



## **Electronic Communications By School Staff and Parents**

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Revisions:

Related Documents: This document replaces Email Policies & Procedures (originally adopted 3/11/07)

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### **Electronic Communications Policies & Procedures**

“Electronic communications,” for the purpose of this policy, means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, mobile phones, computers, computer networks, or other electronic devices. Electronic communications include any transmission of data, including but not limited to e-mail, instant message, text messages, or any message made through online forums/chats, social media, or other social networking websites.

While KPPCS respects the right of and encourages employees to use electronic communication, employee conduct, including electronic communication, is held to a higher standard than the general public. Employees must set appropriate boundaries between their public, personal, and professional online activity, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public even without their knowledge or consent. Employees who post or publish images, photographs, or comments on social networking sites, blogs, or other forms of electronic communication shall ensure their use, postings, or publications are professional and appropriate for a school employee. Employees are strongly encouraged to carefully review the privacy settings on their social networking accounts and exercise good judgment when posting or otherwise transmitting electronic communications.

Electronic communications are an efficient, useful method of transmitting information and expediting process. Electronic communication presents unique challenges, some of which have the potential to create division within our community. The following policies and procedures will aid us in healthy working together.

#### **Confidentiality**

Any request for confidentiality is to be honored. In discussion groups, electronic communication within the specified discussion groups should remain within those groups and confidential unless the group agrees to approve the sharing of such communication to external bodies or individuals. Only persons authorized to represent any discussion group to another group should engage in email communications with those groups.

No employee may share, with any other party or parties, the electronic communication of any other employee without the express permission of the employee who authored the communication.

### **Prohibited content**

Employees may not use electronic communications to create and/or distribute of any offensive, or disruptive messages, including messages containing offensive comments about race, gender, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious or political beliefs, national origin or disability.

Employees or Board members who receive any electronic communications with this content should report the matter to the Board President immediately.

Employees may not use electronic communications to disparage, insult, bully, intimidate, accuse, blame, libel, defame or make any negative comments about any other employees. There are proper avenues for grievances, and employees must utilize those grievance procedures rather than electronic communications to other employees or to school parents.

### **Tone of communication**

As people sometimes write that which they might not feel comfortable saying, it is important that people take time to reflect on the content and tone of emails before they are sent. This is particularly important when emotions are high, as it is easy to hit 'Reply' and fire off an immediate response to something another person has written. Sometimes an immediate response doesn't *really* reflect the complexities of the emotions involved.

If a particular piece of writing evokes a powerful, passionate response, it can be helpful to pause and reflect on where that reaction comes from -- is the response particularly influenced by your own thoughts, assumptions, previous experiences, feelings or beliefs, over and above what the other person has actually written?

### **Ground Rules**

1. **Use "I" statements.** "You" statements are often perceived as an attack.
2. **Express needs and wants rather than judgments or critiques;** we always need solutions to our challenges.
3. **Respect the views of others.**
4. **Speak for oneself,** not for groups unless so authorized, as generalizing can create a false impression.
5. **Use cc: field sparingly.** Do not "cc" others as a way to expose, shame, blame or bully. In general, try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message.
6. **Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.** An email reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste time but also cause considerable frustration.
7. **Do not write in CAPITALS.** IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.
8. **Do not overuse Reply to All.** Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message. Reply to All may never be used to expose, shame, blame, bully, or cast negative aspersions on any other employee.

9. **Read the email before you send it.** Reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

### **Privacy**

Employees have no expectation of privacy when using school technology equipment, the school email system, or public social media sites. The school board and/or administration may monitor and may investigate an employee's electronic communication and use of school-issued devices and school computer network for improper or illegal use. Employees shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

### **Violations of Electronic Communication Policies and Procedures**

Use of the school's electronic resources is a privilege, not a right. An employee's privileges may be suspended pending an investigation concerning use of the school's technology resources. Any violations of district policy, regulations or procedures regarding technology usage may result in temporary, long-term or permanent suspension of employee's privileges. The board and/or administration may use disciplinary measures to enforce school policy, regulations and procedures. Employees may be disciplined or terminated for violating the school policies, regulations and procedures.

Any attempted violation of school policy, regulations or procedures, regardless of the success or failure of the attempt, may result in the same discipline or suspension of privileges as that of an actual violation.

### **Electronic Communications Between Parents and Staff**

Increasingly, parents and teachers are using e-mails and text messages to communicate with each other. Electronic communication is often a convenient and helpful way for parents to communicate with their child's teacher, but parents should follow the same guidelines as for any professional communication.

1. Parents should steer all school-related communications through their child's teacher, rather than directly with each other.
2. Teachers and parents should always be positive, courteous and diplomatic in their electronic communications.
3. If a parent has a grievance, proper grievance procedures must be followed rather than the distribution of an email, text or other electronic communication airing those grievances to other parents or staff members.

### **Existing Policies and Procedures**

All electronic communications should comply with all KPPCS policies and procedures applicable to communications, including the Healthy Work Environment Policy.