



March 2024

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## Safe Communication: Fostering Trust Between Teachers and Students in the Digital Age

Effective communication is the cornerstone of a successful learning environment. In today's digital world, teachers have a wider range of tools at their disposal to connect with students. However, ensuring safety and maintaining boundaries are paramount. This article explores best practices for teachers to communicate effectively with students while prioritizing their well-being.

### Building Trust: The Foundation for Safe Communication

A classroom environment built on trust is essential for safe communication. Teachers can cultivate this by:

- **Modeling respectful communication:** Treat students with courtesy and avoid sarcasm or negativity.
- **Creating a safe space for questions:** Encourage students to ask questions without fear of judgment, fostering a culture of open dialogue.
- **Maintaining clear boundaries:** Establish clear guidelines for communication, outlining acceptable topics and response times.

### Utilizing Messaging Apps for Safe Communication

Messaging apps like Remind offer a convenient way to send quick announcements or reminders to students without requiring their personal phone numbers. These platforms often have features like read receipts, allowing teachers to track if a message has been seen. Here's how to leverage them safely:

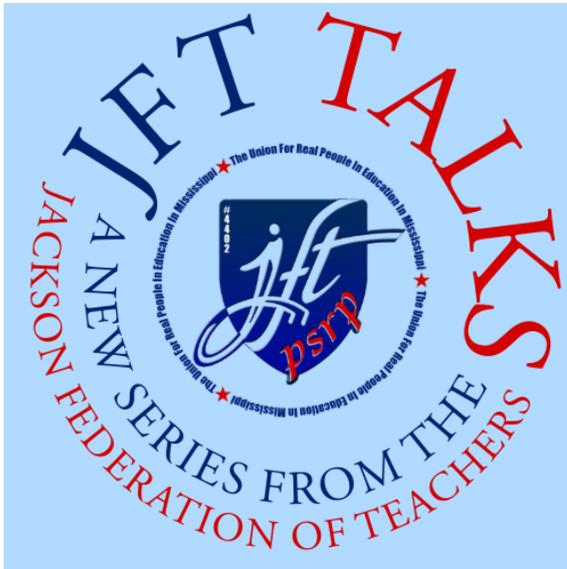
- **Limit communication to class-related matters:** Avoid using messaging apps for personal conversations or sensitive topics.
- **Maintain professionalism in tone and language:** Remember, even informal communication reflects on you as a teacher.
- **Be mindful of response times:** While not obligated to respond immediately, establish reasonable expectations for response during school hours or designated communication windows.

### Email Communication: Balancing Clarity and Privacy

Email remains a primary communication tool for teachers. Here are some tips to ensure safe and effective email communication:

- **Use clear and concise subject lines:** This helps students prioritize and identify important messages.
- **Maintain a professional tone:** Avoid informal language or abbreviations that might be misunderstood.
- **Be mindful of CCing:** Only carbon copy (CC) the principal or a parent when absolutely necessary, such as for serious disciplinary concerns or ongoing communication about a student's needs.
- **Document Everything:** Keep copies of important communications, especially when dealing with sensitive issues.

*(Continued on page 3)*



## JFT Talks: MAAP Testing

Welcome to JFT Talks, a new informative series aimed at providing members with valuable information to help them be stronger, better employees.

Our first session will cover **MAAP Testing** and will be held live on **Monday, April 1, 2024, at 3:00 PM.**

We will cover Appendix F requirements, best practices in the testing room, and how to report testing irregularities. This session is a must for newer teachers.

Can't make the live session? No problem. Visit the JFT Talks page on [our website](#); you'll be able to register to view the recorded session at your convenience. Come and learn with us!

[Register for this session here.](#)

## RETIREE MEETING

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Join us Tuesday, April 2 at PJ's Coffee in Fondren for our next Retiree meeting. Come learn how you can remain an active union member as a retiree.

**PJ's Coffee**  
3100 Old Canton Rd  
Jackson MS 39202

## IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION ACCURATE?

We have run into issues getting accurate employee information from JPS, so if you've changed work sites from last year, we don't know.

Let us know if your name, address, or other info has changed. Scan the code or click the link below (PDF version only).

