

# ASCENSION PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

## PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

### PURPOSE

Louisiana Revised Statute 17:81 requires that the Ascension Parish School Board (APSB) develop and implement policies, procedures, and guidelines relative to electronic communications between students and teachers. To implement this law, the Ascension Parish School Board adopted Policy GAMIA.

The Ascension Parish School Board recognizes that the reputations and careers of students and educators have been damaged due to inappropriate electronic communications. Therefore, it is the intent of the Ascension Parish School Board to make all employees and students aware of the expectations and procedures regarding the proper use of all telecommunication devices and computers.

These Procedures and Guidelines establish and ensure that the staff and parents are informed regarding the expectations relative to electronic communication by an employee with a student enrolled at that school and vice versa. They provide a protocol for the management and administration of the components of the Ascension Parish School Board's policy relating to employee electronic communication with students.

These guidelines are not intended to limit or impede the use of technology as a meaningful teaching tool.

### 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 (including, but not limited to, *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *YouTube*, and other social networks sites available on the internet). 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) *Educational Services or Educational Purposes*- includes any and all activities related to the school or education including homework assignments, absenteeism, tutoring, extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, school performance, test results, class work, or discipline.
- 3) *Improper or Inappropriate Communications* – any communication between employee and student, regardless of who initiates the communication, that violates this Policy or

that may be viewed as derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, simple fraternization, or suggestive in nature.

## **VIOLATIONS OF THE POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES.**

The following acts shall be considered to be violations:

- 1) Failing to report an instance of communication using a non-School System electronic communication system with a student at that school;
- 2) Utilizing the School System or personal electronic communication system with a student at that school for non-educational services or purposes; and
- 3) Contacting a student when the parents have opted out in writing of individual communication with employees.
- 4) Engaging in any improper or inappropriate communications.

## **INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED 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 cooperate fully with the investigation
- 3) All information of the investigation shall be provided to the Superintendent and the Personnel Director by the supervisor.

## **PROTOCOL**

1. All electronic communication by an employee with a student enrolled in that school must be relative to the educational services or purposes provided to the student and shall be made or delivered by means or devices provided by or otherwise made available by the School System for this purpose.
2. School Board employees are prohibited from using any System electronic communication with a student for a purpose **not** related to educational services or purposes except for communication with the employee's immediate family.
3. School System electronic communication devices or means that are approved include, but are not be limited to, any school owned, sponsored, or issued email accounts, internet or web-sites, telephones, cellular phones, 2 way radios, pagers, facsimile machines, or any other school system owned or operated means of communication.
4. Except as provided in Numbers 5 and 6 below, the occurrence of any electronic communication made by an employee with a student enrolled at that school or that is received by an employee at a school from a student enrolled at that school using means **other** than ones provided by or made available by the School System or that is not permitted by this Policy shall be reported by the employee using the Reporting Form

(Appendix A). Said Reporting Form shall be completed by the end of the next work day following the communication and turned in to the school principal. The Reporting Form shall be maintained by the site administrators for a period of at least one year.

5. Recognizing the value of electronic communications as a teaching aid, this policy and protocol does **not** prohibit an employee from using an Electronic communication to communicate related to educational services or purposes for mass or group emails provided to or with more than one student **simultaneously**, such as to a class, team, or club members. Further, it does not prohibit electronic communications where the parent has previously authorized the employee **in writing** to use same (such as for homework assistance or one on one tutoring sessions). A parent may revoke said authorization in writing at any time but shall not be revoked until delivered to the employee. In such events, the employee does not have to report the electronic communication using the Reporting Form.
6. If the school system does not provide School System electronic communication devices or means , then this policy and protocol does **not** apply to electronic communications during school related or sponsored field trips, functions, or events where the electronic communication with students is necessary for coordination, for the safety of students, or for some other reasonable purpose connected therewith. However, in advance of the trip, function or event, the employee (s) must notify the Principal of the intent to communicate with students via electronic communication by other means than those provided by the School System.
7. It is the duty of each employee to comply with the Policy and Procedures and Guidelines regarding electronic communication. Failure to comply shall constitute willful neglect of duty and may result in disciplinary action against the employee, including termination.
8. Any suspected violations of this Policy or Procedures and Guidelines should be reported in writing to the School Principal, Supervisor, or Director. Any violation shall be promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigated.
9. Any alleged violation of the Board’s Policy or these Procedures and Guidelines that may also be a violation of state or federal law shall be reported to the proper authorities.
10. All employees and parents of students shall be notified of the Policy and the Procedures and Guidelines regarding electronic communication including the possible consequences for a failure to comply with the Policy.
11. The Policy (GAMIA) and these Procedures and Guidelines shall be posted on the School System website and shall be included in *APSB Student Handbook – Rights & Responsibilities & Discipline Policy*.
12. The parents of any student may submit written documentation to the School Principal that their child not be contacted individually through electronic communication from any school employee at the school where their child is enrolled. However, exercise of said

option shall not include or prohibit electronic communication made by an employee to group, class or team.

13. Retaliation against one who files a report of an alleged violation by anyone associated with the School System is prohibited.

