

Everett Public Schools E-mail Guidelines

Main Points:

1. E-mail on district computers. E-mail is provided by the district to support the teaching, research and public service missions of the district and for the administrative functions that support this mission.
2. Public access to staff e-mail. Almost all documents generated by school district staff on district time are public information. The confidentiality of electronic mail cannot be assured. It should be treated the same as a written postcard. The public can, and has, requested printouts of staff e-mails related to a variety of issues. (RCW 42.17.310) The same laws that pertain to verbal public discussion of personnel and students also pertain to e-mail: such discussions are also not allowed via e-mail.
3. E-mail etiquette: E-mail should be treated in the same manner as a telephone call or a letter. It should be dealt with in a courteous manner that facilitates staff work. In a few extreme cases, the staff member may feel like he or she is deluged with e-mail from one person or group. This may require a different response than that given to other e-mail.

1. E-mail on district computers

- The district e-mail system is designed for school-related purposes.
- E-mail should not be used to sell personal items or advertise non-school events.
- Employees are encouraged to check e-mail on a regular basis, since it has become a dominant method of communication.
- District e-mail should not be used as an “opinions forum.” As pointed out above, district e-mail is a public document. The general rule is: Don’t say anything on e-mail you wouldn’t want everyone to know.
- E-mail users should not give the impression they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the district or any school unless appropriately authorized to do so.
- Other inappropriate uses of district e-mail are:
 - 1) unauthorized solicitation of funds
 - 2) distribution of chain letters
 - 3) unauthorized sale or purchase of merchandise and services
 - 4) collection of signatures
 - 5) unauthorized membership drives
 - 6) transmission of any materials regarding political campaigns

Q. Is it all right to send an e-mail to large numbers of staff members?

A. Because of the large volume of e-mails received by some staff members, they are beginning to feel besieged by e-mails and may miss or not open urgent e-mails. Please think twice before sending a message to a group address. Ask yourself if 40 or 80 or 100 of your colleagues really need this information.

Q. Is it okay to e-mail family and friends?

A. It is best to limit personal communication to non-work periods.

Q. Is it okay to use district e-mail to promote levies or political candidates?

A. No. E-mail may not be used to support or oppose political candidates or ballot measures.

2. Public access to staff e-mail:

As outlined in the introduction, most e-mail is regarded as public information. That means any member of the public can request, and receive a copy of, most e-mails. Use e-mail only to say those things you would say to everyone or be willing to say if you are called to testify in a legal case.

3. Answering e-mail:

General guidelines:

- As promptly as possible, answer e-mails from parents, especially from parents of children with whom you work directly.
- E-mails asking for district documents or facts about district programs may fall under the State of Washington public information laws. Direct these e-mails to the communications office with a brief explanation that you received this e-mail and believe it is a public information request (forward it to Gay Campbell). The communications office will answer these, treating them, if appropriate, as public information requests.
- Be aware of “reply sender” and “reply all” features. Does everyone who received the e-mail need to know your response?

Q. I am getting e-mails from parents and others asking me questions about district programs and staff that make me uncomfortable. Sometimes these are from parents of children I don't teach or directly work with. How do I answer?

A. The message may qualify as a public information request. See the introductory paragraph of this section and follow those procedures.

If it is a question/message that is not about your classroom or department or not from the parent of one of your students, there are several ways you can deal with this.

- 1) Send a message saying you do not feel comfortable responding to this type of question.
- 2) Ask the person sending the message to contact your supervisor or the appropriate central office department for the answer to his or her question, if the e-mail asks

for information about a program or service. Provide a polite reply about why you are not directly answering the question. Example: "E-mail is a wonderful way to communicate with parents about their own students and I do that regularly. Your question appears to be about _____. Our _____ department can provide that answer for you."

- 3) If the e-mail asks you to comment about another classroom, and you are not comfortable answering it, an answer might be, "It would be inappropriate for me to discuss other staff or another staff member's classroom."

Q. What do I do when I receive chain letters or other unsolicited e-mails?

A. Do not print, forward, or originate inappropriate messages. If there is an attachment to a message from an unknown sender, DO NOT open it. It could be a means of spreading computer viruses. Delete the message if it is not from a familiar source.