

Best Practices for Electronic Communication

Establish Guidelines for Appropriate Use

- Use email for setting up appointments with parents, scheduling phone calls, or family conferences.
- Use email for sharing curriculum links with families.
- Use email to share good news.
- Use email as a reminder for an upcoming event, major assignment, meeting or volunteer opportunity.
- Don't include personal information about the student in the email (full name, id number, grade, etc.).
- Don't include student grade or assessment information in the email.
- Don't use email for parent authorization (field trips, etc.).
- Don't include email addresses of other parents in the "TO" line. Use the "BCC" line to maintain privacy.

Collect and Verify Email Addresses

- Give parents the option of providing their email addresses for communication purposes.
- Verify with the parent that the email is not accessible by the student.
- Keep the email distribution list secure and do not share it with other parents or students without prior authorization.
- If you are not getting a response back from a family, call with the information and verify that they still would like to communicate via email.

Establish Response Expectations

- Inform parents that email is not a confidential way to communicate.
- Let families know when you check your email and give them a timeframe for your responses.
- If there is an emergency requiring an immediate response, make a phone call. Do not email!

Practice Email Etiquette

- Your email is a reflection of you, so use proper spelling, punctuation, and avoid using abbreviations when possible.
- Use the subject field to indicate content and purpose. Subject should reflect the importance of the message so it may be filed for later.
- Keep messages brief and to the point. Concentrate on one subject per email message whenever possible.
- USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING!
- Consider whether a group email is necessary and use blind copies (BCC) and courtesy copies (CC) appropriately. Only send email messages to people that are directly involved.
- Don't use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact with families. It is not appropriate for discussions that may be emotional or confusing.
- Remember that email is not private. Everything you send may be forwarded or monitored.

Helpful Hints

- Don't put an email address in the "TO" line until you are completely finished and the email has been spell checked and edited. That way if you mistakenly hit the send button, it won't send an incomplete message to your recipient.
- Ask parents before sending an attachment. Many people won't open an attachment for fear of introducing a computer virus to their computer. Also, take into consideration that families may not have the software program you used to create your attached document.
- Don't leave your computer logged on when away from your desk. You don't want inappropriate emails sent in your name.
- Check your spam inbox daily for family emails that may have been accidentally blocked. Add parent email addresses to your address book to prevent them from going into your spam folder.
- Input parent email addresses in eSIS so you have the option of sending a recorded voice message and email message when sending out a ParentLink call.

