

SCHOOL DISTRICT DIGITAL MESSAGING AGREEMENT

Purpose

Digital messaging is a common method of communication among adults and students. Teachers and other school district staff increasingly rely on digital messaging as an efficient mode of communication with students. With the ability to communicate via digital messaging, comes the risk of inappropriate contact among teachers/school district staff and students. To ensure student safety and protect the professional reputation of educators, the school district prohibits digital messaging between teachers/school district staff and students on a personal level unrelated to education or school activities. For the purpose of this policy, digital messaging includes text messaging, email, other messaging applications, and social media applications. This policy is designed to provide guidance as to when digital messaging 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 digital messaging prior to use of such technologies, and must specify how and when he or she plans to use this form of communication. If a student or parent refuses to accept digital 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 digital messages must directly involve a school-related subject matter. Digital messaging should never be used to conduct a personal conversation with a student.
4. It is the responsibility of a district employee to utilize district approved digital messaging applications including Email, FinalForms, Schoology, Remind, Hudl, and other communication applications approved by the district when communicating with students about a school-related subject or activity.
5. If an employee receives an inappropriate digital 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.
6. An employee must use digital messaging sparingly. A student may incur charges from his or her cellular phone service provider for use of data or digital messaging. Frequent digital messaging may be considered harassment.

Inappropriate Uses

The district prohibits all communication with students via digital messaging 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 digital messages strictly prohibited are:

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
6. 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. Digital 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 Digital Messaging 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: _____

Revised: April 19, 2018