

# Southgate Independent School District

## Traceable Electronic Communication System & Protocol

To ensure student safety and comply with legal and board-mandated requirements for traceable electronic communication, all school employees, coaches and volunteers shall only use approved platforms to interact with students electronically. Text messaging or the use of social media will not be permitted.

### Approved Platforms

School employees, coaches and volunteers may only use the following district managed and traceable platforms to communicate with students electronically:

1. Southgate Independent School District Email
2. Infinite Campus Messenger
3. Apptegy/Thrillshare Alerts
4. Google Workspace for Education
5. Microsoft for Education
6. ClassDojo
7. GoGuardian Products

### Waiver/Parent Consent

A parent may provide consent to authorize a designated District employee or volunteer who is not a family member to communicate electronically with his or her child outside of the traceable communication system using the approved district form.

### Communication Updates

Any changes to the approved communication platforms during the calendar year will be communicated to all employees and families after Board approval and prior to implementation.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***Why do we have this rule?***

SB 181 was passed by the Kentucky General Assembly during the 2025 Legislative Session to ensure that all school-related communication between employees and students is *traceable and transparent*. This law is designed to protect students, staff, and school districts by creating clear expectations around communication and by requiring that all electronic exchanges such as emails and messages occur on platforms that are approved and monitored by the district.

Following SB 181 is not optional; it is a legal requirement. The law reinforces the importance of professional boundaries, digital accountability, and student safety. By using district-approved, traceable communication platforms, we ensure there is documentation available should any question arise about the nature, content, or timing of a message.

This also protects employees as professionals. Traceable communication provides a safeguard by maintaining accurate records and aligning our practice with state law and district policy.

***What does “traceable communication system” mean?***

It’s a collection of district-approved digital platforms that:

- Logs all communications to and from students,
- Allows parents to access and review these messages when requested, and
- Is the **only** approved means for electronic communication with students (Exceptions include one-way group communication with two-way communication disabled OR the parent grants an exemption)

***Are employees able to use school email to communicate to personal accounts?***

Yes, an employee is allowed to send an email from their school account to someone’s personal email. As long as the employee initiates communication using a traceable platform, such as their district email account, the conversation is considered compliant. Student responses will also be captured on this traceable platform.

***What social media platforms are allowable to communicate with students under SB 181?***

None. All employees are prohibited from communicating with a student at any time using social media. This includes but is not limited to: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, SnapChat, X (formerly known as Twitter), and TikTok.

***If an employee is reported to an administrator for violating the Traceable Communications policy, will the district really report to EPSB?***

Yes. The district is required to report any violations of the Traceable Communications policy involving certified staff to the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB).

***What will occur if an employee or volunteer communicates with a student outside of the Traceable Communications System?***

- Employees: Violations will trigger an internal investigation. Under SB 181, any unauthorized direct electronic communication with a student may be grounds for disciplinary action.
- Volunteers/Coaches: Any violation will result in removal from volunteer/coach status and loss of privileges to serve in that role.

***What do I do if I receive unauthorized communication from a student?***

If a student reaches out to a staff member, volunteer or coach using any means outside of the above approved platforms, do not respond using an unapproved communication method. Respond via an approved system or message their parent via non-student channels. If you believe the student is experiencing an emergency, please contact the superintendent or principal immediately. Simply receiving an unauthorized student message does NOT trigger an investigation and there is no need to report it as long as you redirect the student to an approved platform.

***What if I need to communicate with a student urgently outside of the approved methods?***

Unless there's a parent-granted exemption, urgent messaging must still be traceable. If you believe the student is experiencing an emergency, please contact the superintendent or principal immediately.

***When do we notify parents and students of this policy?***

It is our obligation to inform families within the first 10 days of school. We will comply with this.

***How will individuals be updated if there are iterations and changes to the approved traceable communication system during the school year?***

If the Board of Education makes changes to the approved traceable communications system, all employees and parents will be notified within 10 days of the change.

***How does KDE interpret “student” in the new law?***

“KDE interprets the requirements for traceable communications in KRS 160.145 (which was created by Section 1 of SB 181) as applying to electronic communications between school district employees or volunteers and students of the same school district.” While the actual statute doesn’t define student, the KDE interpretation document states the following: “Though the provisions of KRS 160.145 do not apply to electronic communications with students or minors who are not students of the school district for which the employee or volunteer works, it is best practice to communicate electronically with all minors and students in an open, traceable manner with the consent of the minor or student’s parents.”

***Does SB 181 impact the way that you reach out to parents?***

No, an employee does not have to change the ways in which they communicate with parents. SB 181 only applies to student communication.

***Who is considered a volunteer?***

Anyone that volunteers during the school day or at school sponsored events is considered a volunteer. Volunteers must only use Board approved traceable communication platforms when communicating with students.

***What are purchased and verified traceable curriculum resources that have been approved by the Superintendent Designee?***

Curriculum resources may be used by employees but if the resource is not verified traceable, student communication is prohibited. If not verified to be traceable, the messaging features shall not be used to collaborate with students. The resource may be used by employees and/or students outside of messaging.

***What’s the process of gaining parent consent for student communication outside of the traceable communications system?***

Employees who wish to communicate directly with a student outside of the approved traceable communication platforms must first obtain parent or guardian consent. This process must be initiated by the employee. An electronic consent form is available and can be provided upon request.

The district will not send the waiver link directly to parents or include it in mass communications. This waiver is intended for specific, limited situations and should not be used to bypass the Traceable Communication System. Its purpose is to support compliance with the law and protect employees.