

TABCO MASTER AGREEMENT

HOT TOPICS

ISSUE 20

Use of Telecommunications

Interoffice Mail

6.8 *Mail directed to teachers through the interoffice system will be delivered to teachers in the unopened interoffice envelopes.*

Telephones

10.26 *To the extent possible, telephones which provide for privacy shall be made available to teachers in each school for official telephone calls.*

So what does this mean for you?

As you can see, our Master Agreement currently does not address email and other modes of telecommunications. Even so, each BCPS employee is held to the expectations as delineated in the BCPS “Telecommunications Acceptable Use Policy for Employees.” If you haven’t read the “terms and conditions” of this document recently, we encourage you to do so. **NOTE:** *You are able to use BCPS email to communicate to and from the association.*

With the increased ease of technology and your email addresses widely known, teachers are communicating more readily with parents through email. As this has its advantages, it also is posing great disadvantages.

BCPS, in conjunction with TABCO and other resources, has put together tips for emailing parents located in the “Effective Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences” Guide on the website. An excerpt is on the reverse. The overall premise is to keep emails professional.

Additionally, teachers should not be engaged in emailing or text messaging students. Teachers can post items such as homework

assignments or class project timelines on school or personal websites, but should refrain from personal messages to and from students.

Unfortunately, another increasing occurrence is unprofessional emails being sent to teachers from parents. If this situation arises, you are advised to immediately share the correspondence with your administrator, and work out a plan to end the unprofessional emails. In some extreme cases, administrators have instructed teachers to forward all emails for this individual to him/her and all correspondence will be conducted between the administrator and the parent. If the situation is not resolved, please feel free to contact your TABCO UniServ Director.

Excerpt from “Effective Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences”

Email can be an effective way to provide:

- **A reminder for parents about a conference date, upcoming special events in the classroom, or deadlines for long-range projects.**
- **Short answers or requests for information such as clarification about homework assignments.**
- **Documentation of parent contacts. Keep a log or print emails from parents.**
- **Follow up to conferences showing progress or changes since the last meeting.**

Email should not be used to address:

- **Highly complex issues that require involvement of other staff members or students.**
- **Issues of a confidential nature such as IEP’s, 504’s, or issues involving other students.**
- **Emotionally charged issues.**
- **Situations that can be best addressed in a face-to-face conference.**

To assure confidentiality:

- **Do not use email to communicate confidential matters. Remember that many different people and not just the intended recipient of the message can read your email.**
- **Avoid the use of individual names in a subject line of an email.**
- **Do not “cc” or “bcc” individuals who are not directly involved.**
- **Be aware that email messages can be collected and used in legal proceedings.**

You are a part of TEAM TABCO and together we are strong!