August 30, 2017

Dear Prince Families:

As we conclude our first month of school, we hope your family is settling back into a familiar routine. There have been repetitive comments from parents, faculty, and staff that we have enjoyed one of the smoothest back to school starts in recent memory. If you have experienced anything to the contrary, I encourage you to open a dialog with your teacher or principal to see how we may be of assistance. Our school’s mission statement says we are committed to a *partnership with Christian families* and clear communication is essential to any effective partnership, which is the reason for this letter.

Earlier this week in your [Head of School LINK](http://www.princeave.org/uploads/main/August_2017-a.pdf), we informed you that last March PACS was accredited for the first time by the rigorous process required by the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS). One of this year’s policy changes driven by the accreditation team was the manner in which we conduct electronic communications within our family-school community, more specifically, how the faculty and staff electronically communicate with students and parents and vice-versa. These are not significant changes, but it is very important that we educate ourselves and adhere to these changes to honor our family-school partnership. For simplicity, these changes are outlined below in two categories: texting and social media.

Texting (Short Message Service)

As a generally policy, teachers are not allowed to text students or parents for issues associated with their duties as employees of the school. The reason for this policy change is a legal one with the goal of protecting our family-school community. School case law is replete with litigation relative to texting, and this SAIS policy recommendation has already proven to reduce such unfortunate situations that may arise in schools like ours. Our faculty and staff were made aware of this policy change during preplanning, and it is now documented in our school’s Employee Handbook. Teachers have been instructed to use their school e-mail account as their primary electronic communication medium with parents and students, and coaches have been instructed to use e-mail or one of our school’s official Twitter accounts that have recently been standardized across our athletic and fine arts departments. The rapid dissemination of information regarding cocurricular practice schedule changes, etcetera, makes the use of Twitter accounts by schools like ours a good compromise to texting. Your assistance in using e-mail and Twitter will directly aid our teachers and coaches in complying with this policy change driven by our accreditation process.

Social Media

Social media is now ingrained in our western culture almost unilaterally across generations, and SAIS’s recommendation that teachers neither “friend” or “follow” students, nor students “friend” or “follow” teachers, is a policy already in place at most middle and secondary schools both private and public. Social media is the number one contributor for disciplinary and legal issues among students and faculty nationwide due to the ability for parties with varying religious, social, and political perspectives to miscommunicate in the spontaneous world of social media. We have addressed an increasing number of social media issues at our school, so to aid in preserving the mentor-to-mentee relationship between teacher/coach and student, we have also accepted and implemented this recommendation from the SAIS accreditation team.

Policies of this type are welcomed by some as “no brainers,” and they will be opposed by others, but as we have agreed upon in our Statement of Biblical Morality during the acceptance and reenrollment processes, “When an individual becomes a member of [the PACS] community, he or she lays aside certain rights for the good of the total community.” These changes are supported by overwhelming positive evidence by SAIS, which oversees literally hundreds of schools in the southeast region.

We also recognize that the information in this letter does not cover every scenario, but it does define general guidelines: teachers and coaches do not text students, nor do they “friend,” or “follow” students on social media and vice-versa. In addition, the primary electronic communication between teachers and parents is through a school e-mail account and not by texting. If you have any additional questions regarding this communication policy, please refer them to your student’s principal who will work with you to find the best solution. Thank you for your partnership and helping us create a loving, nurturing, and physically and emotionally safe environment that rests on the most stable of foundations - God’s word.



Seth Hathaway

Head of School

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