

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BY SCHOOL STAFF POLICY

### HENNESSEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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"Electronic communications," for the purpose of this policy, means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, e-mails, instant messages, and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and social networking websites. The Superintendent and Principals will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

I. The annual orientation for all staff and reminder by the administration will give special emphasis on this policy which does not allow direct contact with students by electronic communication other than what is allowed under (B) below, and, on the avoidance of any improper fraternization with students using electronic communications:

A. School employees may not list current students (other than immediate family) as "friends" or "followers" on social networking sites. This includes Facebook;

B. All electronic contacts with students should be through the District's computer and telephone systems. All such contacts shall include the parent or guardian;

C. School employees will not give out their private cell phone or home phone numbers to students without prior written approval of the principal;

D. Electronic communications that are inappropriate and therefore prohibited include but are not limited to:

1. Items with sexual content;

2. Items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs, alcohol or other illegal activities;

3. Items that pertain to students, including confidential information;

4. Any content that significantly affects the employee's ability to perform his/her job or disrupts the educational environment;

5. Any content that would violate district policies and procedures;

E. Examples of inappropriate behavior shall be covered and discussed, including behavior to avoid and the need for staff to use common sense in avoiding inappropriate and unprofessional behavior;

F. Staff shall have no expectation of privacy when using district technology, the district network and/or public social media venues;

G. The administration shall monitor for improper staff electronic communications on district computers, other school issued technology, and the district computer network;

H. Staff shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

The superintendent, principals, or technology personnel may periodically conduct internet searches to see if staff members have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers and internet websites is discovered, the school principals and superintendent will seek to preserve the problematic or offensive material and will seek to maintain storage and chain of custody of the evidence.

## II. Cell Phones

School staff shall not contact students' cell phones other than the method identified in paragraph (I.)(B) in this policy. The parent/guardian should always be the point of contact on any cell phone communication regarding the student and the contact shall concern only legitimate school business. Legitimate school business includes (but is not limited to):

- A. Answering academic inquiries regarding homework, other classroom work or assignments;
- B. Scheduling appointments for school related conferences and/or extra help;
- C. Clarifying classroom expectations and/or assignments;
- D. Notifications related to classroom, club or sports schedules, events, trips, assignments, and deadlines.

## III. Text Messages

Any text messages by staff members, coaches and volunteers shall be sent to the entire class, team, club or organization and not to any student individually. Parent/guardians shall be included on all text messages. Exceptions may include situations involving confidential medical issues, emergencies, or individual issues not involving the entire group. Parent/guardians shall also be included on any individual messages.

Staff shall not send messages containing material that:

- A. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
- B. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
- C. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
- D. Is confidential information and not authorized for distribution;
- E. Violates board policy on Bullying.

## IV. Electronic Communication

School district personnel shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via district owned or issued devices and the district network:

- A. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business;

B. Personnel shall not reveal district issued passwords to others. If a staff member believes that a password has been lost or stolen, or that email has been accessed by someone without authorization, he/she must contact the supervisor for technology or the principal;

C. District administrators shall have access to the employee's password or passwords for all district owned or issued devices and the use of the district network;

D. Staff shall not send messages that contain material that:

1. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
2. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
3. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
4. Is confidential and not authorized for distribution;
5. Violates board policy on Bullying.

E. Personnel shall become familiar with the district's policies and regulation on staff and student access to networked information resources and acceptable use of technology.

F. Employees learning of any misuse of the email systems shall notify the supervisor for technology, principal or superintendent immediately.

#### V. Implementation

This policy shall be made available electronically or otherwise disseminated to all staff members at a minimum annually or as needed.

Each employee shall be required to provide written acknowledgement of receipt of this policy at the beginning of each school year.

Date Adopted: July 13, 2015