



Traceable Communications System

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To ensure student safety and comply with legal and board-mandated requirements for traceable communication, school employees shall only use approved platforms to interact with students electronically. [KRS 160.145](#)

Approved Platforms

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

- Infinite Campus
- Schoology
- Google Workspace/Suite
- Microsoft Office 365
- District Website
- Connect-it
- District-approved instructional tools that are verified by the Superintendent's Designee as traceable

Teachers delivering dual credit instruction shall be able to use institutionally managed platforms of the post secondary partner to communicate with students enrolled in dual credit courses. These include and are not limited to Canvas, Blackboard, and Starfish.

Guidelines for Untraceable Platforms

- Platforms such as Remind, GroupMe, BAND, and others may only be used for one-way, large group communication.
- Direct messaging with students on these platforms is strictly prohibited.
- Two-way communication must be disabled to ensure compliance with district policy and communication transparency.

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 through the use of 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

What changes were recently changed in 2026?

- HB 67 adds definitions of commercial or local government affiliation, electronic communication, and qualified school volunteer;
- Updates the definition of family member, parent, school district employee, and unauthorized electronic communication;
- When an educator engages in prohibited electronic communications, the educator may be subject to disciplinary action rather than educators are required to be subject to disciplinary action for engaging in prohibited electronic communications;
- Updates the procedure for parental written consent;
- Updates the exception to private communications to include an exception for emergencies, field trips, work-based learning, and commercial or local government affiliation;
- Updates the procedures for teachers reporting unauthorized electronic communications; and
- Updates how alleged violations should be reported to parents. When a report of a district employee or volunteer engaging in prohibited electronic communication, the parent(s) of the student(s) alleged to have been involved in the communications shall be provided updates of each material phase of the district's investigation and the parent(s) shall receive a written summary of the results of the investigation and the final outcome of the disciplinary action.

Why do we have this rule?

SB 181, **also known as KRS 160.145**, 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 KRS 160.145 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 a professional. Traceable communication provides a safeguard by maintaining accurate records and aligning our practice with state law and district policy.

What is an approved traceable communication system?

KRS 160.145 defines an approved traceable communication system as one (1) or more electronic school notification and communication programs or applications that: (1) Are approved by the local board of education as detailed in KRS 160.145; (2) Trace all communications sent to or by a student; and (3) Provide parents an opportunity to access and review those communications

What is unauthorized electronic communication? What is private electronic communication?

HB 67 defines unauthorized electronic communication as private electronic communication with a student enrolled in a school district by the school district's employee or qualified school volunteer who is not the student's family member and that occurs outside of a designated traceable communication system. This includes any private electronic communication with a student or students through a personal email account, text messaging, social media, or other private electronic notification and communication programs.

Are there any exceptions for direct messages to and from students regarding academic performance and progress?

HB 67 created new exceptions to KRS 160.145 to exempt communications for virtual instruction, including nontraditional instruction, online course instruction, homebound instruction and electronic academic feedback mechanisms. If the messages in the educational platform are used for virtual instruction or to provide academic feedback, then they are permitted by KRS 160.145.

Does KRS 160.145 contain any exceptions that allow for electronic communications between school district employees/volunteers and students outside of a traceable communication system authorized by the local board of education?

Yes. School employees and volunteers may communicate electronically with students outside of the approved traceable communication system if: (1) The student is a family member of the school employee/volunteer; or (2) Written parental consent has been filed with the student's school.

Who is a family member?

A family member is a parent (parent, legal guardian, a person acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian, or other individual or agency responsible for the student), brother, sister, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece, or grandparent related to the student by consanguinity, affinity, or adoption; or an adult that resides in the same household as the student.

Who is a qualified school volunteer?

A qualified school volunteer is an adult who is not a school district employee or enrolled in the school district and has served the school or district at any point during the current school year: as a student teacher, a nonfaculty coach or assistant coach, a nonfaculty sponsor of an extracurricular program or activity, a school-sponsored academic tutor, or in a nonfaculty student services role designated as a qualified school volunteer by the local board of education.

