

Email PIM Toolkit, 57

Should teachers be using email at all to discuss students? Simcoe County DSB, Acceptable Use Guidelines for Computing and Information Technology Facilities and Resources

Consider this in the context of issues that help manage personal information more securely:

- Email messages sent over the internet should not contain sensitive personal information about an identifiable individual. If it is necessary to include personal information in an email, consider using the individual's initials, symbols or a code rather than a full name.
- The sender should exercise caution in addressing an email to avoid sending a message to the wrong party. All email addresses should be confirmed prior to sending an email.
- All email messages, particularly those from a school board email account, should contain a notice of confidentiality i.e. *CONFIDENTIALITY WARNING: This e-mail message, including any attachment, is confidential. If it was not meant for you, you must not use or disclose the information it contains to anyone else. Please notify us of our mistaken distribution to you right away by reply e-mail and delete the message and any attachment without reading, copying or forwarding it to anyone. Thank you for your co-operation.*
- Personal information must never be included in the subject line.
- An email message containing personal information should only be forwarded on a need-to-know basis, and must not be broadly distributed. The sender should read the entire contents of an email before forwarding it, to ensure the information further down is deleted if it is not necessary.
- Laptop and mobile device users should clear out their email Inbox and Sent folders on a regular basis. This helps minimize the potential risk of confidential information being breached if the laptop or mobile device is lost or stolen. Save important messages to your boards' network.
- Spam and other suspicious mail should be deleted without opening such messages, and email chain letters of any kind shall not be distributed.
- Mail servers and communication networks should contain industry standard security features such as up-to-date virus protection software and firewall packages.

Can a probationary employee be discharged for an email criticizing management? Edu-Law HR Digest, Vol. 1 Issue 1, June 2003

Yes. The decision to do so may be rooted in collective agreements which refer to terminating a probationary employee who demonstrates unsuitability through culpable conduct. It may be not so much that they are expressing negative viewpoints; it's how they do it.

Principal's Best Practice: For all school-related business, communicate with your staff by using your board-based email. Make sure that you send your email to staff members' board-based accounts as well.