

Electronic Communications with Students

Unless otherwise expressly permitted by Board policy or rule, District staff may only engage in electronic communication with students using a district provided or otherwise District-approved means of electronic communication (e.g., a district-approved social media account, district-approved online learning platform, or district-provided email account). The District will establish and maintain a list of district-approved means of electronic communications.

District staff are prohibited from communicating electronically with students using a personal (i. e., non-district) email, text messaging, or social media account unless, 1) exigent circumstances are present that suggest that there is an imminent threat to the health safety or property of any person and the staff member promptly communicates their reliance on this exception to the school principal or other appropriate administrator; or 2) the appropriate school principal or administrator has granted written approval for such communication for a limited purpose.

“Electronic media” includes all forms of social media, such as but not limited by enumeration to the following: text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (email), web logs (blogs), electronic forums (chat rooms), video sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the internet, and social network sites (e.g, Facebook, Snapchat, X, Instagram, Tik Tok), and all forms of telecommunications such as landlines, cell phones, and web-based applications.

1. The employee shall limit communications to matters within the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for teachers, matters relating to virtual learning, class work, homework, or assessments).
2. Staff shall not engage with students in inappropriately peer-like social relationships, via activities or communications that reasonably may compromise the staff member's ability to perform their District role, including their ability to serve as an effective and objective adult authority figure.
3. Staff shall not foster, encourage, or maintain relationships with students in which there is an inappropriate level of communicative, interpersonal, or emotional intimacy that reasonably may compromise the staff member's ability to perform their District role, including their ability to serve as an effective and objective adult authority figure.

Limitations on the scope and application of this policy: This policy and any rules or guidelines developed under this policy shall not be construed or applied in a manner that would impede a staff member's ability to:

1. Reasonably perform their District authorized role and responsibilities, provided that their communications and conduct remain grounded in legitimate educational purposes and sound professional practice. Depending on the staff members' specific District authorized role(s), legitimate educational purposes may include matters that relate to academics, extracurricular activities, counseling, advising, health and medical matters, social services, or operational services(e.g., transportation or food service).

2. Reasonably respond to exigent circumstances that suggest there's an imminent threat to the health, safety, or property of any person. If a staff member relies on this exception to engage in communication or interaction with the student that may otherwise be inappropriate (e.g., due to the time, location, method, or subject matter), the staff member is expected to promptly report the relevant circumstances to the applicable school principal or other appropriate administrator.
3. An employee is not subject to this prohibition to the extent the employee has a pre-existing social or family relationship with the student. For example, an employee may have a pre-existing relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization.

Consequences for policy violations.

District staff who violate this policy or any rules or directives that the district issues in furtherance of this policy may be subject to discipline or other consequences, up to and including termination of their District role(s) (e.g., employee, volunteer, etc.). The district may also report the circumstances relating to certain violations to law enforcement and other applicable authorities.