

3.10

ETHICAL AND SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET

3.10.1 INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE

Librarians have a responsibility to provide students a safe and healthy environment in which to learn. That responsibility has taken on multiple new dimensions with the availability of the Internet. Student safety is being addressed in three ways: filtering, Acceptable Use Agreements, and teaching students the ethical and safe use of information.

Filtering

The Department of Education has installed filtering software “in an attempt to block user access to inappropriate and/or harmful text on the Internet. The software works by scanning web site addresses, web site content, e-mail and other documents for objectionable words or concepts.”

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm#filter>

The filter is set in levels from the most restrictive to the least restrictive depending on the age level of the students. Some content falls into the intermediate area where the context of the use determines its acceptability (e.g., breast cancer).

Because any filtering software cannot make perfect determinations of acceptability, sometimes sites are blocked that students need to access for legitimate research purposes. In that case, librarians may follow a process to request that a particular site be unblocked.

1. Verify the legitimacy of the site in question
2. Consult with your principal
3. Go to:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/WWWForms/default.htm> to download the form. You must be on a Department of Education administrative computer to access this form (probably located at a secretary’s desk or in an assistant principal or principal’s office).

4. Ask the principal to send to DIIT
3. DIIT unblocks the site

Acceptable Use Agreement

All students and staff are governed by the Department of Education Acceptable Use Policy which prescribes that all use of the Internet and e-mail must be for legitimate educational purposes. All students are expected to abide by the requirements outlined in the policy:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm#filter>.

All of your students should have signed an AUP (Acceptable Use Policy). They may have signed it through a technology class/teacher or it may be through the library. You

should check with your administration to see how this is being handled in your school. The Department of Education AUP can be found at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm>

This is the policy statement from the DOE. Your school should have some kind of AUP contract or pledge that is signed by student (age appropriate) and guardian. **[See the sample Acceptable Use Policy in the following pages.]**

Teaching Ethical Use

Librarians have a major responsibility to teach students the ethical use of information and technology. In fact, the third standard of the Information Fluency Continuum is “Demonstrating Social Responsibility: An independent learner contributes to the learning community by seeking multiple perspectives, sharing his or her understandings with others, and using information and resources ethically.”

The teaching of Internet ethics and web site assessment should be integrated into your lessons. For ideas and resources to help you with this, see the Information Fluency Continuum.

The main indicators in the Information Fluency Continuum that serve as the basis for teaching social responsibility skills include:

Importance of Information to a Democratic Society

- Seeks diverse sources and multiple points of view.
- Respects the principle of equitable access to information.
- Understands that democracy is built on access to information without censorship.

Effective Social Interaction to Broaden Understanding

- Shares knowledge and information with others.
- Respects others’ ideas and backgrounds, and acknowledges their contributions.
- Collaborates with others to solve problems.
- Collaborates with others to access and use information effectively.
- Uses technology to collaborate with others.
- Uses a variety of media to share information with others.

Ethical Behavior in Use of Information

- Respects the principles of intellectual freedom.
- Respects intellectual property rights.
- Uses information technology responsibly.

Conversation about the ethical use of information and technology should begin in elementary school and build through the years. Every student must learn to evaluate the accuracy and validity of Internet information, to use information without plagiarizing, and to seek and respect others' ideas.

The following websites will be useful in teaching ethical and analytical approaches to the Internet:

<http://www.novemberlearning.com/>

<http://joycevalenza.com/>

See "Evaluation of Internet Information" for the criteria students and teachers can use to determine the reliability and validity of Web sites.

Teaching Safe Use of the Internet

Children can be taught to use the Internet safely through a series of lessons. Two sites offer cyber-safety lessons for free:

<http://www.cybersmart.org>

This site offers a cyber-safety curriculum, lesson plans, and resources.

<http://www.isafe.org>

This site is a free project with materials offered by the US Department of Justice.

3.10.2 ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Policy on District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The New York City Public School System expects that faculty will blend thoughtful use of the Internet throughout the curriculum and will provide guidance and instruction to students in its use. As much as possible, access from school to Internet resources should be structured in ways which point students to those which have been evaluated prior to use.

While students will be able to move beyond those resources to others that have not been previewed by staff, they shall be provided with guidelines and lists of resources particularly suited to learning objectives. Most importantly, librarians and classroom teachers shall instruct students in the skills they need to enable them to find, evaluate, and use information from the Internet wisely and safely.

