

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES**

"Electronic communications," for the purpose of this policy, means a communication either transmitted by means of an electronic device or distributed via a school sponsored electronic notification (e.g. public address system, daily email announcements). Electronic devices include, but are not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, pager, or public address system. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, e-mails, instant messages, communications distributed via the public address system and/or daily school email announcements, and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and social networking websites. The chief school administrator/principals will annually remind School District Employees and orient new School District Employees concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. School District Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

The annual orientation and reminder will give special emphasis to improper fraternization with students using electronic communications:

- A. School District Employees may not list current students as "friends" on networking sites without written approval of the school principal;
- B. All electronic contacts with students should be through the district's computer and telephone systems;
- C. All electronic contacts by coaches and extracurricular advisors with team members and members of extracurricular activities shall, as a general rule, be sent to all team members and activity participants;
- D. School District employees will not give out their private cell phone or home phone numbers to students without prior approval of the principal;
- E. Electronic communications that are inappropriate and therefore prohibited include but are not limited to:
  - 1. Items with sexual content;
  - 2. Items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs, alcohol or other illegal activities;
  - 3. Items that pertain to confidential student information;
  - 4. Any content that significantly affects the School District Employee's ability to perform his/her job or disrupts the educational environment;
  - 5. Any content that would violate district policies and procedures; including, but not limited to, Controversial Materials (6144) and Resource Materials and Displays (2530)
- F. Examples of inappropriate behavior from other districts shall be covered and discussed, including behavior to avoid and the need for School District Employees to use common sense in avoiding inappropriate and unprofessional behavior;
- G. School District Employees shall have no expectation of privacy when using district technology, the district network and/or public social media venues;
- H. The administration shall monitor for improper School District Employees electronic communications on district computers, other school issued technology, and the district computer network;

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES (continued)

- I. School District Employees shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

The chief school administrator or designees may periodically conduct internet searches to see if School District Employees have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers and internet websites is discovered, the school principals and chief school administrator will seek to preserve the problematic or offensive material and will seek to maintain storage and chain of custody of the evidence. The chief school administrator/principal shall promptly bring that alleged misconduct to the attention of the board president.

Cell Phones

As a general rule, School District Employees shall not contact students' cell phones unless directed to do so by the parent/guardian. School District Employees shall limit cell phone interaction with students to contact that pertains to legitimate school business. Legitimate school business includes (but is not limited to):

- A. Answering academic inquiries regarding homework, other classroom work or assignments;
- B. Scheduling appointments for school related conferences and/or extra help;
- C. Clarifying classroom expectations and/or assignments;
- D. Notifications related to classroom, club or sports schedules, events, trips, assignments, and deadlines.

Cell phone contact with students shall be as brief and direct as possible. When brief contact is not sufficient and/or feasible to resolve the matter, where appropriate, School District Employees shall schedule face-to-face conferences during regular classroom and extra-help periods to confer with the student. No cell phone contact shall exceed three replies.

Text Messages

Any text messages by staff members, coaches and volunteers shall, as a general rule, be sent to the entire class, team, club or organization and not to any student individually. Exceptions may include situations involving confidential medical issues, emergencies or individual issues not involving the entire group. School District Employees shall not send messages containing material that:

- A. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
- B. Violates the district's affirmative action policies (2224, 4111.1, 4211.1, and 6121);
- C. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
- D. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
- E. Is confidential information and not authorized for distribution;
- F. Violates board policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying.

Public Address System and Daily Announcements

Daily announcements from each school will be sent via email to parents/guardians each school day. These

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES (continued)

daily announcements are intended to display information that was shared to students and faculty over the loudspeaker system each morning. Daily announcements can be found on each school website under the Quick Links.

Public address systems, including daily announcements, may be used for a variety of purposes. School District Employees should adhere to the following guidelines when submitting announcements. Announcements should be clear and concise while focusing on the following: routine announcements (providing instructions and/or information), emergency communications, regular school updates, school programs, academic and sports updates, extra-curricular activities, school sponsored designated weeks and months, and notable recognition calendar events. Principals of each respective school, or a member of the administration, are required to approve the daily announcements to ensure adherence to all guidelines and policies.