What if school staff are responding to a student who communicates with them electronically, but outside of the approved traceable communication system, about a health or safety emergency?

HB 67 creates an exemption if the school staff reasonably believe that an emergency exists that creates an imminent risk to any person or property. The school staff must promptly notify and disclose the emergency electronic communication to his or her immediate supervisor after the fact. If the school staff member is the principal or a district-wide employee, the employee shall notify the superintendent of the school district.

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 the 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?

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 I have a stepchild but am not their guardian and they attend FTIS, do I need to receive consent from the child's parent to text them?

If the employee resides in the same household as the student, no waiver is needed to communicate with the child.

What about school-sponsored field trips, especially overnight trips like taking a class of students to Washington, D.C.? How should school employees and volunteers communicate with students?

HB 67 no longer restricts private electronic communications between a student and a school district employee or qualified school volunteer during and in direct relation to a school-sanctioned field trip if the student has parental consent to attend the school field trip.

What about work-based learning experiences?

HB 67 no longer restricts private electronic communications between a student and a school district employee or qualified school volunteer during and in direct relation to work-based learning experience.

How can coaches, interns, or other employees communicate with their teacher placements?

Employees may have two way communication with students using an approved platform. Employees may communicate directly with students through Schoology, email, or the Connect-itz app.

**If you would like to use Microsoft Teams, the employee will need to create the initial chat to invite the student to the group. When properly configured, the Teams app provides pop-up notifications similar to text messages. To ensure these notifications function correctly, users must enable them both within the app and in their phone settings. (More information will be deployed regarding using Teams chat as a feature.)

Since Teams is an option for employees to communicate with students, will students be able to create chats and add students to the chat feature?

Student-to-student communication via Microsoft Teams has been disabled. Students are not able to initiate chats or add other individuals to chat groups. All chats must be initiated by employees, who are the only users with access to this feature.

Are school employees/volunteers required to report unauthorized electronic communications between a student and school employee/volunteer?

HB 67 requires that if a school district employee or volunteer participated in unauthorized electronic communications or reasonably believes that another school district employee or volunteer participated in unauthorized electronic communications that has not been previously reported shall immediately notify the supervising principal or applicable supervisor.

If the subject of the report is the school principal or district-wide employee, then the report shall be made to the district superintendent. If the subject of the report is the superintendent or a KDE employee assigned to a school or area technology center, then the report shall be made to the commissioner of education.

HB 67 does not impose a duty on school employees or volunteers to speculate as to whether or not another school employee or volunteer engaged in unauthorized electronic communication with a student. Instead, the duty to report only arises when a school employee or volunteer reasonably believes that another school employee or volunteer participated in unauthorized electronic communications.

Are there consequences for failure to report to the appropriate contact - principal, superintendent, or commissioner?

Yes. HB 67 states that if a school employee fails to make the reports described in the previous question, they may be subject to disciplinary action by their employing school district. Furthermore, certified employees who fail to make the reports may be subject to disciplinary action by the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB).

What are the consequences for engaging in unauthorized electronic communications with a student?

An investigation must be conducted when a principal, superintendent or the commissioner of education receives a report. School employees found to have engaged in unauthorized electronic communication with students are subject to disciplinary action by their employing school district. Furthermore, certified employees who engage in unauthorized electronic communication with students are subject to disciplinary action by the EPSB. Finally, volunteers who engage in unauthorized electronic communication with students may be prohibited from future school volunteer opportunities.

Should parents be notified if there is a report of unauthorized electronic communications?

Under HB 67, upon receipt of a report of unauthorized electronic communication the commissioner, superintendent or principal shall immediately notify the parent of each student that is an alleged party to the communication. Further, the parent of each student that is an alleged party to the communication shall be given a written summary of the results of the investigation and the final outcome of the disciplinary actions. Parents may also receive updates related to the material phases of the investigation. When providing parents with this information, districts should ensure that no confidential information protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act about the students allegedly involved in the communication is shared.

