

Instruction

Electronic Mail

E-mail is an integral part of the communication strategy of the Edina Public Schools. The district's e-mail service supports employees and departments within the district and allows them to perform their work more efficiently.

Employees are increasingly using e-mail to realize the district's goals, strategies and services. The proper use of e-mail saves time and money, reduces administrative overheads and improves services. However, its improper use may jeopardize integrity, security and service levels of the Edina Public Schools.

Because of their structure, e-mail systems are not confidential or secure message systems. This applies whether messages are purely internal to the district or external. Consequently, information requiring protection should not be sent by e-mail. This also applies to confidential student and staff information as well as credit card and other financial transaction details.

The Edina Public Schools have the right to inspect and monitor all employee e-mail communications. The district tracks and logs e-mail traffic for statistical and technical troubleshooting purposes. Additionally, the district will inspect, monitor, or disclose e-mail activities if it suspects illegal or other activity that might adversely affect the district or its employees.

Use of e-mail must not jeopardize the e-mail system itself, the activities of others using it, or the reputation and/or integrity of the Edina Public Schools. All employees and administrators must comply with this policy. Violations shall be handled in a manner described in School Board Policy 5114, which deals with dismissal, including suspension, exclusion, and expulsion.

Instruction

Electronic Mail

I. E-mail Utilization

All staff (with the exception of substitute employees) are allocated a mailbox and individual e-mail addresses at the commencement of their employment with the district. Students are provided temporary e-mail accounts on an as-needed basis for preapproved curriculum-related projects. This e-mail address must be used to receive and send work-related messages.

Staff are permitted to use e-mail for personal use, provided this does not interfere with the activities of the district, their work/teaching assignments, or harm the district's reputation, and is not used for personal financial gain. Personal use must comply with the district's Acceptable Use Policy 6161.2. Staff are reminded that the school district retains the right to access e-mail, whether sent for personal or business reasons, as it deems necessary.

A. Confidentiality of E-mail

1. Because of their structure, e-mail systems are not confidential or secure message systems. Students and employees are responsible for their individual e-mail accounts and must take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from accessing their accounts. Students and employees should not share passwords with others. This applies whether messages are purely internal to the district or external. Consequently, information requiring protection should not be sent by e-mail. This also applies to confidential student and staff information as well as credit card and other financial transaction details.
2. E-mail must be composed with the expectation that it could be read by persons other than the designated recipient. It can be saved to a disk, printed, forwarded to another party, viewed by e-mail system administrators, and, in the case of Internet e-mail, possibly read or intercepted by those outside the school district. Thus, all information, including e-mail messages and files, that is created and sent or retrieved over the Edina School District's computer system is the property of the school district, and must not be considered private or confidential. Recipients of e-mail messages must remember that proprietary information, as in hard copy, must be disseminated only to authorized parties.
3. Students and employees must not send e-mail or other communication that either masks the sender's identity or indicates that the message was sent by someone else. Employees and students must not access any technical resources using another person's password. Similarly, employees and students must only access the libraries, files, data, programs, and directories that are related to their work duties or school assignments. Unauthorized review, duplication, dissemination, removal, installation, damage, or alteration of files, passwords, computer systems or programs, or other property of the Edina School District, or improper use of information obtained by unauthorized means, is prohibited.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

B. Confidentiality Notice

All electronic mail must contain the following confidentiality notice:

“If the information in this electronic communication relates to an individual pupil, it is a confidential pupil record under Minnesota Law and may not be reviewed, distributed, or copied by any person other than the individual(s) to whom it is addressed. This electronic communication is intended solely for the use of the individual(s) to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, any further review, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this electronic communication or any attachment thereto is strictly prohibited. If you have received an electronic communication in error, you should immediately return it to the sender and delete it from your system.”