Update  
your info  
here



## Safe Communication...

Continued from p. 1

### Alternatives to Direct Communication:

There are situations where direct communication with a student might not be the safest or most effective approach. In such cases, teachers can utilize these alternatives:

- **Classroom announcements:** For general reminders or announcements, utilizing classroom time or a dedicated online forum can effectively reach everyone.
- **Parent-teacher conferences:** Schedule a meeting to discuss sensitive topics or concerns with both the student and their parent or guardian.
- **School counselor intervention:** For issues related to mental health or personal problems, refer students to the school counselor, who is trained to provide support and resources.

### Beyond Communication: Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Safe communication goes beyond just using the right tools.

Here are additional tips for teachers to maintain professional boundaries with students:

- **Avoid personal contact outside of school hours:** This includes social media interactions or phone calls unless strictly necessary and with parental knowledge.
- **Maintain appropriate physical boundaries:** Respect a student's personal space and avoid any physical contact that could be misconstrued.
- **Be mindful of gifts:** Avoid accepting personal gifts from students, especially those of significant value.

By following these guidelines, teachers can create an environment where students feel comfortable communicating openly and safely. This fosters a trusting and productive learning environment where students thrive. Remember, open communication is a two-way street. Encourage students to report any concerns they have about safety or inappropriate communication practices. Working together, teachers and students can ensure a positive and secure learning experience for all.

## Recent changes to JPS Policy **GADE** (Sick Days)

### Key Takeaways

- **Doctor's Note:** You need a doctor's note for absences exceeding 4 consecutive days (including specific situations around holidays). You will also be asked to complete FMLA forms.
- **Long Term Leave:** For absences exceeding 4 weeks, submit a doctor's note with your return date to the finance office. **FMLA paperwork will likely apply.**
- **Notification:** Tell your supervisor about planned medical leave in advance, and unplanned leave as soon as possible.
- **Misuse of Sick Leave:** Optional medical procedures scheduled during school sessions could result in loss of future sick days.
- **Discipline:** Lying about the reason for absence could lead to docked pay, a mark on your record, or even termination.
- **Compliance:** Failure to follow these rules could be considered unauthorized absence and lead to termination.

## Did you know this policy exists?

### GBRA: PAPERWORK REDUCTION

It shall be the policy of the Jackson Public School District that paperwork required of teachers and staff be limited to that which is directly related to the instructional program and shall contribute to the effectiveness of the instructional program in the district. Reports required by the state or federal government may be required. All other reports and paperwork requirements shall be reviewed and appropriate action taken to eliminate or reduce those which are not essential. The district board and administration will continue to improve the ability of the district to manage instruction and fiscal requirements by electronic means.

**Congratulations to  
Gladystine Jones  
for winning the Swag Bag and gift  
card from JFT Talks!**

# JFT BYTES - MARCH 2024

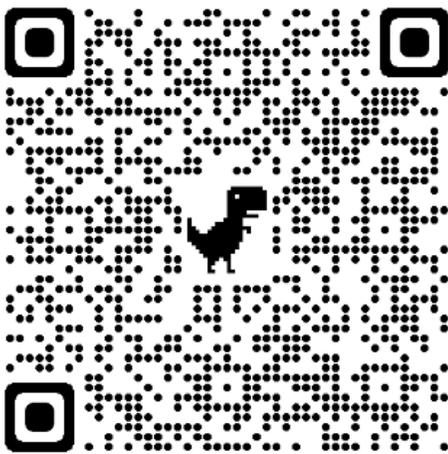
How has the union helped you?

Your testimonials demonstrate the importance of the union to prospective members

Share  
your  
stories  
with us



Work Site Issues Form



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### In-Person PD Sessions

- March 23 - Differentiating Instruction (.6 CEUs)
- March 30 - Managing Behavior in School Communities (.6 CEUs)
- April 20 - Students with Challenges (.6 CEUs)
- May 4 - Reading Comprehension Instruction (.6 CEUs)
- May 25 - Engaging Students' Long-Term Memory (.6 CEUs)

### Virtual PD Sessions

- March 23 - Navigating the Bridge Between Stress and SEL (.6 CEUs)
  - April 6, 20, & 27 - Foundations for Effective Teaching, Part III (1.8 CEUs\*\*)
- \*\* Must attend all sessions to receive CEU certificates*

To sign up, visit

[www.jftpsrp.com/professional-development.html](http://www.jftpsrp.com/professional-development.html)

For questions, email [pd@jftpsrp.com](mailto:pd@jftpsrp.com), or call the union office.

**In Development: Summer PD Sessions, On-Demand Sessions**

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