

Use of Technology

Things You Should Know as an Educator

Computers, internet, e-mail, text messages, cell phones, i-Pods, and tiny digital cameras have changed our lives. Most school employees use technology to improve communication and instruction, but a few school employees have lost their jobs because they used technology inappropriately.

Tip: Whenever you face a dilemma about whether using technology is appropriate, analyze the situation by changing it to an “old-fashioned” method of communication. For example, if you are deciding whether to send a text message to a student, ask yourself if it would be appropriate to send a similar letter to the parent or your administrator.

Here are more suggestions to help you avoid technology-use pitfalls:

Read your district’s Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), abide by it and reread it once or twice a year. Find out if your district limits use of school computers, personal e-mail, and cell phones by employees.

Assume you have NO privacy regarding e-mail you send and receive, internet sites visited or even computer work done off-line on your employer-sponsored system. For more information on privacy see: www.epic.org/privacy

Ask for proper training if in question about security/privacy issues related to the use of school computers.

Do not use the school computer to communicate or view anything that you do not want your administrator or your mother to read. Most deleted e-mails and computer information can be recovered by a computer technician. School district internet policies usually prohibit profanity, ethnic slurs, sexual content and photos, and harassment. Public schools expect teachers to be role models for students and to conduct themselves with decorum, decency, and integrity. If you should not say something at work, then you also should not communicate it by e-mail or text messages at work or on school computers. You should not bring a sexy magazine to school, and similarly you should not look at sexy Web sites at school or on school computers.

Think before you send. Technology is quick. If you would not say something directly to a person, then do not send it to that person in an e-mail. Take a moment to review any e-mails or text messages before you send them. Check to see if you clicked on “reply,” or “reply all.” Check the message to determine whether it should be sent to a personal e-mail address rather than a school e-mail address.

Avoid sending or forwarding messages to a huge list of people at school. If you would not say it out loud at a staff meeting, do not send it to everyone on campus. Avoid sending jokes or cartoons to a wide distribution list. You may think it is funny; someone else may think it is offensive.

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Do not give away your password or let others see your password, and change your password often. If you do not have password capabilities, you need to insist on getting them. Do not stay logged-on to your computer if you are going to be leaving your classroom for an extended period of time.

There is a trail on the computer you are using showing what internet sites you have accessed. **This history is stored permanently on the computer server.**

Be aware that students can misuse technology at school. If you become aware of inappropriate use of computers, the internet, or email by students, **IMMEDIATELY** report it to your building administrator.

Be aware that some of the newer software now available allows district network administrators to monitor every keystroke on a computer. This not only makes email and Internet usage open to scrutiny, but also would allow a district to read every Word document prepared on a district computer as well. No one should consider anything done on a school computer to be private!

Be cautious about letting others use your school computer. Log off your school computer before you let a student or anyone else use it.

Keep communications professional. Use a school e-mail address to communicate school information to students and parents. Avoid sarcasm and name-calling. Be cautious about giving students your personal telephone numbers, email addresses, and web pages. Remember that you are the student's teacher, coach, or club sponsor. You must be the "grown-up." You can be friendly, but you are not the student's friend or peer.

Keep personal information private. If you use an online social networking site, such as Facebook or MySpace, set your profile as private so that only your close friends and family can view it. Do not post your address, telephone number, work site, birth date, or social security number online.

Remove inappropriate materials from your websites or blogs. Delete suggestive photographs, sexy innuendos, and anything else that can be used against you. Students and parents may view information on these sites.

Google your name. This can help you locate that old website you may have had in college, and also help you locate any fake profiles someone may have created about you. Search www.blogpulse.com and similar sites for information about you on computer blogs.

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Be wary about writing online about your work. It is best not to discuss your work or supervisor even if you are using false names. Someone may see your impulsive, sarcastic rant, and you could be disciplined or fired. Above all else, do not discuss your students online. You might inadvertently disclose student information that is protected by FERPA (Family Educational Records and Privacy Act).

Do not use a school computer or school e-mail addresses to influence an election. Use of a school computer to send or forward communication that asks others to vote for or against a candidate, request political contributions, or volunteer time to help a candidate is against school and state election law policy. Use your home computer and e-mail addresses.

It is recommended that school owned computers be used for school related purposes only, NOT for purely personal use such as: checkbook balancing, online purchases, game playing, social networking, online auction monitoring, etc.

Report unsolicited, inappropriate e-mails to the technology coordinator or your supervisor.

All of these recommendations also apply to school owned laptops that may travel or are able to be checked out. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for the property if it is in your possession.



***We're Not in Kansas Anymore...Make
New Technology Work for You – not
Against You!***