

Listserv Guidelines and Etiquette for MCCPTA Delegates

July 12, 2005

Last modified March 12, 2008

In order to facilitate communication on the MCCPTA_Delegates listserv, we are asking all members of our listserv to please be aware of and abide by a few basic rules of internet etiquette and specifically our listserv's guidelines.

1) Please be sure to sign your message with the same information we ask of people that speak at Delegates Assemblies:

your name - so we can get to know each other between Delegates Assemblies.

your school name - please don't abbreviate the school name, since there are almost 200 schools in the county and new members may not know what your school abbreviation means! You can use ES for elementary school, MS for middle school and HS for high school, though.

your PTA/PTSA position.

If you are forwarding a newspaper article link, please identify yourself in the space provided by the newspaper website for comments.

2) Be respectful and courteous.

Please refrain from any personal and direct retorts on individual PTA members or elected officials by name. Please disagree in a friendly and respectful manner. We all have very strong opinions, but we can disagree in a respectful manner without getting personal. Discussion of ideas is one of the best ways to learn. Discussion of people is counter-productive and to be avoided. All members of this list are equally important, and their opinions and ideas are equally valuable. E-mail feels like a private discussion, but it is not. A good rule of thumb is, "Never post anything you wouldn't want to read on the front page of the Washington Post."

3) Make sure the subject is descriptive.

Please be sure to put a descriptive subject in your message. This helps people who are scanning their email for subjects of interest to them. If you are reading the list in digest and have not upgraded your message format to "fully featured," when you reply to a message, be sure to change the subject or it will just say "re: digest (number)."

4) To originate a message to the group, just email it to:

MCCPTA_Delegates@yahoogroups.com

5) Please trim your replies.

It is helpful if you can remove all but the pertinent thoughts you are responding to when you reply. For instance, if the message you are replying to contains three paragraphs of ideas, and you are only commenting on what is said in the first paragraph, delete the second two paragraphs before adding your own thoughts. Even if the entire message is relevant to your response, please delete the footer information, since Yahoo groups add the footer automatically to all messages it sends. If you leave the original message you are replying to intact, and then add your comments, the footer of the message appears twice in the message. Imagine what happens to a message that is replied to multiple times and not trimmed! Doing this simple thing cuts down on the length of your reply, and is especially important for those list members who are reading the list in digest form. Note: I realize that on some platforms this is difficult or impossible to do, but for those that can, please do so. If you need help, I am happy to provide whatever assistance I can. Email me directly (LPTwigg@erols.com) by clicking on my email address, which should open a new message window directly to me.

6) Political campaigning for individuals is prohibited.

Please refrain from referring to voting for or against specific candidates on the list-serve. MCCPTA is a 501(c)(3) organization, and its tax exempt status requires that it refrain from electioneering with regards to specific candidates. Penalty for electioneering is loss of exempt status; penalty for lobbying above a de minimus amount is a fine. That's why the MCCPTA by-laws are so specific about not engaging in campaign activity. It's easy to talk about the issues without taking the next step and specifically suggesting how people should vote.

7) Copyright.

Rather than post copyrighted information, provide a brief description and a website link to the information or article. Copyrighted information, including newspaper articles, should not be posted to the listserv if the copyright owner has not consented to the posting. If permission has been given to post copyrighted materials, the permission should be stated in the post. For example, "This article has been reprinted with permission from The New York Times."

8) Replies go to the entire list.

Yes, everyone forgets sometimes. But, if you want to respond privately to the poster, you will need to insert their email address into the "to" for the email and delete the group address.

9) Help reduce the number of messages.

Typically, it is considered bad form to reply to the entire list with a message that only says "I agree" or "well said" or "me too." Those types of messages are best sent only to the author of the message. If you want to respond to the entire list, then try to add a reason for your agreement, or some other additional thought that furthers the discussion.

10) Reread posts before sending.

Since email is in itself a very impersonal type of communication, in which we are not afforded the benefit of body language or facial expressions to judge the intent or tone of the sender, we need to all be vigilant of our words. Some people use emoticons to try and add helpful “tone” information. Regardless, it is helpful to read each message knowing the sender may have meant something entirely different from the meaning you ascribe to it. In the same way, it is always a good idea to re-read you own message before you send it, to make sure it is conveying your intended meaning. Sometimes, with a hot issue, delaying the sending of your response and re-reading it hours later is a good course of action.

11) Focus your posts and replies.

We are all very busy people. To reach the largest audience, keep your thoughts focused on issues and positions or you will lose your audience.

12) Be patient!

Everyone needs to remember that the members of this list vary in their computer savvy and expertise. Please be patient and remember all of us make mistakes, even the most expert!

Finally, the moderator is here to help you with any problems you may have. Please do not hesitate to ask for help!

Patti Twigg

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Listservs Moderator**

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