9721 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 staff and both parents/guardians and staff are invited to use this form of communication. 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 parents/guardians and staff.

Email may be a fast and convenient way for some people to send messages, but this may not be the case for everyone. While all staff members have access to email, it is important to note that not all staff members have access to individual computer workstations and must share resources to access their respective email throughout the school day. In addition, the classroom environment does not allow teaching staff members to check their emails regularly. In a best case scenario, they check and respond to emails before and after school. Further, many teachers prefer to use the phone to speak directly to parents/guardians. The same limitations may be true for parents/guardians.

For these reasons, please remember if you choose to send an email message, you may not get an immediate reply. In fact you may not receive an email reply at all, since the other individual will determine how best to contact you: by email, telephone, or to schedule an in-person conference.

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 parent/guardian should not use email to inform a staff member that their child is not to go home on the bus. The staff member 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 or 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.

3. To relay medical or health concerns or any related forms and documentation. Parents/guardians should contact their child's school nurse by telephone or in-person.

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, learning expectations, or behavioral issues 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 identify yourself in the subject line of your email message and, if appropriate, the name of the child.

2. Please keep all contacts professional. Jokes, amusing or special stories, chain letters, or commercial solicitations are inappropriate and reduce valuable teaching time.

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.

Adopted: 17 January 2008