



TBU President's Memo

Shane Stagg, President

905 668 7100

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Student Gmail Accounts - The introduction of student Gmail accounts has generated concerns among members. Those concerns include: a growing list of methods of communication to keep track of, a threat to professional boundaries, and a spread of work responsibilities into personal life.

The School Board is able to provide email accounts to students if it chooses. Reasons for this move have been described as: to provide a tool for communication, to provide students an email address to sign up for online learning tools, and to allow for Google notifications to be delivered to students.

Advice from District 13 has been to avoid engaging in email communication with students. There are professional risks with using email and the best way to avoid those risks is to avoid it entirely. It is understood however that some members choose to use email. In those circumstances it is recommended that members take the time to carefully craft messages with consideration for tone and content. Avoid casual conversation and keep the focus on matters of curriculum. If an email conversation is headed toward a back and forth disagreement the matter is best moved to a phone call. Now that students have Board provided email addresses, any member engaging in email communication with students should only use these email addresses. There should be no communication with students using personal email addresses.

Appropriate times of day for interacting by email should be considered as well. There should be no expectation to be available at all times of the day or week. A good rule of thumb is if you would not have called a parent at that time of day or week, then you should not be involved in email communication with students. Be mindful of the possible different misperceptions of a teacher working at all hours and exchanging emails with students late in the evening. Be sure that your mindset is entirely professional at the time of sending any emails and not influenced by the casual atmosphere of home life.

If the use of email grows over time the impact on wellness can be significant. Feel free to establish separation between your personal life and your work life. Members have noted a tremendous increase in email communication over the last several months and are reporting that it is overwhelming. Entering onto this slippery slope of email communication with students may seem like a fine idea until it's not. Please tread carefully.