

E-mail Guidelines

E-mail communication is common practice for many people. School personnel all have e-mail accounts and do their best to check messages once a day. Their primary focus, however, is not their e-mail; it is their students. They have very little time during the day to access and respond to e-mail messages. Although this form of communication is convenient, quick, and easy, it needs to be used carefully since the written word is harsher than the spoken word and intent can be misunderstood.

Parents are asked to keep the following guidelines in mind as they write e-mail messages to school staff:

- E-mail sent through a public account is not considered private communication between parties, and as such, nothing of a personal or sensitive nature should be disclosed in e-mail messages.
- E-mail communications should be brief, concise, and, if warranted, should be a request for a personal contact (phone call or note) if feedback is necessary.
- E-mail is not a substitute for a conference, nor should it be a problem-solving tool, especially when children and their learning issues are the topic.
- Timely information should not be included in e-mail messages as teachers may not be able to read or pass along, within the expected timeframe, information that has an impact on a child's daily routine.
- At times, teachers and teaching teams may establish e-mail protocols with families that are mutually agreeable and which support students.

It is important that we manage this online communication so it remains a tool and not a replacement for individual conversations about students. The guideline offered for checking whether e-mail messages are appropriate remains, "Don't write anything you wouldn't want to see printed on the front page of the newspaper."