

IMD Connection

Educate, Celebrate, Innovate

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A Publication of the GCPS
Information Management
Division

Supporting Instruction and
Administration through
Technology

→ Holiday Greetings!

At this festive time of year, I am grateful for the great work accomplished by the IMD community. I applaud the devoted and industrious efforts you have demonstrated towards your job in the last year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the schools, tech teams, and leadership for their support, suggestions, and valuable input this year. It has been a pleasure to work with innovative professionals like you.

I hope every member of the IMD staff and GCPS community, and all of their families and friends, have a lovely holiday season filled with joy and meaning.

***I wish you the best of
holidays and a Happy New
Year!***

Scott Futrell



→ Email Overload

Halloween is behind us, Thanksgiving is put away, and the early signs of Christmas cheer can already be seen in many places. The holiday season brings festive parties, family gatherings, and a deluge of spam. Unsolicited messages, or spam, which account for nine out of 10 emails, fill up the inboxes of computer users more than ever at this time of year, experts say.

Can sending a "Happy New Year" or "Merry Christmas" greeting hurt our email deliverability? You bet!

Let's say on we get holiday emails from:

1. Family: Parents, Children, Grandchildren, Aunts, Uncles, Nieces, Nephews, Cousins... *(maybe 5 emails in all, could be more or less depending on how spread out your family is)*
2. Friends *(let's just say 5, though it could easily be far more)*
3. Bosses, Co-Workers, Employees *(another 5 as a start)*
4. Retailer emails promoting sales *(another 5 a day, at least)*



So far, only about 20 emails, this might not seem too bad. But now,

let's say we're in a department of 20 people, and they all send out a holiday email. Now we're at 400 greetings...a day. Throw in the fact that we probably have not been at our computer as much over the holidays, so the other emails coming in over that time are piling up, too. Whew!

Forwarding Christmas stories may seem like a festive thing to do, but these emails with hundreds of email addresses inline not only clog up mail servers, it also spreads email addresses to countless others whose systems may be infected.



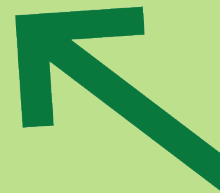
An overstuffed inbox is often the cause for spam complaints that require staff time and energy to resolve.

Screensavers, animated wallpapers, and holiday themed games are all very popular at this time of year. Frequently, they carry malicious payloads, often taking advantage of unpatched Flash installs. Security software companies warn that the electronic holiday greeting cards likely to clog company intranets in December could carry so-called "Trojan horse" executables. These viruses arrive cloaked in attachments, invading a network when a user opens a card containing code that can virtually "bug" a PC.

Let's have a safe and jolly holiday by redirecting those holiday emails to our personal home email accounts. Open and share those funny e-cards and animated greetings with family to enjoy.

→ Policy Corner

Q - I am a teacher at a middle school, and would like to know if students can create a blog for school? I want them to create one at Blogger.com, but I do not know if this is permissible. I use an academic blog for students' responses.



A - The real question is around the academic reasons for having students create such a blog. As the teacher, you would be responsible for **all content** being placed on the blogs, especially if the blogs are public to the internet. Below are some key questions you need to consider.

Key questions:

- What is the academic / teaching & learning reason for creating the blog? Are there other tools that can address the same skills in a safer format?
- How will you monitor the content of each blog **before** it is posted?
- Our district guideline is that the teacher moderates all class-related blogs. How do you plan to do that?
- What steps will you take to protect the privacy of students on the blogs?
- Who will be backing you up on the maintenance of the blogs

in case you are not able to do that?

- What will happen with the blog at the end of the term or assignment?

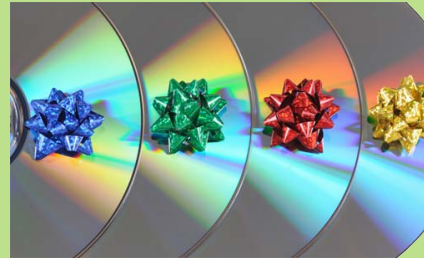
While this seems like a lot of questions, the reality is that GCPS employees don't have a district-approved solution that can do all of these things yet, and they are functions recommended for eCLASS development in the future.

→ A Suite Deal

For about the cost of a month's subscription to an Internet service provider, eligible GCPS employees can purchase a copy of the software application they are currently using on their office desktops for use on their personal home computers. This benefit, called the Microsoft Home Use Program, is part of the overall GCPS Microsoft Enterprise License Agreement.

Through this program, **employees can purchase a single copy of Microsoft Office for approximately \$25.**

Copies of Windows Office 2010 and MAC Office purchased through this program can be installed and used on only one home computer while the purchaser continues to be employed by GCPS. Contact Customer Support or your school TST for information about the suite's components.





Microsoft Office Suite ordering is available year-round. The Microsoft Office package must be purchased with a personal credit card directly from [Microsoft](#). The Access Code to verify the purchaser as an eligible GCPS employee is available from the Help Desk or your school TST. Please note that GCPS is not responsible for supporting or installing the software. You can contact Microsoft directly for support.


This is an employee benefit, and employees **MUST** have a GCPS e-mail address to participate. If an employee does not have a GCPS email account, they will need to request a GCPS portal email account to initiate the ordering process


"Getting this software is easier than people may believe," said Christopher Wells, who recently purchased software for his home computer. "The process is simple and easy, and I would definitely recommend anyone who is eligible to take advantage of the benefit," he said.

→ Laptop Tips

 Keep your laptop on a cool, hard surface to avoid obstructing the ventilation and overheating your computer.

