

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL STAFF

Electronic communications," for the purpose of this policy, means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, e-mails, instant messages, and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and social networking websites. The superintendent/principals will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the online, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

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

- A. School employees may not list any student currently enrolled at Mainland Regional High School as "friends" or create any other digital relationship on personal social networking sites, including responding to social media postings in any way, until after the student's exit from school due to graduation or withdrawal. Staff that wish to use social networking sites as part of their practice must create separate sites/accounts specifically for this purpose that are distinct from their personal sites/accounts. The District must be made aware of the existence of the site/account and access must be granted to administration.
- B. E-contacts with students should be through the district's computer and telephone system whenever possible;
- 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. 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 and other illegal or illicit activities;
 - 3. Items that pertain to students, including confidential information;
 - 4. Any content that significantly affects the employee's ability to perform his/her job or disrupts the educational environment;
 - 5. Any content that would violate district policies and procedures;
- E. Staff shall have no expectation of privacy when using district technology, the district network and/or public social media venues;
- F. The administration shall monitor for improper staff electronic communications on district computers, other school issued technology, and the district computer network;
- G. Staff shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

The superintendent or designees may periodically conduct internet searches to see if staff members have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers and internet websites is discovered, the school principals and superintendent 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 and other appropriate agencies as required by law.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL STAFF (continued)Cell Phones

As a general rule, school staff shall not contact students' cell phones unless directed to do so by the parent/guardian or student. School district personnel 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; 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, teachers shall schedule face-to-face conferences during regular classroom and extra-help periods to confer with the student.

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. Staff 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.

Electronic Communication

School district personnel shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via internal or external email:

- A. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business;
- B. Personnel shall not reveal passwords to others. If a staff member 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 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

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL STAFF (continued)

3570 Records (retained three (3) years for external correspondence and one (1) year for internal correspondence);

- E. Federal copyright laws shall be observed;
- F. Staff shall not send, respond to, highlight, or repost messages that contain material that:
 - 1. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illegal or unethical activity;
 - 2. Violates the district's affirmative action policy;
 - 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. Personnel shall become familiar with the district's policies and regulation on staff and student access to networked information resources and acceptable and ethical use of technology (6142.10 Internet Safety and Technology) before initiating email use;
- H. Employees learning of any misuse of the email systems shall notify their direct supervisor, the supervisor of technology, principal or superintendent immediately.
- I. No online postings may include pictures or names of students without permission in compliance with Policy #5145.5 Photographs of Students and NJ Statute 18A:36-35.
- J. A staff member and student may be exempt from the provisions outlined in this Policy if a staff member and student are relatives. The student's parent and the staff member requesting an exemption must submit a written request to the school Principal indicating the family relationship between the student and the staff member. If not approved, the staff member and the student must comply with the Policy. If approved, the approval shall only be for the individual staff member and student included in the request for the school year in which the request is submitted.

Online Education

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.

Staff 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.

Implementation

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

NJSBA Review/Update: February 2012, April 2014
Adopted: August 15, 2016

Key Words

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

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 2A:38A-1 et seq. Computer System

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL STAFF (continued)

<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:6-10	Dismissal and reduction in compensation of persons under tenure in public school system
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:27-4	Power of boards of education to make rules governing employment of teacher, etc.
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-35	Disclosure of certain student information on Internet prohibited without parental consent
<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:9-17.5	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

<u>Cross References:</u> *2224	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
*3570	District records
*4111.1/4211.1	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
*4119.21/4219.21	Conflict of interest
*4119.22/4219.22	Conduct and dress
*4119.23	Employee substance abuse
4119.24	Staff/pupil relations
*4131/4131.1	Staff development, inservice education, visitation, conferences
*4219.23	Employee substance abuse
*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.