

**ECI-R Communications System**

7/1/18

(GSBA Reference: ECI-Telephone Use)

**RATIONALE/OBJECTIVE:**

The Cobb County School District (District) uses numerous methods such as written and widely distributed documents, spoken announcements, electronic mail, and cellular phones and other wireless communication devices to transmit official information to employees quickly and accurately. Employees are responsible for keeping themselves informed of official information distributed through these means. Supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring effective communication occurs within their areas of responsibility.

**RULE:****A. GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

The District inter- and intra-communication system (to include computers, wired and cellular phones and other wireless communication devices, regular mail and e-mail, bulletin boards and employee mailboxes) is District property and is to be used primarily for business purposes of the District. The District permits some limited, incidental use of this system for personal communications. Such personal use must not:

1. Interfere with any District operation or activity,
2. Be for personal business or personal monetary gain,
3. Cause any harm or embarrassment to the District, our schools or our employees,
4. Be for any unethical purposes or illegal activity, or
5. Negatively affect the District's mission or any employee's effectiveness or ability to perform his/her duties and responsibilities.

Employees may be disciplined, up to and including employment termination, for violating Board Policy IFBGE (Internet Safety) and/or Administrative Rule IFBGE-R (Internet Acceptable Use), this Rule, or using the District communication system to violate any other Board of Education Policies or District Rules.

**B. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF THE INTER- AND INTRA-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM:**

The following guidelines govern the use of County Mail, employee mailboxes, employee bulletin boards by employees and non-profit organizations, cellular phones, and other wireless telecommunication devices.

**1. Electronic Mail (E-Mail):**

The District's E-mail System is a non-public forum administered by the Technology Services Division and is provided solely for District business and communications. Employee use, including limited personal use, of the District's e-mail system is governed by Administrative Rule IFBGE-R (Internet Acceptable Use). Personal use should in no case interfere with the employee's ability to perform his/her job duties or responsibilities.

**2. County Mail:**

- a. The District County Mail system is a non-public forum administered by the Human Resources Division for the efficient and effective distribution of written communications to and between all schools and facilities within the District. It is primarily designed to assist in the efficient operation of the District's instructional program.
- b. An employee or non-profit organization desiring to use the County Mail system is subject to the following guidelines:
  - (1) Requests must be authorized by the official governing body of the organization and must be in the form of a letter or e-mail from the president or designee of the

organization. Send all requests to Director Support Services, Human Resources Division, Cobb County School District, 514 Glover Street, Marietta, GA 30060.

- (2) The request must be received by Human Resources at least ten (10) working days before the day use is requested.
- (3) All requests are subject to approval by the District. General announcements, such as announcements of meeting times, places, and dates and program information, may be approved.
- (4) Advertisements, solicitations or related items must be submitted for advance approval.
- (5) Mail that includes editorial components or opinions shall not be approved.
- (6) Commercial use of, or solicitation through, County Mail is prohibited.
- (7) Seasonal/holiday greetings between and among schools and departments are not subject to advance approval for distribution.
- (8) Items approved for County Mail should be delivered to the Human Resources Division of the Cobb County School District, 514 Glover Street, Marietta, GA 30060, as soon as possible following approval.
- (9) Action by Human Resources Division to stop unauthorized access should be uniform in application. A record of such action should be maintained by the Human Resources Division.

**3. School Employee Mailboxes:**

- a. The school employee mailboxes are considered a part of the District County Mail system. Therefore, the above County Mail guidelines shall apply to the use of employee mailboxes and the Principal/supervisor shall be directly responsible for their use.
- b. Access to employee mailboxes for other than official business must be approved in advance by the Principal/supervisor or designee.
  - (1) Action by Principals/supervisors or designee to stop unauthorized access should be uniform in application. A record of such action should be maintained by the school.
- c. General Boxes:  
Other materials may be made available to employees at the school level in an established location accessible only to employees, preferably at or near the employee bulletin board or mailboxes. This may be accomplished by a box or basket being provided for materials to be made available to employees interested in receiving information other than general announcements.

