

Email Best Practices

1. When addressing student issues, please limit your email to one topic (and one student), and avoid “chain” e-mails except where appropriate.
2. An e-mail communication should be phrased in the same manner as you would phrase a letter or memorandum written in your professional capacity. Your business e-mails are School District records: they can be obtained by parents, in various ways including a formal FOIP request and in litigation by someone who is suing you or the District.
3. Unlike a paper record, an e-mail you send can be re-distributed to the entire world by any recipient, and once distributed, it never goes away. Don’t put anything in an email you are not willing to see on the front page of the newspaper.
4. Don’t use e-mail to discuss confidential information unless you are sure that all recipients understand that it is confidential (or if it is a communication with District legal counsel). Identify it as confidential and make sure it is treated confidentially (i.e. limited distribution).
5. Don’t send an e-mail until you have proofread it for typographical errors, content and tone. If it is an e-mail on a sensitive subject, consider composing it without adding the names of any recipient(s) (so that you can’t accidentally send an incomplete or ill-considered message), or draft and edit the text as a Word document and then paste the text into an e-mail.
6. The “Reply All” button is dangerous. Don’t use it unless you are sure that you want “all” to get your message.
7. Be as professional in an e-mail as you would in any other written correspondence; a District e-mail is not a “chat.” Parents should be referred to as “Mr.,” “Mrs.” or “Ms.,” or as “[Name of student]’s father”; not as “Mom” or “Dad.” Casual terms like “yikes,” “weird,” “wacky,” “off the wall,” etc. should be avoided at all time. No “emoticons” or e-mail abbreviations such as “LOL,” “IMHO,” etc., please.
8. Don’t hit the “Send” key when you are angry. Avoid responding to edgy or angry e-mails in kind. Don’t be editorial (“Ms. Jones complained yet again”) or sarcastic (sarcasm usually works by using tone of voice to reverse the meaning of a statement, and it doesn’t work in writing).
9. Assess your audience: are you writing to a colleague, a parent, or a third party outside the District?
10. E-mails about student issues should be addressed to people who have a legitimate “need to know” about the issue you are discussing.
11. Please be careful using “bcc”: the person to whom you sent a “blind copy” may reply to all, thus revealing his/her identity and the fact that you sent him/her a blind copy. If in doubt, send the e-mail to the intended “public” recipients and then forward a copy to the other person.
12. Use Google Drive to distribute lists that contain personal information to staff rather than emailing lists. Make sure to check the permission setting.