

EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMUNICATING ELECTRONICALLY

Zionsville Community Schools recognizes that today's students and parents engage in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents.

To keep pace with the evolving landscape of digital communication, Zionsville Community Schools has developed the *Expectations for Communicating Electronically* to provide direction for employees when participating in digital communication and online social media activities. The expectations outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of:

1. Protecting students, staff, and the district
2. Raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students and parents
3. Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students and parents

Electronic communication with students and parents must always be **transparent, accessible and professional** as defined below:

- Transparent—maintain openness, visibility and accountability
- Accessible—consider all electronic communication to be a matter of open record
- Professional—use correct grammar, spelling and tone; choose appropriate subject matter representative of a Zionsville Community Schools professional

Acceptable Communications Methods

CANVAS:

CANVAS is the official district Learning Management System. CANVAS allows for effective online learning by supporting online discussions, secure chat rooms, online delivery of assessments, and the sharing of documents, images and other media, all in a secure, password protected environment.

District Email:

Use of District email is an appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents. District email provides the staff member and district with a record of all communication.

District Phones:

Use of District telephone can be an appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents provided that the content is appropriate. Use of the District phone does not provide the staff member and district with a record of all communication, and employees should remain mindful of this fact to minimize the chance for misinterpretation and/or allegation when communicating with students.

Social Media for Instructional Purposes:

District employees may set up a professional or class Twitter, Facebook or other social media account for the purpose of sending out information, reminders and displaying student's work if proper parent consent has been given. Once the site has been created, staff members are responsible for monitoring and managing the site to promote safe and acceptable use.

Text Messaging:

If any Zionsville Community Schools employee plans to use texting for immediate and urgent contact with students/team members, they must be transparent about such use. They must make parents aware at the beginning of the school year or season that they may use texting through a school *ParentSquare* account.

On ParentSquare, a user's personal contact information stays private and isn't shared without user permission. ParentSquare saves all communication to user accounts, which allows teachers, administrators, and participants to access a complete message history at any time. Verified school administrators on ParentSquare also have the ability to manage staff accounts, review participant lists, and request message history directly.

The use of a ParentSquare account using the Zionsville Community Schools provided email address is the only way that a Zionsville Community Schools employee can communicate using SMS/text features.

Unacceptable Communications Methods

Non-District Email and Text Messaging:

Zionsville Community Schools employees should never use personal email accounts, personal social media accounts, or sms/text messaging to communicate with students about school or non-school matters.

Important Reminder about Personal Social Media Sites

Staff members are discouraged from inviting students to be “friends” on personal social networking sites. Staff members are also discouraged from accepting “friend requests” from students on personal social networking sites. Employees taking such action do so at their own risk. Staff members are encouraged to review their privacy settings and enable the timeline review feature. Employees should not use their district email address or phone number for communications on social media networks for personal accounts. Any content, pictures, or dialogue staff members publish, whether in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, a blog, a discussion thread or other website, should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in a professional Zionsville Community Schools role.

Employees engaging in unacceptable communication methods with students will be investigated by school officials and, if warranted, disciplined, up to and including termination. Depending upon the severity of the offense, the school district may notify the proper authorities, including the Indiana Department of Education, local or state police and child welfare agencies for further investigation. In addition, if/when the school district becomes aware that employees have posted information on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or similar social networking web sites that include inappropriate personal information such as, but not limited to, lewd photographs, sexually explicit messages, or use of substances prohibited by law, their cases will be investigated by school district officials and, if warranted, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, depending upon the severity of the offense.