

UNDERSTANDING SENATE BILL 181

TRACEABLE COMMUNICATIONS

Frequently Asked Questions



[Senate Bill 181](#) (SB 181), passed during the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly, requires school boards to adopt a traceable communication system that “*shall be the exclusive means for school district employees and volunteers to communicate electronically with students.*”

The spirit of the bill is one we can all agree on: protecting students, encouraging more parental involvement and safeguarding school communications. After receiving bipartisan support and unanimous approval in the legislature, as well as the signature of the governor, districts are now tasked with overseeing broad new restrictions on employee and volunteer communications with students.

As districts prepare to implement new policies for adhering to SB181, several questions have arisen. KSBA has compiled the following answers to frequently asked questions to clarify key aspects of the legislation.

Note: This is summary information and is not meant to reflect all situations. School board members and district administrators should always consult their school board attorney on matters of policy.

When will SB 181 go into effect?

All (non-emergency) legislation passed during the 2025 Regular legislative session, including SB 181, will go into effect on June 27. Local school boards must adopt/approve their local policies each year by the statutory deadline of Aug. 15. ([KRS 160.340](#)).

Additionally, the law requires that districts must communicate with parents/guardians about the traceable communication systems – including instructions for accessing those communications tools – within the first 10 days of school. SB 181 states:

“The principal of each public school shall provide parents written or electronic notification within the first ten (10) days of the school year of each electronic school notification and communication program designated within the traceable communication system. The notification shall include instructions for parents to access and review communications sent through each electronic school notification and communication program.”

Does SB 181 require school boards to adopt the use of a singular mode of communication for authorized student communications by district employees and volunteers?

No. The term “traceable communication system” is defined in the law as “one (1) or more electronic school notification and communication programs or applications” that meet specific criteria. Districts are not limited to a singular program/application.

What qualifies as traceable communications programs/platforms?

The law requires the local school board to approve programs(s)/platform(s) that trace all communications sent to or by a student and that provide parents/guardians an opportunity to access and review all communications. Many types of communication tools can fall under the category of “traceable communication system,” pending board approval. Districts across Kentucky already use traceable platforms, such as ParentSquare, Apptegy, Google Classroom, district email, etc.

Just as important as adopting the approved traceable communication tools, is ceasing all use of “unauthorized electronic communication” with students. For instance, employees and volunteers may be accustomed to using text messaging as a convenient means of communicating with students. Under the new law, text messaging with students would be prohibited as, in most cases, the exchange would not be fully traceable or reviewable/accessible by parents/guardians.

Note: “Electronic communication” is not defined in the law. Other statutes in the KRS define “electronic communication” to include “any transfer of information, including signs, signals, data, writings, images, sounds, text, voice, and video....” This broad definition could include many unanticipated forms of communication up to and including voice and video communications, two-way communications within Google Classroom between a teacher and student, or devices used by disabled students. Each district will have to make their own determination.

Exactly who is prohibited from communicating electronically with students outside of the district’s approved traceable communication system.

The law defines school district employee or volunteer as “a school administrator, classified or certified employee of a school district, school volunteer, nonfaculty coach or assistant coach, student teacher, or sponsor of an extracurricular program or activity.” This definition likely also includes substitutes and virtually every type of volunteer from classroom volunteer to extracurricular volunteers to chaperones.

The definition does *not* include school board members, SBDM parent representatives, PTA/PTO members or individuals serving in booster, vendor or independent contractor capacities, so they would not be restricted to using only the approved traceable communication system – regardless of if they work directly with students.

Are there any exceptions that allow employees to use student communications tools that are not part of the approved traceable communication system?

Family members (parent, brother, sister, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, or grandparents) and legal guardians who are employees or volunteers are exempt from this policy when communicating with their own children.

Note: As written, not *all* family members fall under the exceptions, only those listed above. Cousins and in-laws, for instance, would be subject to the communications restrictions set forth in SB181.

Furthermore, the bill allows a parent or legal guardian to submit written consent for a designated employee or volunteer to communicate with his/her student outside of the traceable communication system. Each consent form applies to an individual employee or volunteer. Or, as the law reads, “a single, specific school district employee or volunteer per each consent form.” That means there would need to be a consent form for each individual employee or volunteer that the family wishes to exempt from the traceable communications. For

instance, one consent form could not be submitted to exempt all four basketball coaches. Instead, written consent would need to be submitted for each individual coach.

As part of the 2025 board policy updates, districts have received from KSBA a model procedural consent form they can use or build from that designed to capture what is required for consent. (Procedure 08.2324 Ap.2)

How long are the consent forms effective? Until the end of the school year? Until the student graduates/advances from the school?

The law does not identify the effective dates of consent. The bill allows the consent to be “revoked at any time.”

What about instances in which an employee or volunteer serves in a capacity outside of school that merits communication with the student, such as a youth minister, piano teacher, neighbor, etc. Would he/she be required to restrict all electronic communications with the student to those within the traceable communication system, even in instances where the communications are not school related?

As written, the bill captures all communication between any student and any employee or volunteer in any setting under all circumstances (with exceptions only for close family.) The bill does not make any distinction regarding the reason for the communication, and it does not require the communication to be connected to the student’s role as a student or the district employee/volunteer’s role as an employee/volunteer.

What happens if an employee or volunteer is alleged to have communicated with a student electronically outside of the approved traceable communication system?

If a district employee or volunteer is aware of alleged unauthorized electronic communications between a district employee or volunteer and a student, he/she “shall immediately notify the supervising principal.” (If the allegation is against the principal, the notification can be made to the superintendent. If the allegation is against the superintendent, the notification can be made to the school board chair.)

The district must then notify the parents of each student who is an alleged party to the unauthorized communication. The district must also investigate the allegation and respond accordingly.

What response or disciplinary action is required in the event of alleged violation of the traceable communication system policy (and SB181).

If it is determined that there was a violation to this policy (unauthorized communication between an employee or volunteer and a student), the law outlines disciplinary steps.

Classified employees who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to existing disciplinary action in accordance with [KRS 161.011](#).

Certified employees who are found to have violated this policy must be reported to the Education Professional Standards Board which is separately required to “promptly investigate” the allegations and take appropriate disciplinary action.

Volunteers who are found to have violated this policy “shall be prohibited from future school volunteer opportunities.”

What about instances where the unauthorized communications were accidental or otherwise innocuous?

There is no exception for accidental or innocuous communication. From the bill: “Unauthorized electronic communication . . . means an electronic communication with a student by a school district employee or volunteer who is not the student’s family member that occurs outside of a designated traceable communication system and without prior written parental consent.” This encompasses all communication between any student and any employee or volunteer in any setting under all circumstances for any reason.

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