C. Communicating with Parents or Guardians Using E-mail

If school district employees plan to use e-mail to communicate with a student’s parents or guardian about the student, the employee must use the following precautions:

1. Do not use e-mail to communicate with a parent about his or her child unless the parent has asked you to do so.
2. If a parent asks you to communicate by e-mail, explain that e-mail is not an entirely secure form of transmission because there is a risk that e-mail can be intercepted. Ask the parent whether he or she still wants to communicate by e-mail in light of that risk. If the parent says yes, document the conversation, including the date it occurred, and place the document in the student’s file.
3. Verify that the e-mail address you have for the parent is correct.
4. Ask the parent whether the e-mail that he or she has provided is a work address or a personal address. If the parent receives e-mail at work, explain that other people, including the network administrator, may have access to the content of the e-mail. If the parent receives e-mail through a home or personal address, ask whether the student, siblings, or anyone else in the home has access to the e-mail account. Upon consideration of these issues, parents may rescind their request to communicate by e-mail.
5. Never put anything in an e-mail that you would not be willing to put in a signed letter to the parent on school letterhead.
6. Print a copy and/or save online in your folder all e-mails sent to and received from parents in accordance with district policy in the same manner as other pupil records.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

D. School Board Use of Electronic Mail

Use of electronic mail (e-mail) by School Board members should conform to the same standards of judgment, propriety, and ethics as other forms of School Board-related communication. Board members shall comply with the following guidelines when using e-mail in the conduct of School Board responsibilities:

1. The School Board shall not use e-mail as a substitute for deliberations at Board meetings or for other communications or business properly confined to Board meetings.
2. Board members should be aware that e-mail and e-mail attachments received or prepared for use in Board business or containing information relating to Board business are likely to be regarded as public records, which may be inspected by any person upon request, unless otherwise made confidential by law.
3. Board members should avoid reference to confidential information about employees, students, and other matters in e-mail communications because of the risk of improper disclosure. Board members should comply with the same standards as school employees with regard to confidential information.

E. Correspondence Protocol

1. E-mail users, including students provided temporary e-mail addresses while working on curriculum projects, are expected to follow appropriate business correspondence standards. Chain messages and profane, obscene, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, or otherwise offensive messages are strictly prohibited. Offensive material includes, but is not limited to, pornography, sexual comments, jokes or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any comments, jokes, or images that would offend someone on the basis of his or her race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation. Any use of e-mail to harass or discriminate is unlawful and strictly prohibited.
2. E-mail is provided as a business communication tool. Staff use e-mail for teaching and learning, administrative purposes, and for general communications with clients. All business e-mail should include a signature block including details of name, position, and contact details (phone and e-mail). Graphics should not be used in a signature block as this increases the file size. All e-mail sent from a departmental mail server (whether central or school-based) are attributable to the Edina Public School District, and, for this reason, all users must ensure that all e-mail use complies with School Board policies.
3. E-mail and other network resources may not be used for commercial purposes or for personal financial gain. E-mail may be used to assist in the investigation and support of vendor products such as the discussion of a product's relative advantages and disadvantages by users of the product. E-mail can also be used to distribute information or technical support material requested or vendor responses to questions about their products, as long as the responses are not in the nature of a solicitation.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

II. E-mail System Operation

A. Name Changes

When an employee changes his/her name and wants this to be used in the workplace, they must first change their name with the Human Resources Department. Once this change has been entered into the TIES information system, District Media and Technology Services (DMTS) will work with the employee to change his/her e-mail address (and user name) to reflect their new personal name. E-mail addressed to their old e-mail address will be delivered to the new e-mail address for three months. This period of overlap must be used to update any subscriptions and advise others (especially those outside the district) of the new address.

B. Mailbox Termination

Upon exit from Edina Public Schools, the staff mailbox is immediately made inactive. E-mail subsequently sent to an inactive mailbox will not be redirected and will be returned to the sender. Mailboxes are kept for one month and then terminated. This enables DMTS to access e-mail as required but does not provide for access by the ex-employee.