 Check and clean the vents every month to expel out the dust and prevent dirt from clogging up the inside of your computer. Don't let pets on your laptop, their hair will clog vents.

 Avoid soft surfaces, because the laptop sinks down and the ventilation system can't do its job keeping the laptop cool enough to operate.

 A laptop stand can make a big difference. There are a number of options to consider, for example Keyynamics (<http://keyynamics.com/>). Or try a cooling rack to elevate the laptop.

 Check the fan. If your fan is not working correctly you could experience some big troubles. Contact your tech team immediately.

Taking some basic precautions for your laptop will enable you to enjoy a lot of usage.

Safe Holiday Browsing

Bargain hunters will undoubtedly be flocking to the Internet for holiday sales this year, and overall online sales are again expected to increase this season as more shoppers forego the trip to the store and tick off the names on their "nice" list from the comfort of their homes. Unfortunately, scammers will again be setting up shop online this year, using low prices to entice shoppers, but ultimately not delivering the goods. IMD Connection offers these tips for gift givers to help stay safe and secure when shopping online this holiday season.

Know the Signs of Fraud

A lock symbol in the wrong place on a web page. A misspelled domain name in the address line. Lotteries that charge a fee to collect your winnings. All of these tricks, and more, have been used to take someone's money or identity. To avoid being conned, learn the telltale signs below.

Phishing Websites

Fraudulent (phishing) emails may direct you to a bogus or spoof site that is often very convincing. Look closely for these telltale signs:

- The site threatens to shut down your account unless you verify your personal information.
- The site returns an error message and asks you to log in.
- The URL isn't quite right. For example, you see www.Visa-USA.com or http://www.Visaonline.Visa.com instead of www.Visa.com. The URL may also contain numbers (such as an IP address) or a "@" symbol.
- The padlock icon is out of place. It should be in the browser status bar in the lower right and not within the web page.
- When you double-click on the lock icon, you get a warning that the site address doesn't match the security certificate.
- The logo is distorted or stretched which indicates it's been copied.
- Spelling and grammar mistakes.
- If there's a phone number on the fake website, it doesn't match the phone number on your account statement.
- You can't link to a home page from the fraudulent site.



Remember: Banks and credit card companies never ask for your PIN or password over the telephone, by text message or by e-mail.

For more information about phishing scams and examples of phishing emails, visit the Consumer Fraud Reporting [website](#).

Courtesy of BBB.com



Watch GCPS TV December 12th at 8 p.m. for the season premiere of ParentTVision. Margaret Cheeley,

Collins Hill High counselor and ParentTVision host, introduces a new magazine style format for the show. Topics covered include connecting to schools via new technologies; facebook and its appeal to teens; the college search process; changes in HOPE; and a look at how much sleep students are getting.





GCPS student projects take top spot during International Student Media Festival

Close to 100 student projects from Gwinnett County Public Schools were selected for top awards during the 2011 International Student Media Festival (ISMF).

At the annual event, which celebrates excellence in student media projects, 90 of the 112 GCPS entries were recognized with the Excellence in Media Production award. Thirty-six of those 90 projects also received a Judge's Favorite award, and one project from Mason Elementary was selected as the recipient of the **Best of Festival** award, the highest honor. These award-winning entries included projects in animation, live action, web sites, and sequential and interactive stills.

→ Netiquette

By its nature, email is a "cold" medium. Messages written on-screen lack the warmth of face-to-face conversations. Missing is the benefit of body language and intonation. Combine email's coolness with a tendency of many writers to type messages quickly, and sometimes thoughtlessly, and it's easy to see how email can result in misunderstandings. Here are some simple guidelines you can use to avoid difficulties.

- **Beware of Hidden Readers** - If confidentiality is an issue, don't use e-mail. It's not secure. You may intend to send an email to only one person, but an inaccurate keystroke or the recipient's decision to share your message could land your email on hundreds of unintended readers' screens.
- **Write as Though Mom Were Reading** - Regardless of the intended reader, write your message as if your boss, the media, or Mom were going to read it. People tend to treat email too casually, sending messages they would never commit to paper. Before you send the message, read it out loud, and ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable saying this in a crowded elevator?"
- **Keep the Harassment and Discrimination Policies in Mind** - Sexual harassment and racial discrimination lawsuits have resulted from employees sending improper internal and external email messages. Ethics, harassment, and discrimination policies apply to all communication regardless of the format.
- **Control the Urge to Let Off Steam** - Upset or angry? Chill...compose yourself before composing your message.



Once you hit "send", your email is on its way through cyberspace and can't be retrieved.

- **Respect the Reader's Time** - An electronic mailbox stuffed with recipes, jokes, health warnings, and requests for charitable donations can be a time-consuming annoyance. In some environments this is considered spam and a violation for which you can be fined...or fired!
- **Keep an Eye on Spelling, Grammar, & Punctuation** - Your readers will. Professionalism extends to all forms of communication; written, verbal, and electronic.
- **Keep the Editorial Comments Out** - If you receive an email that is short on style but long on grammatical errors, keep the observation to yourself. Few people appreciate unsolicited critiques of their electronic writing.
- **Consider Email's Limitations** - Email may be the best way to deliver news fast, but it's not necessarily the best route to a quick reply. For an immediate response to a pressing issue, don't rely on email. Instead, pick up the phone or schedule a face-to-face meeting.



Excerpted from *The E-Policy Handbook*, by Nancy Flynn

Send your comments, ideas, and news to IMD_Connection via Lotus Notes. To access the newsletters online, go to <http://gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps-imdweb01.nsf/pages/newsletters>

At IMD Communication Web Page, click on "Newsletters" under the QuickLinks to access previous IMD Connection newsletters.

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