**4. Bulletin Boards:**

- The District recognizes two types of bulletin boards: District (official) and employee (unofficial) bulletin boards.
- a. District bulletin boards are reserved for information concerning important business-related subjects such as Board Policies, Administrative Rules, guidelines, legally required notices, District-sponsored activities and events, safety procedures, and other topics that concern or affect the majority of our employees.
  - b. Employee bulletin boards are for information concerning unofficial, non-District sponsored activities or events which may be of interest to our employees, notices of recreational/social clubs or organizations, want ads or other general interest items. All notices to be posted on any employee bulletin board must be cleared through the Principal/supervisor or designee prior to its posting.
    - (1) Action by Principals/supervisors or designee to stop unauthorized access should be uniform in application. A record of such action should be maintained by the school.
  - c. Each school and facility with employees will designate a bulletin board as the employee board. It should be located in an area that is accessible to employees but not the general public.
  - d. Materials posted on the District bulletin board should deal with official District business and must be signed and dated by the person authorized to post the information.
  - e. Employee and non-profit organizations may request use of the employee bulletin board. The maximum length of time information may be maintained on the bulletin board is ten (10) school or working days.

5. **Cellular Phones and Other Wireless Communication Devices (Cellular Phones/Wireless Devices):**

The District may issue a cellular phone or other wireless telecommunication device to an employee or contractor who is required to be immediately accessible for work-related communications.

a. **Guidelines:**

- (1) District cellular phones/wireless devices are to be used for business purposes.
- (2) Employees/contractors are allowed minimal personal use of District cellular phones/wireless devices.
- (3) An employee/contractor who uses a District-provided cellular phone/wireless device is required to reimburse the District for personal use which results in additional charges to the District.
  - (a) The employee/contractor's liability is limited to the lesser of the following:
    - 1) Additional charges resulting from the total number of minutes beyond the plan maximum; or
    - 2) Additional charges resulting from the total number of minutes used for personal reasons.
  - (b) The employee/contractor is responsible for reviewing his/her cellular phone/wireless device invoice and reimbursing the District the portion of the additional charges that resulted from personal use.
  - (c) All cellular phone/wireless device invoices and records are subject to audit by the District and/or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and disclosure under Georgia's Open Record's Act (Administrative Rule EF-R [Data Management]).
  - (d) A District-owned Cellular phone/wireless device used primarily for personal reasons could be considered an employee taxable fringe benefit under IRS regulations.
  - (e) A pattern of personal use which causes additional cost to the District may be subject to corrective or disciplinary action.
- (4) Employees/contractors are responsible for protecting the District's cellular phones/wireless devices from loss, damage or theft.
  - (a) The employee/contractor must produce the equipment immediately upon resignation or termination of employment or at any time upon request.
  - (b) An employee/contractor unable to present the equipment in good working condition should expect to remunerate the cost of a replacement to the District.

b. **Safety Issues for Cellular Phone/Wireless Devices Use:**

- (1) Employees/contractors who are issued cellular phones/wireless devices must comply with state law, including the Hands-Free Georgia Act (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-241) in conducting business-related communications on a cell phone/wireless device while driving a vehicle. Safety must come before all other concerns.
- (2) Employees/contractors who are charged with traffic violations or who cause accidents resulting from the use of the District's cellular phone/wireless device will be solely responsible for all liabilities resulting from such actions.
- (3) Notwithstanding the above guidance, school bus drivers must comply with state law, including the Hands-Free Georgia Act (O.C.G.A. § 40-6-165).

c. **Personal Cell Phones:**

Employees, except bus drivers as noted in Section 5.b.(4) above and in Administrative Rule ED-R (Student Transportation Management), shall be allowed infrequent use of personal cell phones so long as their use does not interfere with job performance. Classroom personnel shall be allowed to use personal cell phones during any non-instructional time when not in the presence of students.

Approved: 8/26/04

Reclassified an Administrative Rule: 9/1/04 Reviewed: 9/8/04

Revised: 2/8/06; 7/13/06; 8/8/07; 11/14/07

Revised and recoded: 7/19/12 (Previously coded as Administrative Rule GBDA)

Revised: 7/1/18

Legal Reference

O.C.G.A. 40-6-241

Driver to exercise due care; proper use of radios and mobile telephones allowed