C. Distribution Lists

When sending a message to a large group of people that you e-mail regularly, it is useful to give the group a name and use this as the mailing address. It saves the time of typing each person's name or e-mail address individually each time or searching through one's contacts for each address. This group of names is called a distribution list. Distribution lists should only be used for work-related purposes where you need to communicate with all staff that belong to the distribution list.

Distribution Lists are generated automatically and are based on the departmental organizational structure. Distribution lists are created automatically for schools and departments and are available in the Global Address List. You can create additional lists in your Contacts folder. Software to create list servers is available for school use. Creation of further special distribution lists, or list servers, needs to be approved by the director of District Media and Technology Services.

D. Non-Edina Public School Staff

E-mail is not generally provided for people outside the district. The exceptions to this rule are contractors working for the district and trainees assigned to it. Access for trainees is not automatic; the principal or administrator must approve each request. The director of Business Services or assistant superintendent must first approve a contractor's need for an e-mail account. The director of District Media and Technology Services must approve all other requests. Where access is provided, the person must ensure that their e-mail usage meets the guidelines of this policy. E-mails for contractors and trainees will be terminated immediately upon the completion of their project/training.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

E. Generic Addresses

Some schools and departments have a need for a generic e-mail address. These are normally general mailboxes that can be monitored by a number of people, as opposed to the usual e-mail mailbox that each individual staff member receives. For example, the generic e-mail address, helpdesk@edina.k12.mn.us, can be viewed and monitored by the entire DMTS staff. Generally, a specific e-mail address is used when a school or department provides a general service that is not specific to a particular person or position in the district. The preferred method of providing generic e-mail messages is through a shared folder or distribution list.

Public folder access may also operate in conjunction with the generic e-mail address so that authorized individuals can access common e-mail sent to the generic address. To apply for a generic e-mail address, please contact the DMTS Help Desk. All owners of generic e-mail accounts must ensure that they are checked daily.

III. E-mail Management, Storage and Security

Edina Public Schools has the right to inspect and monitor all employee e-mail communications. The district tracks and logs e-mail traffic for statistical and technical troubleshooting purposes. Additionally, the district will inspect, monitor, or disclose e-mail activities if it suspects illegal or other activity that might adversely affect the district or its employees.

District correspondence in the form of e-mail has the same level of accessibility within a school or department as paper correspondence. Consequently, managers are also able to access staff mailboxes when deemed necessary. Generally, this will occur if a staff member is on leave and they have not made arrangements for their mail to be forwarded to another mailbox, or if a manager requires access to existing information within the mailbox. In this case, the administrator will contact the DMTS Help Desk staff person who will request appropriate authorization and then will grant access (or set a forward) for an appropriate length of time.

A. E-mail Storage

1. E-mail use involving large files creates congestion on the network and disruption of services. It is important to keep in mind the size of e-mail when sending a message. A maximum message size of 3.5MB has been established to ensure acceptable performance.
 - a. Avoid sending multimedia files.
 - b. Do not spread nonwork related messages, for example, jokes, pictures, video clips, and other multimedia files by forwarding them to your colleagues. Convert large attachments using the WinZip compression tool.
 - c. Send a shortcut or URL to a document or web page rather than the actual document.
 - d. Make sure any necessary picture files are saved as a GIF or JPEG.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

2. All school district employees are required to check their e-mail on student contact days.

Although it is not compulsory for school staff to use e-mail, staff are encouraged to use e-mail as the standard method of distributing information. Reply promptly to e-mail. A response to district- and classroom-related e-mail from district staff or parents/guardians should be made within 48 - 72 hours, when appropriate.

3. Staff on leave must make provision for their e-mail to be dealt with either through:
 - a. Redirection of e-mail to another staff member, or
 - b. Advice of absence and alternate contact details through an out-of-office reply
4. The district e-mail servers are not backed-up. E-mails that are required to be kept should be saved to a file on the school server or off-line on a disk.

