the office, etc.) I will endeavor to get back to you within 24-48 hours.”

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q: I'm a (Teacher, FSLC, etc.) and I often help my students and communicate with their families and engage in student-based activities outside of normal working hours. Is it expected I won't communicate at all in the evenings or on weekends?

A: We appreciate and understand the value that such engagement has for effective schools and the overall development of our students. We are just asking that you do not invite others to join you in work by sending work related communications during hours they can expect to be away from work.

Q: I frequently call parents in the evening as it is the best time to reach them. Need I change this practice?

A: No. We expect this to continue as you serve your student needs and meet your professional responsibilities. Thank-you for this effective practice. It builds high trust and strong relationships.

Q: I use Google classroom and provide feedback to students in digital environments which gets emailed to students. Do I need to stop doing this?

A: No. Thank-you for this effective practice of timely feedback.

Q: Will some staff still email/text after hours as part of their roles?

A: Yes, for example custodial staff or E-Team responding to emergencies. In fact, in emergency situations our regular call-out structures will occur to inform staff.

Q: I don't know how to set up delayed delivery and automatic replies in Outlook. What do I do?

A: Please see if there is someone in your school or at your site can support. There are tutorials within Outlook to support. If you need assistance please contact the help-desk in Technology Services for support.

Appendix C

Safeguarding Flexible Work Arrangements

The Division believes that being on site in the workplace contributes to the development of positive professional working relationships, advances the learning goals of the organization, and contributes to the development of the FSD Team. With this in mind, and in considering work life excellence and employee wellness and wellbeing, The Foothills School Division recognizes that at times flexible work arrangements can allow for the ability to support employees and operational needs.

There is an understanding that certain roles and essential functions of the school division will require onsite personnel including professional learning. The School Division will determine and communicate when work from home may be a choice that employees can make on professional learning days in accordance with the goals outlined in AP422 - *Professional Learning for Teachers* and AP442 - *Support Staff Professional Development*.

Division personnel may at times discuss a flexible 'Work from Home' arrangement whereby an employee fulfills their job responsibilities from their place of residence or a remote location that is not operated by the employer – e.g., office space in an employee's home – on an emergent basis and based on individual circumstances. When considering flexible work arrangements operational needs being met remain the priority.

'Work from Home' requires the approval of the direct supervisor as well as the establishment of arrangements, location and expectations for the employee to successfully carry out their assigned duties and meet operational needs.

The employee's direct supervisor shall monitor the effectiveness of the arrangement and will review and may modify the 'Work from Home' arrangements as necessary.

Procedures:

Any employee approved to work from home must adhere to the following

- Employees approved by their supervisor to work from home must code their ADS absence as:
 - Reason: Prof Dev/Mtg/Work Offsite
 - Comment: Approved work from home by (Supervisor name)
- Employees approved to work from home may be directed to return to attend work in-person to meet learning needs and operational needs as directed by their supervisor.

- Any employee working from home must adhere to Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Working from home is still considered a workplace thus all applicable Health & Safety regulations that apply.
- Staff working from home should be free from personal commitments during regular working hours and be able to maintain attention to their employment obligations.
- Staff must adhere to the Working from Home & IT Privacy Guidelines that are archived in Public School Works: C-104 Foothills School Division - Working from Home. Staff are encouraged to complete all required Public School Works training programs.
- Staff who are working from home must have reliable internet access in order to ensure the continuity of learning and operations - if that is not available at home they must be operating from their regular place of work.

Appendix D

Safeguarding Employee Wellness and Wellbeing Supports

The Foothills School Division recognizes the importance of making available to employees the supports and benefits that are available to them through the Division and the Employee Assistance Program. A comprehensive list of supports and contact information is available below:

Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – Homewood Health

- Confidential support available 24/7 for all employees and dependents (no cost to employee)
- Reach out to 1-800-663-1142 or www.homeweb.ca to access these services
- Intended to provide short-term therapy, support and resources to employees in a variety of different areas

Group Benefits Extended Health Coverage and Mental Health Support – ASEBP

- Available to employees eligible for group benefits
- Mental health resources <https://mentalhealth.asebp.ca/>
- Employee wellness resources <https://asebp.ca/my-benefits/employee-wellness>
- Psychology benefits are intended to provide longer-term mental health support to employees and their dependents.
 - \$1200 annually, see full coverage information for more details (<https://asebp.ca/my-benefits/other-medical-services-supplies>)

Please reach out to FSDEmployeeservices@FSD38.ab.ca for any questions about employer supports.

Reference: Relevant Legislation and Regulations