

SCHOOL DISTRICT CELLULAR PHONE TEXTING AGREEMENT

Purpose

As communication devices such as cellular phones become more prevalent, teachers and other school staff increasingly rely on such devices as an efficient mode of communication with students. Because such use can lead to inappropriate contact with students and can threaten an educator's professional reputation, the school district strongly discourages use of texting to contact students. However, the District recognizes that cellphone texting can serve as a useful communication tool in certain limited circumstances. This policy is designed to provide guidance as to when texting is permitted between students and school district staff, and what types of communication are appropriate.

Appropriate Uses

1. A school district employee must receive written permission from students and parents if a student is under the age of 18 to use cellphone texting prior to use of such technologies, and must specify how and when he or she plans to use texting. If a student or parent refuses to accept text messages from an employee, the school district employee must use an alternative means of communication without any penalty to the student involved.
2. A district employee may maintain a private address book with student cellphone numbers. However, the employee must protect student privacy rights and ensure that the numbers are not available to unauthorized individuals under any circumstances.
3. The content of all text messages must directly involve a school-related subject matter. Cellphone texting should never be used to conduct a personal conversation with a student.
4. If an employee receives an inappropriate text message response from a student, it is the responsibility of that employee to contact a student's parent and school administration immediately to address the behavior.
5. An employee must use text messaging sparingly. A student may incur charges from his or her cellular phone service provider for use of text messaging. Frequent text messaging may be considered harassment as well.

Inappropriate Uses

The District prohibits all communication with students via texting or other means that may negatively impact the District's reputation, the reputation of its employees, or its educational interests, or that may negatively impact its students or the school community at large. Such activity, even if engaged in on an employee's own time, may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment. Such behavior may also be reported to the State Board of Education as a possible violation of the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators, and may likewise result in suspension or revocation of a state teaching license. The following types of text messages are therefore strictly prohibited:

1. messages that are sexual in nature, or that otherwise solicit or encourage an inappropriate personal relationship with a student;
2. messages that contain inappropriate language, gestures or signs such as racial slurs, or biased, lewd or lascivious expressions;
3. language that disparages a student on the basis of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation, physical characteristics, academic or athletic performance, disability or English language proficiency;
4. messages that are used to harass or intimidate a student or that encourage others to harass or intimidate another student;
5. language that encourages students to act inappropriately or that provokes altercations between students and
5. language that would be considered inappropriate to the educational interests of a student or that would negatively impact the school community at large.

No Expectation of Privacy

All messages sent to or received from students on District-issued technology are the property of the District. Users shall have no expectation of privacy with regard to the content of the messages. Text messages may be reviewed by District personnel at any time and may be recorded for District purposes.

EMPLOYEE ACKNONMEDGEMENT

I have read and understand the School District Cellular Phone Texting Policy. I will adhere to the established policy and understand that if I violate the rules explained herein, I may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment with the District.

Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____