

Billings School District 2

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

School Board Use of E-Mail

The Board recognizes Montana's constitutional rights to participate in and to observe Board deliberations, and it intends its policies to advance those rights. The Board understands that it must conduct its meetings in public, except as otherwise provided for in Montana law.

The Board recognizes that communication by electronic mail, social network websites, blogging, and similar methods is increasingly common and is often an effective means for trustees to communicate with members of the community. Such communication methods are generically referred to in this policy as "e-mail."

The Board adopts this policy in an effort to balance the convenience and prevalence of using e-mail with the public's right to participate in and to observe Board deliberations. To that end, the Board directs the following:

A. Trustees' use of e-mail must conform to the Board's Code of Ethics for School Board Members and to reasonable standards of judgment, propriety, and appropriate social conduct for responsible parents and for elected officials entrusted by the electorate to govern a public school system.

B. Trustees shall not use e-mail as a substitute for deliberations in an open meeting of the Board.

C. Trustees recognize that e-mail may be subject to public disclosure or subject to discovery in contested cases. Accordingly, trustees shall not use personal e-mail accounts to discuss District or Board matters.

D. If a trustee wishes to use e-mail as a trustee, the District shall provide the trustee with an e-mail address, just as District employees are provided an e-mail address. The trustee's use of that e-mail address shall be subject to the acceptable use policies of the District.

E. Trustees must avoid reference to confidential information about employees, students, or other matters in e-mail, because of the risk of improper disclosure and a violation of a protected privacy interest.

F. Trustees shall include the following footer in e-mails: "Montana's open meeting and public record laws strongly favor doing the peoples' business openly. This e-mail may be subject to public disclosure."

Cross Reference: Policy 1400 Board Meetings
Policy 1401 Records Available to Public
Policy 1500 Code of Ethics for School Board Members

Legal Reference: § 2-3-103, MCA Public participation – governor to insure guidelines adopted
§ 2-3-201, MCA Legislative intent – liberal construction
§ 2-3-203, MCA Meetings of public agencies and certain associations of public agencies to be open to public – exceptions
§ 20-3-322, MCA Meeting and quorum

Policy History:
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