

ONLINE COMMUNICATION POLICY

NASHOBA Regional School District recognizes the educational usefulness of online conversation and collaboration among staff, students, parents and guardians using internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of information. Our policy is to allow our staff to use district-owned resources and personal devices with care and professionalism to conduct such exchanges. All such interactions will be governed by the state and federal laws governing online communications and violations of such laws could result in work related sanctions. The district will provide staff with this policy each year which will include references to applicable laws and regulations.

Staff and volunteers may communicate and collaborate online with students, parents, guardians and other staff in agreement with NASHOBA Regional School District policies and protocols. Such accounts should be expressly for the intended audiences related to NASHOBA Regional School District and privacy settings should clearly be set to enforce this provision. Such interactions may not contain any verbiage or photography that is in violation of this or any other district policy, regulation or law, state or Federal. In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) the Nashoba Regional School District includes the appropriate use of online tools in its curriculum. To the extent practical, staff supervises and monitors appropriate usage of the online applications. At all times, and in the use of any form of communications, staff members must adhere to student privacy rights (FERPA) and the rights of the employees to have their personal or medical information kept confidential. Information that is protected by state and Federal law from disclosure to third parties may not be communicated online in any way. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) protects children under the age of 13 from websites that collect personal information. Staff must verify that the school administration obtained parental consent prior to the use of any social networking applications with students age 13 and under.

When a staff member communicates electronically as an employee of the district, and the intended audience is another staff member, student, parent or guardian, staff must use their NRSD email account and comply with all current and future policies relative to conduct becoming of an employee. In all communications with guardians, staff, parents, and students, staff must use professional etiquette and maintain appropriate boundaries. Professional etiquette is further defined in the protocol along with appropriate boundaries. Any actions that are suggested to be unbecoming will result in a thorough investigation of such actions and could result in disciplinary action. Said communications are made with the full understanding that they can be made public at any time and there should be no misunderstanding of a right to privacy once they are released to the public.

Staff members who use personal devices for online activities that involve other staff, students, parents and guardians must know that those devices are subject to court-ordered subpoena and their private email relative to the above may be reviewed if questions of alleged activities arise that violate the law. The burden falls on the staff member to comply with all public record laws when using personal devices, email or social network accounts, or other software used to communicate.

In conjunction with this policy a protocol has been written to support its successful implementation.

References

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) 2000

<http://www.fcc.gov/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) 1998

<http://www.coppa.org/comply.htm>

Family Education Rights Act (FERPA) 1974

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

First Reading by School Committee:	March 15, 2012
Second Reading by School Committee:	May 10, 2012
Third Reading by School Committee:	October 9, 2012
Adoption by School Committee:	October 9, 2012
Reviewed by Policy Subcommittee	April 13, 2016 (no revisions)
First Reading by School Committee:	April 27, 2016(no revisions)
Second review by Policy Subcommittee:	May 11, 2016(no revisions)
Second reading by School Committee:	May 31, 2016 (no revisions)

Online Communication Protocol

This protocol is in addition to, and not a substitute for, the School District's Internet Acceptable Use Policy and Protocol. Its intended use is to guide and support staff communication to improve the student's overall wellbeing and academic performance.

As an employee of Nashoba Regional School District you are a representative of the District and when you communicate with others about school-related information readers assume you are speaking on behalf of the district. Such communications need to be professional at all times and reflect positively on yourself and the district.

1. All electronic correspondence is subject to the Commonwealth's public records laws.
2. When regarding school-related matters, staff should only communicate with parents, guardians and students using district-owned resources and those sites sanctioned by the district.
3. Staff shall familiarize themselves fully with any terms of agreement and privacy policies of resources to ensure their protection and safety.
4. Each staff member is responsible for following FERPA and COPPA regulations before using any internet site or downloading software.
5. Staff shall not communicate anything that is disparaging about self, peers, colleagues or employers, students or parents.
6. Staff should not connect with any student or parent on any site, not sanctioned by the district. District-sanctioned sites can be found on the start page (staffstart.mynrsd.com)
7. Staff should only use a school-sanctioned account to communicate school-related business.
8. Should a staff member use a personal device to communicate with another staff member, student or parent/guardian about school-related issues, such transmissions are subject to the Commonwealth's public records laws, and as such, may be subpoenaed in the event of legal action against the district, school or individuals in the transmission.
9. Unprofessional conduct is defined as any behavior, whether online or not, on a personal account or district account, that reflects poorly on the district or consists of inappropriate behavior on the part of a staff member, may require an investigation and depending on that outcome, may require discipline. To reflect poorly, the behavior must create a disturbance in the school or district to the point that the employee's ability to perform his/her job is irreparably harmed, another individual is harmed or it creates a liability for the school or district to the point that the resolution requires a separation of services with the employee. An employee may also face individual liability for such actions.
10. Any staff member that is made aware of communication they deem inappropriate is advised to report said communication to their Principal and/or Supervisor.
11. If you have a personal site or email, you may not use the District's/School's logo, likeness, or any school photographs or other property without the express permission of the Superintendent or designee.

References

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) 2000

<http://www.fcc.gov/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) 1998

<http://www.coppa.org/comply.htm>

Family Education Rights Act (FERPA) 1974

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>