

POLICY

STAFFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Parent/Guardian Email Communication

3441 PARENT/GUARDIAN EMAIL COMMUNICATION

The Stafford Township Board of Education believes that the use of electronic mail (email) can enhance communication between parents/guardians and teaching staff. As such, teaching staff members are invited to use email to communicate with parents/guardians. However, use of email is not the most appropriate or effective tool for communication for every situation. Therefore it is necessary to establish guidelines for the use of email between teaching staff and parents/guardians.

Email may be a fast and convenient way for some people to send messages, but this may not be the case for everyone. Not every parent/guardian has access to email. If they do, they may not necessarily check it on a regular basis. Parents/guardians may prefer to utilize the telephone or an in-person conference to communicate with teaching staff. For these reasons, please remember to discuss the use of email as a method of communication with a parent/guardian to determine if it is convenient for them.

While generally the district feels that email is permissible, there are situations where the district will not accept email as a permissible form of communication. Those situations are specifically outlined below:

When email is not permissible:

1. To relay vital, time-sensitive information. For example, a teaching staff member should not use email to inform a parent/guardian that their child is ill and needs to be picked up from school. The parent may not have time to read the message in a timely fashion. Instead use the telephone to be sure your message is received and clearly understood.
2. To provide formal written notification or consent as required by law. This includes but is not limited to special education laws (e.g., including but not limited to: requests for special education referral, identification, evaluation; consent to conduct special education evaluations; notification of IEP meetings; any other consent or waivers required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3; or the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education, generally); release of records; permission to attend class trips. In each of these situations, there are separate forms for you to complete and sign as required by law.



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3. To discuss discipline or behavioral issues/incidents.
4. To share highly confidential and highly sensitive information.

When email is permissible:

Use of email is permissible in all situations not specifically excluded hereinabove. However, please keep in mind that just because email is permissible, it does not always mean it is appropriate. Here are some helpful tools for determining whether email is appropriate for the situation:

1. A child's academic progress or learning expectations are best addressed through a telephone conversation or by scheduling an in-person conference. An email message on these matters is not appropriate.
2. Think about your goal in communicating. If the goal is to merely share a piece of information or to give the other person some lead time to think about an issue you would like to discuss, then email is probably appropriate. If the goal, however, is to have two-way communication and meaningful dialogue, email is not appropriate. The telephone or an in-person meeting is a better option.

Other reminders for using email:

1. Please respond to emails in a timely manner.
2. Please keep all contacts professional. Jokes, amusing or special stories, chain letters, or commercial solicitations are inappropriate. Further, please remember that when you utilize district email as a district employee in furtherance of your job duties, it is not the proper forum for sharing your personal views and beliefs.
3. Please remember that statements made in emails can often be misconstrued because it is difficult to determine someone's tone. Please contact the individual via telephone or in-person before jumping to conclusions.
4. All email communications must adhere to the district's Acceptable Use Policies and Regulations 3321.
5. Be cautious in opening email attachments in order to prevent the potential spread of computer viruses.

Adopted: 17 January 2008

