

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

The Bogalusa City School Board shall require that all communications between employees and students be appropriate and in accordance with state law. All electronic or any other communications by employees to students at any time shall be expected to be professional, acceptable in content to any reasonable person, and limited to information that is school-related or is acceptable to both student and parent.

All electronic communication, including electronic mail, by an employee at a school to a student enrolled at that school relative to the educational services provided to the student shall use a means provided by or otherwise made available by the school system for this purpose and the School Board shall prohibit the use of all such system means to electronically communicate with a student for a purpose not related to such educational services, except communication with an immediate family member if such communication is specifically authorized by the School Board.

Any electronic communication made by an employee at a school to a student enrolled at that school or that is received by an employee at a school from a student enrolled at that school using a means other than one provided by or made available by the school system shall be reported by the employee in a manner deemed appropriate by the School Board. Records of any such reported communication shall be maintained by the School Board for a period of at least one (1) year.

### DEFINITIONS

1. *Electronic Communication* - includes any direct communication facilitated by voice or text-based telecommunication devices, or both, computers, as well as those devices that facilitate indirect communication using an intermediate method, including but not limited to Internet-based social networks. It shall also include transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectric, or photo-optical system and pertains to both personal and School Board issued devices.
2. *Electronic mail* – the transmission of text-based information or communication by use of the Internet, computers, a facsimile machine, a pager, a cellular telephone, a video recorder, or any other electronic device or means sent to a person identified by a unique address or address number and received by that person.
3. *Computers* – pertains to any and all computers.
4. *Social networks* – locations on the Internet where users may interact with other users -- examples are Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and other social networks sites available on the internet.
5. *Improper or inappropriate communications* – any communication between employee and student, regardless of who initiates the communication, that may be viewed as derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, simple fraternization, or suggestive in nature.

### NOTIFICATION

The School Board shall ensure that at the beginning of each school year each employee, student, and parent, or other person responsible for a student's attendance, be notified of the provisions of this policy and any related procedures or practices regarding communications between employees and students.

The parent or other person responsible for a student's attendance shall also be notified of his/her right to request that his/her child not be contacted through electronic communication by any school employee

unless the purpose of such communication is directly related to the child's educational services and is sent to and received by more than one student at the school.

### INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS

The School Board is aware that the reputations and careers of students and educators have been damaged due to inappropriate communications between parties. Therefore, it is the intent of the Bogalusa City School Board to make all employees and students aware of the expectations and procedures of the school system and the School Board in regard to proper use of all telecommunication devices and computers if used to communicate with one another. The policy is not intended to limit the use of technology as an effective teaching tool.

In addition to reporting communication to or from students not made through the means provided by the school system, employees must report to their supervisor at the first opportunity available, *any* student-initiated communication that may be construed as inappropriate.

Employees shall be required to comply with all policies, procedures, and practices established by the School Board regarding direct communications with a student, and any failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Extreme circumstances may constitute willful neglect of duty. Should an employee's failure to comply also violate state or federal law, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall report such violation to the proper authorities.

#### Violations

1. Employee failure to report an occurrence of communication using a non-School System electronic communication system with a student at that school or in the school system.
2. Using the School System or any personal electronic communication systems with a student at that school and/or in the school system for non-educational purposes.
3. Contacting any student when the parents have opted out of individual communication with employees.

#### Violation Procedures

1. Any violation of this policy shall be immediately investigated by the employee's supervisor/principal. The investigation shall include dates, the name of the person reporting the allegation, and the specific allegation made.
2. The supervisor shall meet with the employee to document his/her response to the allegation. The employee shall be required to cooperate fully with the investigation.
3. All information of the investigation shall be provided to the Superintendent and the Personnel Director by the supervisor/principal.

Violations of this policy or any implementing regulations or procedures may result in discipline of the employee up to and including termination of employment

New policy: September, 2009

#### **Procedures**

1. It is the responsibility and obligation of each School System employee to abide and comply with the Policy

Procedures set forth by the Bogalusa School Board regarding electronic communication.

2. All School System employees shall be informed during the year of the policy and procedures upon entering into the school system service about the Bogalusa City Schools policy regarding electronic communication including the possible consequences for failing to comply with the policy. The Policy and Procedures shall be posted on the School System website for reference.

3. A letter will be distributed to parents of Bogalusa City School Students through the students informing them of the Policy and Procedures concerning electronic communication by employees with students enrolled in the school district during the first semester of the 2009-2010 school year. Thereafter, parents and students will be notified as part of the *Code of Conduct* and the School System website.