B. Storage and Archiving

1. Individual mailboxes have an established limit of 30MB.
2. Users will regularly monitor, store, or delete e-mail they receive.
3. The use of your personal folders (in your Inbox) enables you to store important e-mail to reference at a later date while still adhering to the mailbox limit restrictions.
4. Storing e-mails with attachments fills up a mailbox rapidly. Attachments should be saved on a network drive.
5. It is important that you delete any e-mail messages that you no longer need to reference or are not required to keep due to archiving rules.
6. The district e-mail servers will be purged on June 30th of each school year.

C. Records Management and Archiving

All e-mail messages are potentially official records and may need to be kept under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and School Board policy.

Staff can determine if they should save e-mails by considering the following:

1. E-mail can be useful for your own future reference.
2. The information you use and produce is not your own personal property but the property of the Edina Public Schools.
3. Effective record management, including e-mails, helps to ensure school district accountability by recording important school district transactions or decisions.
4. You have a legal obligation to keep e-mail that documents school district business.
5. Ask yourself, "If this was a paper memo, would I have the authority to destroy it?"

D. E-mail Filtering

An e-mail spam filter has been installed on the district network. The district may block unsolicited e-mail and may filter messages to ensure compliance with School Board policies.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

In order to decrease the likelihood of yet-to-be identified viruses entering the district's network, certain types known to be able to carry viruses are blocked. When the blocking process occurs, the message's attachment is quarantined and replaced with a text file that explains that the attachment has been quarantined. The body of the message remains unchanged.

Staff that need to receive e-mail messages containing attachments with the blocked extensions for work-related purposes should discuss the matter with their media specialist.

E. Virus Protection

Viruses circulated via e-mail spread very quickly and can cause an infection that can render e-mail systems inoperable. Viruses distributed via e-mail are usually in the form of files attached to an e-mail message.

E-mail servers are protected with antivirus software that scans all messages. In order to decrease the likelihood of yet-to-be identified viruses entering the district's systems, certain file types known to be able to carry viruses are blocked. Similarly, access to external e-mail systems is restricted. In addition to virus protection software, users adhering to safe e-mail protection assist prevention of a virus outbreak in an organization. Therefore, as part of safe and sensible e-mail practices, please ensure that you only open attachments that you are expecting. It is best to err on the side of caution. If you don't know what the attachment is, don't open it!

In order to reduce the risk from viruses and other malicious software, users are required to:

1. Be careful opening attachments, particularly those received from external sources.
2. Keep virus protection up-to-date on all computers that are used to access the district's e-mail systems, including PCs outside the district's network such as laptops. Antivirus software is available for home use as well as for district computers by calling the DMTS Help Desk.
3. Large files and Excel and Access documents should be WinZipped.

F. Disaster Recovery

The district e-mail service supplied by the department of District Media and Technology Services is backed-up to enable the e-mail system to be restored in the case of server failure. Messages deleted by individuals in error cannot be restored from the backup system.

G. Responding to Unsolicited and Inappropriate E-mail

1. If an inappropriate e-mail is directed at you as an individual, you will need to keep the message and any attachments as evidence. Advise the sender not to send such material to you again, or ask your supervisor to advise the sender not to send such material.

Instruction

Electronic Mail (continued)

2. For spam e-mail, do not reply to the sender as this serves to confirm that your e-mail address is correct and may lead to more messages. Delete the message immediately, and report the incident to the network manager.

H. Misuse of E-mail

The district shall cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through Edina Public Schools computer network.

1. In the event there is a claim that employees or students have violated this policy or other Board policy in the use of the Edina Public Schools computer network, they shall be provided with a written notice of the suspected violation and an opportunity to present an explanation as defined in School Board Policy 5131 and 5114 for students and bargaining agreements for staff.
2. If the violation also involves a violation of other provisions of School Board policy, it shall be handled in a manner described in School Board Policy 5114 which deals with dismissal, including suspension, exclusion, and expulsion. Additional restrictions may be placed on the use of individual Internet accounts, or could result in suspension, expulsion, and/or financial liability.