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

Redirect the student to an approved platform, respond via an approved system, or message their parent via non-student channels. 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 a student calls the school telephone line? Are school staff able to speak with the student?

Yes. Telephone calls placed by students to official school telephone lines are not within the scope of communications limited or prohibited by KRS 160.145. Communications between a student and school employee/volunteer via the employee/volunteer's personal phone, however, are prohibited unless an exception applies.

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 it's a safety issue, contact the parent or guardian directly via appropriate channels.

When do we notify parents and students of this policy?

It is our obligation to inform within the first 10 days of school. In our district, this communication will be sent by the district on our first student day. Others may also communicate the change to our families.

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.

Is there additional training for employees?

All employees and volunteers will have a new module created in our Safe Schools training. In this module, everyone will review and verify that they have received communication related to the traceable communications system annually.

How does FTIS interpret “student” in the new law?

A “student” is an individual with an active FTIS enrollment in IC. Employees of the district are not subject to traceable communication requirements when communicating with students who are not enrolled in Fort Thomas Independent Schools. These individuals are not considered district students and, therefore, fall outside the scope of the district’s student traceable communication policy

Does SB 181 impact the way that you reach out to parents? Can you communicate directly with parents?

Yes, an employee does not have to change the ways in which they communicate with parents. SB 181 only applies to student communication.

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.

We are working to define our workflow process for employees to submit a review request of curriculum resources. We will post approved resources publicly following approval. Currently we have approved Amplify CKLA, Amplify ELA, Savvas Envision, Savvas, McGraw Hill Reveal.

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

Employees who wish to communicate directly with an FTIS 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. To obtain the form, the employee must contact their school principal or Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

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 as a way to bypass the Traceable Communication System. Its purpose is to support compliance with the law and protect employees.

What about situations where a student is employed by a school district employee or qualified volunteer at their local business? What if a school district employee or volunteer hires a student to mow their lawn, babysit or housesit? How should school employees and volunteers communicate with students?

A school district employee or qualified school volunteer may submit a written disclosure notifying the school district of a commercial or local government affiliation that could result in private electronic communication with a student. Upon filing the written disclosure, subsequent private electronic communication directly related to the disclosed commercial or local government affiliation is now permissible under KRS 160.145.

HB 67 defines a commercial or local government affiliation as having an ownership interest in, being employed by, or being a customer or client of a commercial business or activity or having an association with a city, county, consolidated local government, urban-county government, or unified local government.

If a teacher leads a youth group at their church, does KRS 160.145 apply to communication between the teacher and youth group members? If a school district employee is a scout leader in her personal time, does KRS 160.145 apply to communication between the employee and members of the scouting troop?

If a school district employee/volunteer leads a youth group at church or scouting troop, KRS 160.145 continues to apply to electronic communications between the employee/volunteer, and any member of the youth group or scouting troop who happens to be a student enrolled in the school district where the employee/volunteer works. Furthermore, under HB 67, if electronic communication with the student includes the parent of the student as a recipient of the message, such communication is permissible. Alternatively, the school district employee or volunteer could collect parental consent forms from parents of students in the youth group or scouting troop and file those with the school district in order to communicate electronically with the students in the youth group or scouting troop. Otherwise, the school district employee/volunteer should communicate through parents of the students in the youth group or scouting troop, or through a traceable communication system approved by the district.

If a teacher coaches a travelling sports team not associated with any school during his personal time, does KRS 160.145 apply to electronic communication with students who are members of the traveling sports team?

KRS 160.145 continues to apply to electronic communications between the school district employee and any student who is enrolled in the school district where the employee works and who is not a family member. If any student who is on the travelling sports team is a family member of the employee, then KRS 160.145 does not limit electronic communications with that student. Furthermore, the employee could collect parental consent forms from parents of students on the travelling sports team and file those with the school district in order to communicate electronically with the students. Under HB 67, if electronic communication with the student includes the parent of the student as a recipient of the message, the communication would be permissible. Otherwise, the employee should communicate through parents of the students on the travelling sports team or through a traceable communication system approved by the district.