

Attachment 1 - Parent Accountability and Transparency: Communication Requirements for Guest (Third Party) Speakers and Presentations in Ontario Schools

With the amendments to the Education Act made by the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023, the ministry continues to build on its aims to standardize practice across school boards and schools by identifying clear accountability measures to strengthen transparency and parental involvement. As an added measure to promote transparency and accountability to families, we are writing to provide direction pertaining to a new communication and transparency requirement for K-12 schools.

Effective at the start of the 2024-25 school year:

- (a) Boards will make the school board's policy for third party speakers in schools publicly available.

Boards will be required to develop or update their external presentation/third party speaker policy to meet the new requirements set out in this appendix to ensure consistency across the province. Boards will be required to post their updated policy on their public facing website so that parents and guardians are aware of what information they can expect from their school whenever guest speakers or other external groups are invited into their children's school.

- (b) Schools will provide specific information to parents and guardians whenever external speakers or groups are invited to speak to K-12 students at school-based events, at least 14 calendar days in advance of the date the presentations are to take place.

This requirement applies to a school event that takes place during the school day:

- involving a third-party speaker or group (e.g., guest speakers, live performances);
- organized by a school, a department, a teacher or other staff member, school council, or a student group; and,
- that involves all students in a school, or students in multiple classes.

To ensure that parents and guardians are adequately informed of the content of these presentations in a timely manner, information related to external guest speakers and presentations in a school must be provided at least 14 calendar days in advance of the planned event through existing communication tools supported by the school board or school, including:

- Date and time of the activity;
- Name(s) of the guest speaker(s) and the organization they represent, if any;
- Title and location of the activity, together with the names of the presenters or performers;

- Topic or focus of the activity; and,
- Connections to the curriculum and/or the purpose of the activity.
- Details of any handout materials, give-aways, or literature that will be provided.

If, at any time, there is a change to a planned event or should arrangements at the school level not allow for 14 calendar days' advance notice (i.e., change in speakers, limited planning time), the school will be required to provide this information to parents and guardians as soon as final arrangements are confirmed.

School boards are permitted to exclude certain information (such as date and time of activity) where the school board determines that posting this information would pose a safety risk to students and/or staff.

School boards must comply with these new requirements effective at the start of the 2024-25 school year.