Electronic Communication

School District Employees shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via district owned or issued devices and the district network:

- A. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business;
- B. School District Employees shall not reveal district issued passwords to others. If a School District Employee believes that a password has been lost or stolen, or that email has been accessed by someone without authorization, he/she must contact the supervisor for technology or the principal;
- C. District administrators shall have access to the School District Employee's password or passwords for all district owned or issued devices and the use of the district network;
- D. Electronic messages on school owned or issued electronic devices and the district network shall be retained for the period of time specified by the Destruction of Public Records Law and board policy 3570 Records (retained three (3) years for external correspondence and one (1) year for internal correspondence);
- E. Federal copyright laws shall be observed;
- F. School District Employees shall not send messages that contain material that:
  - 1. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
  - 2. Violates the district's affirmative action policies (2224, 4111.1, 4211.1, 6121);
  - 3. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
  - 4. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
  - 5. Is confidential and not authorized for distribution;
  - 6. Violates board policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying.
- G. School District Employees shall become familiar with the district's policies and regulation on School District Employees and student access to networked information resources and acceptable use of technology (6142.10 Internet Safety and Technology) before initiating email use;
- H. School District Employees learning of any misuse of the email systems shall notify the supervisor for technology, principal or chief school administrator immediately.

Online Education

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES (continued)

An online classroom is still a classroom. Though courses and/or assigned programs of home instruction may be online, appropriate classroom behavior is still mandatory. Respect for the participants is essential for learning and student achievement.

School District Employee communications with students during online education will be limited to legitimate school business as set forth under cell phones, text messages and electronic communication, above. Professional standards and etiquette shall be observed at all times.

When using personal social networking sites, School District Employees:

1. Should not make statements that would violate any of the District's policies, including its policies concerning discrimination (2224, 4111.1, 4211.1, 6121) or harassment (5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying);
2. Must uphold the District's value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about the school district, its employees, students, or their families. Defamatory is defined as a deliberate or negligent false statement of fact, communicated to a third party, that harms an individual's reputation.;
3. May not disclose any confidential information about the school district or confidential information obtained during the course of his/her employment, about any individual(s) or organization(s), including students and/or their families;
4. Shall not use social networking sites to post any materials of a sexually explicit graphic nature;
5. Shall not use social networking sites to post any materials which promote violence or hate speech;
6. Shall not post updates to their status on any social networking sites during working hours, including posting of statements or comments on the social networking sites of others during school time unless related to your professional work.

Implementation

This policy shall be made available electronically or otherwise disseminated to all staff members, annually or as needed.

Adopted: October 12, 2010  
 NJSBA Review/Update: August 2016  
 Revised: August 18, 2014, January 21, 2025, March 19, 2026

Key Words

Employee Conduct, Cell Phones, Text Messaging, E-Mail, Electronic Communication

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| <b><u>Legal References:</u></b> | <u>N.J.S.A. 2A:38A-1 et seq.</u><br><u>N.J.S.A. 18A:6-10</u><br><br><u>N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1</u><br><u>N.J.S.A. 18A:27-4</u><br><br><u>N.J.S.A. 18A:36-35</u> | Computer System<br>Dismissal and reduction in compensation of persons under tenure in public school system<br>General mandatory powers and duties<br>Power of boards of education to make rules governing employment of teacher, etc.<br>Disclosure of certain student information on Internet prohibited without parental consent |
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ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES (continued)

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| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-40                | Written policy concerning electronic communications between school employees and students |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:37-13 <u>et seq.</u> | Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act                                                          |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20                | Powers of board (county vocational schools)                                               |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:3-15 <u>et seq.</u>   | Destruction of Public Records Law                                                         |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:9-3.3                 | Professional standards for teachers                                                       |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:9B-4.7                | Grounds for revocation and suspension of certification                                    |

In the Matter of Certificate of Weidemoyer, Exam 2010 April 29.

In the Matter of Certificates of Stenz, Exam 2010: March 25.

In the Matter of the Certificates of Alan Chadrijan, Exam 2011: July 28.

In the Matter of Rhaney, Exam 2011: June 16.

In the Matter of Young, Exam: 2011: Sept 22.

In Re Cluggish, Exam 2011, Dec 16.

**Possible**

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|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Cross References:</u></b> *2224 | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action                            |
| *3570                                 | District records                                                |
| *4111.1                               | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action                            |
| 4117.50                               | Standards for staff discipline                                  |
| *4119.21                              | Conflict of interest                                            |
| *4119.22                              | Conduct and dress                                               |
| *4119.23                              | Employee substance abuse                                        |
| 4119.24                               | Staff/student relations                                         |
| *4131/4131.1                          | Staff development, inservice education, visitation, conferences |
| *4211.1                               | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action                            |
| *4219.21                              | Conflict of interest                                            |
| *4219.22                              | Conduct and dress                                               |
| *4219.23                              | Employee substance abuse                                        |
| 4219.24                               | Staff/student relations                                         |
| *4231/4231.1                          | Staff development, inservice education, visitation, conferences |
| *5125                                 | Student records                                                 |
| *5131                                 | Conduct and discipline                                          |
| *5131.1                               | Harassment, intimidation and bullying                           |
| *6121                                 | Nondiscrimination/affirmative action                            |
| *6142.10                              | Internet safety and technology                                  |
| *6144                                 | Controversial issues                                            |
| *6173                                 | Home instruction                                                |

\*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.