Outside of school, families bear responsibility for the same guidance of Internet use as they exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, radio, and movies,.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT USERS

Students utilizing District-provided Internet access must first have the permission of and must be supervised by New York City Public School System's professional staff. Students utilizing school-provided Internet access are responsible for good behavior online just as they are in a classroom or other areas of the school. The same general rules for behavior and communications apply.

The purpose of District-provided Internet access is to facilitate communications in support of research and education. To remain eligible as users, students' use must be consistent with the educational objectives of the New York City Public School System. Access is a privilege, not a right. Access entails responsibility.

Users should not expect that files stored on school-based computers will be private. Administrators and faculty can and may review files and messages to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are acting responsibly.

UNACCEPTABLE USES

The following uses of school-provided Internet access are NOT permitted:

- Maliciously disrupting or harming the school's workstations, network, and services through such activities as hacking, or downloading, uploading, creating, or spreading computer viruses;
- Plagiarism;
- Violating copyright or otherwise using the intellectual property of another individual or organization without permission;
- Accessing, uploading, downloading, scanning, or distributing pornographic, obscene, sexually explicit, harassing, discriminatory, or defamatory material;
- Transmitting obscene, abusive, sexually explicit, or threatening language;
- Violating any local, state, or federal statute; or school district policies;
- Vandalizing, damaging, or disabling the property of another individual or organization;
- Accessing another individual's materials, information, or files without permission; sharing passwords or
- Using the account or the identity of another user;
- Using limited network bandwidth for downloads not related to academics;
- Posting web pages for commercial purpose or political advocacy (Material posted on the school server must be reviewed and approved by a faculty member.);
- Copying or downloading software without the authorization of the network administrator;
- Using computers for personal communications: gaming, personal e-mail, chat, personal blogs.

DISCLAIMERS/ LIMITATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT LIABILITY

The New York City Public School System makes no warranties of any kind, neither expressed nor implied, for the Internet access it is providing. The District will not be responsible for any damages users suffer, including – but not limited to – loss of data resulting from delays or interruptions in service. The District will not be responsible for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information stored on District diskettes, hard drives, or servers; nor for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information gathered through District-provided Internet access. The District will not be responsible for personal property used to access District computers or networks or for District-provided Internet access. The District will not be responsible for unauthorized financial obligations resulting from District-provided access to the Internet.

SANCTIONS

Violations of this Acceptable Use Policy could result in a student's loss of access to network and Internet privileges, or other disciplinary action to be determined at the building or classroom level, consistent with the student Discipline Code. Where there is an allegation of criminal behavior, law enforcement organizations will be involved.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Parents of students in the New York City Public School System shall be provided with the following information:

The New York City Public School System is pleased to offer its students access to the Internet. The Internet is an electronic highway connecting hundreds of thousands of computers and millions of individual users all over the world. This computer technology will help propel our schools through the communication age by allowing students and staff to access and use resources from distant computers, communicate and collaborate with other individuals and groups around the world, and significantly expand their available information base. The Internet is a tool for lifelong learning.

Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or potentially offensive to some people. In addition, it is possible to purchase certain goods and services via the Internet which could result in unwanted financial obligations for which a student's parent or guardian would be liable.

While the District's intent is to make Internet access available in order to further educational goals and objectives, students may find ways to access other materials as well. While the District utilizes filters to help regulate students' Internet access, those methods are not failsafe. Nonetheless, the District believes that the benefits to students of access to the Internet exceed any disadvantages. Ultimately, however, parents and guardians of minors are critical in setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. Toward that end, the New York City Public School System makes the System's complete Internet policy and procedures available on request for review by all parents, guardians, and other members of the community.

STUDENT AGREEMENT

Student User

I have read, understand, and will abide by the New York City Public School System Acceptable Use Policy. I realize that violations may result in my loss of my Internet and/or network access privileges, disciplinary actions per the Student Code of Conduct, and/or possible legal action.

Student User Name (Print): _____

Student User Signature: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____

Homeroom Teacher: _____

SOURCE: Adapted from the Indiana Department of Education: AUP Model

<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/olr/aup/aupmod.html>.

Modified by Joyce Valenza.