4. The parents have the option to submit in writing to the Principal of his/her students school the desire for their child not to be contacted individually through electronic communication from any school employee in the schools system and/or at the school where their child is enrolled. Contact through group electronic communication can and should be accepted.

5. Any and all electronic communications by a Bogalusa City School System employee with a student enrolled in the district shall be directly related to the educational services provided to the student. The communications shall be delivered by means provided by or otherwise made available by the district for this purpose. Bogalusa City School System employees are forbidden from using any district resource or system for electronic communication with a student for any purpose not related to educational services. The only exception is allowed for communication with the employee's immediate family if such communication is deemed necessary and otherwise authorized.

6. If an employee of the school system is attending a school related trip, function or event with students in which electronic communication with students is deemed necessary for the organization and management of the trip, function or event, and for the safety of students, or for some other practical purpose then the employee(s) may obtain written permission from the Principal, in advance of the school trip, function or event, to communicate with students via electronic communication. The electronic communication may occur over a period of time not to exceed seven (7) days. If the trip, function, or event is longer than seven (7) days the employees will need to gain permission for extended days from his/her Supervisor/Principal prior to the trip, function, or event. In order to implement this option, a parent's written permission to communicate with a student will be obtained in advance of the school trip, function or event. Approved Bogalusa City School System electronic communication methods are School System email, school sponsored teacher websites, school websites, school provided phones and other electronic communication that is approved by the School Board or Supervisor/Principal. Records shall be maintained by the Supervisor/Principal for a period of at least one year of any reported electronic communication.

7. In the event of any electronic communication made by an employee with a student enrolled at that school or any school in the school system using any other means than ones provided by or made available by the Bogalusa City Schools System shall be reported by the employee. This report shall be given to the school Principal verbally or by email prior to reassuming regular duties. The event should not be reported any later than 24 hours after the event or knowledge of the event, except as otherwise provided in these procedures. A Reporting Form (Appendix A) should be completed by the end of the work day and given to the Principal of the school.

8. All persons employed and/or associated with the Bogalusa City School System shall uphold the law. Any alleged violation of the Board's Policy and/or these procedures involving a school employee that may also be a violation of state or federal law shall be reported to the proper authorities. Some acts are considered criminal and may be subject to prosecution. The Bogalusa City Schools and School Board will fully cooperate with law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney in investigating and prosecuting such criminal offenses.

9. Failure to comply with the Policy and Procedures may result in disciplinary action and in some situations can and may constitute willful neglect of duty. The Bogalusa City School Systems prohibits any type of retaliation or perceived retaliation by anyone connected with the School System against him/her who files a report of an alleged violation. This exclusion extends to the alleged violator of this policy and/or third parties who, directly or indirectly, retaliate against an individual reporting a violation.

10. Any violations or alleged violations of this Policy and Procedures should be reported to the Principal of the school either verbally or by email. The Board through its designees will punctually, methodically and fairly investigate reports of an alleged failure by a school employee or student to comply with the Policy and Procedures regarding electronic communication. Appropriate action shall be taken that is consistent with the outcome of the investigation and the legal requirements afforded by law, e.g. tenure law, collective bargaining agreement and/or Student Code of Conduct.

11. Violations of the Policy shall be addressed by the Principal of the school in fulfillment with the requirements of discipline in the collective bargaining agreements. Violations that involve recurring or inappropriate contact with students in the district shall result in consequences that may range from a warning up to a recommendation for termination depending upon the severity of the violation.

12. These procedures discourage employee electronic communication with students in the district. Any improper contact shall be handled following all applicable laws and policies. Nevertheless, the law clearly prohibits electronic communication by an employee at a school to a student enrolled at that school, and/or in another school in the district unless appropriate reporting procedures are followed in compliance with law and the Bogalusa City School Board policy.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **BOGALUSA CITY SCHOOL BOARD**

**EMPLOYEE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION  
Reporting Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Related:

Violation:

Reporting Employee:

\_\_\_\_\_

Was violation reported by employee, student, or parent?

\_\_\_\_\_

School of employee or student of incident:

\_\_\_\_\_

Incident:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Method of contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Employee initiated:

Student initiated

Entire class contact

Class(s) contacted: \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) name(s): (add attachment if necessary.)

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Employee(s) name(s) involved in violation or suspected violation:

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Message: (add attachment if necessary.)

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