



Sahtu Divisional Education Council

Electronic Communications Guidelines for ALL Staff

Introduction

The Sahtu DEC recognizes that electronic mail (e-mail) is a valuable communication tool that is widely used across our society. Staff members are provided with district e-mail accounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication both within the organization and with the broader community. The Superintendent of Schools reserves the right to decide if teachers can use e-mail as a means of communication with parents.

Text Messaging and Social Media ARE NOT authorized methods of communicating information to students/parents. These methods may ONLY be used to advertise school events.

General Guidelines for Communication

Staff using e-mail to correspond with students and parents must adhere to the following:

- Staff must use a school provided e-mail account for all communications.
- Staff will adhere to the Sahtu DEC E-mail Retention Policy (all email is retained and backed-up on the @sahtudec.ca email server).
- E-mail must never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues should be dealt with face-to-face or by telephone.
- E-mail messages to parents and students should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- All e-mails that reside on the District servers may not be confidential. E-mail messages may be requested by the public under the Right-To-Know Law and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- E-mails should be short and directional in nature and only include facts.
- E-mail parents only when they have agreed that e-mail is an appropriate form of communication and they have signed permission on the Registration Form for their son/daughter. Only communicate with parents at e-mail addresses listed on the e-mail permission form.
- Care should be given when using student names. Refer to students by first name, initials or your son/daughter depending on the content. Do not discuss non-related students.

The Sahtu DEC maintains e-mail accounts for teachers to facilitate parent/teacher, student/teacher communication and internal staff communication. Sahtu DEC e-mail accounts will be maintained 60 days following termination, however the ability to send e-mail will be removed at the end of the school year.

The Sahtu DEC reserves the right to block or filter e-mail messages to staff that are not directly related to District business or to the District's educational mission.

Student E-mail Accounts

E-mail accounts are available for ALL students. Students may have the restriction placed on their account that they are unable to communicate outside of the 'sahtudec' domains.

Student e-mail accounts will be removed following a withdrawal from school or transfer to another district or 30 days after graduation.

Acceptable Use of Student/Parent Communication

E-mail should be used for general information such as;

- Class activities, curriculum, assignments, tests, deadlines and special events.
- To arrange for a meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue e.g. if would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance.
- Follow-up on an issue that has previously been discussed.

Unacceptable Use of Student/Parent Communication

E-mail should not include:

- Any discussion related to other students.
- Personal information about other students.
- Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent. (e.g. I am concerned that your daughter failed the last three tests and was not at school again today.)
- Any discussion related to other staff.
- Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face-to-face or by phone. (e.g. I am concerned that your daughter may have a learning disability.)

Generic Email Response

If a teacher or staff member believes that a topic is too sensitive for an e-mail reply, here are a few generic responses:

Thank you for your e-mail. The Sahtu DEC does not use email to discuss sensitive and/or confidential student information. In order to best address your concerns and quickly answer your questions, please feel free to call me at (insert school phone number) and I will be happy to discuss this with you further. Thank you.

Thank you for your e-mail. I feel this concern is too sensitive for email. I would prefer to speak in person regarding this matter. I will call you on (state the date and time) to discuss this matter further. Thank you.

Sahtu DEC Email Guidelines for Students/Parents

(To be posted in the schools and district website)

E-mail may be a fast and convenient way for you to send messages, but this may not be the case for many of our teachers. Some teachers read their e-mail messages in the morning before school, some read them at the end of the day, and some read them during the school day. Many teachers prefer to use the phone to speak directly to parents.

For these reasons, please remember if you choose to send an e-mail message to a member of our professional staff, you may not get an immediate reply. In fact you may not receive an e-mail reply at all, since the staff members will determine how best to contact you: by e-mail, phone, or to schedule a personal conference.

When using e-mail

Permission to communicate by e-mail is part of your child's school Registration package. The permission form indicates the e-mail address(es) that will be used to communicate with school staff. Only authorized e-mail addresses will be used by School School staff to communicate with students and parents. Please send e-mail messages from an authorized e-mail account.

Please send only non-vital messages by this medium. For example, do not use e-mail to inform a teacher that your child is not to go home on the bus. A teacher may not have time to read your message in a timely fashion. Instead use the telephone to be sure your message is received and clearly understood.

Your child's academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioral issues are best addressed through a telephone conversation or by scheduling a personal conference with your child's teacher. An e-mail message on these matters is not appropriate.

Please remember that e-mail is not necessarily confidential. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or personal contact.

Please identify yourself in the subject line of your e-mail message and, if appropriate, the name of your child.

For all medical or health concerns, please contact your child's school by phone.

Please keep all contacts professional. Jokes, amusing or special stories, chain letters, or commercial solicitations are inappropriate and reduce valuable teaching time.

The School District maintains email accounts for teachers to facilitate parent/teacher, student/teacher communication and internal staff communication.

The District reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to District business or to the District's educational mission.

Remember that e-mail is a quick way to send a message, but it is not necessarily the best way to get a quick reply.

Although e-mail has become a valuable communication tool, it is important to remember that it is not always a completely secure and confidential method of communications. We would like to make e-mail available as another possible way for parents to communicate with their child's teachers where appropriate. We are, however, concerned about maintaining privacy laws, especially as they relate to student records. We will not send any student information via e-mail unless we have a signed permission form from the parent/guardian. This includes any e-mail addresses that are entered in the PowerSchool Parent Access portal. If your e-mail address changes, you are required to fill out and sign an updated form before we send information to the new address.

SAHTU DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS
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In return for the privilege of using the resources of the Sahtu DEC Computing Environment, I agree to abide by the Rules and Regulations for its use. I understand that failure to follow these rules can result in having my privileges restricted or taken away.

Staff Name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Principal/Designate (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____