

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

The West Baton Rouge Parish 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 any employee to any student enrolled in a West Baton Rouge Parish public school relative to the educational services provided to the student shall use a means provided by or otherwise made available by, or approved 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 to a student enrolled in a West Baton Rouge Parish public school or that is received by an employee from any student enrolled in a West Baton Rouge Parish public school using a means other than one provided by or made available by or approved 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

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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 West Baton Rouge Parish 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.

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## Violations

1. Any violation of this policy shall be immediately investigated by the employee's supervisor. 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.

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

Ref: La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§14:40.3, 17:81, 17:239.