

8311.1 E-MAIL PROTOCOL and Standard Operating Procedure

Email Essentials:

- E-mail has become an essential means to communicate.
- Effective use of e-mail requires clear guidelines and expectations.
- You are expected to respond to your district emails from parents and staff in a timely manner.
- Do not respond to unknown emails.
- You may never know who will read the content. E-mail is not private

Know and Observe E-Mail Laws

- Employees' e-mail is the property of the District, including the use of personal e-mail accounts on the Board's computers.
- E-mail is like a postcard- anyone can read it.
- E-mail can be subpoenaed. Not only yours but anyone you communicate with. E-mail has an indefinite shelf life. Governmental agencies are now required to archive all e-mails sent on the network.
- Employees are responsible for the appropriate use of technology.
- Communications over electronic networks are not private, there is no right to privacy, there is no right to an expectation of privacy on the Trenton School District's e-mail system.

Staff are expected to use email:

- For purposeful, educational (school-related) tasks only.
- To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of communication both within the Trenton School District and in the broader community.
- For better student-teacher/student-parent/teacher-teacher collaboration and communication.

Staff email accounts

- Prior to using a Trenton School District email services all staff are expected complete and accept the Staff Acceptable Use Policy – this must be signed & returned to the HR Department.

E-MAIL PROTOCOL AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

- All staff are allocated an email account. For purposes of confidentiality, account information should be kept private. Please fill out a help desk slip for IT Services should you wish to change or update your account details.
- Staff may access their email through a mail client or via the internet.

Top E-mail Etiquette Tips

- Identify yourself at the beginning of the email.
- Keep the message simple and clear.
- Keep harassment and discrimination policies in mind.
- Humor and sarcasm can backfire.
- Do not use e-mail to let off steam or flame a conversation.
- Copy with care. Reply to all with care.
- Be cautious sending attachments.
- Edit your e-mail before you hit send.
- Always delete spam right away
- Upper case letters are generally viewed as shouting. Use them only for emphasis.

General Guidelines for appropriate use

- The best use of email is as a substitute for conversation where information is being exchanged, and the topic is not controversial, sensitive or confidential.
- If the message is more than 10 lines, perhaps a memo or personal approach is the best means of communication. (Keep it Short and Simple – KISS).
- Email is easily forwarded and its security cannot always be guaranteed. Therefore, never send anything that you would not want to put in writing on paper or become public knowledge.
- Prior to forwarding email staff should get permission from the previous sender/senders.
- No one other than you should have access to your email account.
- Email lacks the cues of body language and intonation, which are present in verbal communication. Take care with sarcasm and humor so that you are not misinterpreted. It is recommended that you do not use emoticons to convey your mood .
- Take time to consider your message before sending it. Never send an email when angry or tired. Try not to reply immediately to a message that upsets you. Save your thoughts in writing and return to them the next day. Upon reflection, you may elect to rewrite the message to improve the tone, or not send it at all. Do not reply in the "heat of the moment" as a message cannot be recalled! Use the spell check tool.
- Cite all references, quotes and sources used. Plagiarism applies to email as much as other documentation.
- Use email subjects lines (topics) that are not controversial, sensitive or confidential.

Mail Management Guidelines

- Read your email regularly. The immediacy of email is lost if it sits unnoticed in your mailbox for long periods.
- Try to read through all unread messages on a topic before responding – sometimes queries and responses have already been taken care of or worked out between messages
- Only open attachments from senders that you trust. Delete all unrecognizable messages.
- Delete unwanted email from your mailbox to save space. Staff are allocated a limited amount of server space to manage and store email. When the account exceeds the given limit you will need to empty mail from the following folders - sent items, deleted items and junk mail.
- Create folders for storing emails, which are stored on your local machine. Moving emails into these folders will help to reduce your total server storage that you are using.
- Attachments are particularly space consuming - download them to your hard drive to reduce the used space in your mailbox.
- Take your time when selecting individual(s) or groups that should receive your message. In particular, always check that you do not inadvertently send an unintended message to a student or someone with a similar name.
- When replying to an email sent to a group of people, carefully consider whether you need to use Reply or Reply All – often the other people in the list do not need to see your response
- Please refrain from sending unnecessary email/s to groups within the Trenton Public Schools email system.
- Any junk or spam mail that enters your inbox should be moved to the junk mail folder or marked as junk mail.

Staff/Parent Email Communications Guidelines

In addition to the above guidelines, Staff using email to correspond with parents and students must adhere to the following:

- Staff should clearly set out the expectations for parents with respect to response times (e.g. staff will respond to student and parent email within 1-2 school days).
- Staff who correspond with students or parents via email must use only the Trenton Public Schools email system.
- Staff members cannot make email the only option for communicating with parents. Staff should check with parents and establish whether email is the preferred method for regular contact and communication.
- All sensitive or critical email to and from parents and students should be saved at least until the end of the school year.
- Email must never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues should be dealt with face-to-face or by phone.

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- As the employer, the Board has the right to access and disclose the contents of staff email messages as required.
- Email messages to parents should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.

Examples:

Staff member to parent:

Acceptable

- General information about class activities - curriculum, homework, tests, special event.
- Arrange for a meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue e.g. 'I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance.'
- Follow-up on an issue that has previously been discussed.

Unacceptable

- Any discussion related to other students.
- Personal information about other students.
- Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent. (e.g. 'I am concerned that your daughter failed the last 3 tests and was not at school again today.')
- Any discussion related to other staff.
- Any discussion related to a staff member's performance.
- Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face-to-face or by phone e.g. 'I am concerned that your daughter may have a learning disability.'

E-mail Communications Between a Teaching Staff Member and a Student

- All e-mails between a teaching staff member and a student must be sent or received through the Trenton School District's e-mail system.
- The content of all e-mails between a teaching staff member and a student must be limited to the staff member's professional responsibilities regarding the student.
- A teaching staff member shall not provide their personal email address to any student. If a student sends an email to a teaching staff member's personal e-mail address, the staff member must respond to the e-mail through the Trenton School District e-mail system and inform the student his/her personal e-mail shall not be used for any electronic communication between the teaching staff member and the student.

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Acceptable

- Discussions specifically related to class activities - curriculum, homework, tests, special events

Unacceptable

- Any discussion related to other students.
- Personal information about other students.
- Discussion about personal life of staff member or student (home life, vacations, relationships)
- Sensitive information regarding the student's performance

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