

The following document is from:

Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet: A Guide for Educators

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Part I. Comprehensive Approach

3. Education about Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet

International Society for Technology in Education Technology Education Standards

The recommendations for student instruction and professional development for administrators and teachers contained in this Guide are in accord with the technology education standards developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), in partnership with other educational organizations¹.

¹ URL: <http://cnets.iste.org>.

The pertinent standards are as follows:

National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators (NET*A)²

VI. Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues – Educational leaders understand the social, legal, and ethical issues related to technology and model responsible decision-making related to these issues. Educational leaders:

- A. ensure equity of access to technology resources that enable and empower all learners and educators.
- B. identify, communicate, model, and enforce positive social, legal, and ethical practices to promote responsible use of technology.
- C. promote and enforce security and online safety related to the use of technology.
- D. promote and enforce environmentally safe and healthy practices in the use of technology.
- E. participate in the development of policies that clearly assign ownership of intellectual property developed with district resources.

National Education Technology Standards for Teachers (NET*T)³

VI. SOCIAL, ETHICAL, LEGAL, AND HUMAN ISSUES. Teachers understand the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding the use of technology in PK-12 schools and apply those principles in practice. Teachers:

- A. model and teach legal and ethical practice related to technology use.
- B. apply technology resources to enable and empower learners with diverse backgrounds, characteristics, and abilities.
- C. identify and use technology resources that affirm diversity
- D. promote safe and healthy use of technology resources.
- E. facilitate equitable access to technology resources for all students.

National Education Technology Standards for Students (NET*S)⁴

2. Social, ethical, and human issues

- Students understand the ethical, cultural, and societal issues related to technology.

² URL: <http://cnets.iste.org/tssa/>. Originally referred to as Technology Standards for School Administrators.

³ URL: <http://cnets.iste.org/index3.html>.

⁴ URL: <http://cnets.iste.org/index2.html>

- Students practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software.
- Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.

Instruction for Staff

Administrator Instruction -- A Priority!

As was reported in the *Digital Disconnect*, the Pew Internet and American Life survey of Internet savvy teens, the role of administrators in the use of technology in schools is of critical importance.

School administrators—and not teachers—set the tone for Internet use at school. The differences among the schools attended by our students were striking⁵.

Internet savvy teens have picked up on what educational technology professionals have also come to recognize: The knowledge, understanding, and support for the effective use of technology for instructional purposes demonstrated by school administrators is what sets the tone for the use of the Internet at school.

Unfortunately, while much emphasis has been placed on professional development for teachers in the use of technology, there has been far too little focus on professional development for administrators.

Administrators simply cannot provide the leadership that is necessary and critical to the establishment of a school environment that supports the safe and responsible use of the Internet by students and staff if they do not understand the critical issues that underlie the foundation of such an environment.

The lack of understanding by administrators of these issues can also have significant financial repercussions for the district. As discussed in "District Liability to Students and Other Liability Issues" and "Student Speech," some school districts have suffered financial loss as a result of inappropriate disciplinary responses implemented by the building principal.

Teachers and Other Staff

Teachers and other staff, especially those with responsibilities related to monitoring of student use of the Internet, also need to have a good grounding in issues related to the safe and responsible use of the Internet. All staff should understand that their use of the Internet through the district system must be in compliance with the Internet Use Policy and that their use is also monitored. Far too often, when instances of misuse are identified, the offender is a school staff person, ranging from the relief custodian to the superintendent.

Levin, D. & Arafah, S. *The Digital Disconnect: The widening gap between Internet-savvy students and their schools*. Pew Internet and American Life. Report released August 14, 2002. The full report is available online at: URL: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=67> Summary of Findings.

Teachers need to be especially knowledgeable about activities that they may undertake that could be in violation of the policy -- such as directing all of their students to sign up on a "cool new commercial site" they have discovered. These sites that may be collecting personal information and market research data on their students.

Teachers also need to understand and be attentive to indicators that may provide clues that a student may be engaging in highly inappropriate or potentially dangerous online behavior. Teachers also need to be attentive to student use that may be harassing or bullying other students.

An important aspect of instruction regarding the safe and responsible use of the Internet relates to the effective use of those "teachable moments" that will naturally occur in the context of all Internet use. For example, a well-prepared teacher can use an instance of a student's incorporation of a copyrighted material into a multimedia project as the opportunity for a discussion about how the principles of copyright law apply to such use.

Substitute and Student Teachers

A district's well-developed approach to the safe and responsible use of the Internet can be undermined by the failure of substitute teachers or student teachers to understand the basic principles of the district approach and their responsibilities when engaging students in Internet-related educational activities.

It is recommended that substitute teachers must be specifically approved to instruct in classrooms where students are accessing the Internet. Approval requirements will ensure that substitute teachers have a standard level of technical proficiency and understand Internet safety and responsible use issues, this policy, and the obligations related to supervision of students in their use of the Internet.

Student teachers should receive the same instruction prior to being allowed to provide instruction to students involving the Internet, outside of the supervision of their cooperating teacher.

Districts may want to consider the establishment of periodic training sessions so that substitute teachers and student teachers can learn about the district's comprehensive approach, the district's Internet Use Policy, and their responsibilities when directing student use of the Internet.

Instruction for Parents

Schools should be encouraged to undertake the important responsibility of providing parents with education around issues of the safe and responsible use of the Internet by young people. If parents have greater understanding of the critical issues, this will likely contribute to their support for the comprehensive approach taken by the district.

Unfortunately, far too many parent education programs around safety on the Internet have focused on "how to choose and install filtering software." Parents are simply not choosing this approach. As noted in the *NRC Report*,

A survey conducted by Family PC magazine in August 2001 found that of 600 families surveyed, 26% used parental controls of some kind. About 7 percent of those using parental controls (about 1.8 percent of the total) used off-the-shelf store-bought filtering software. The rest used filtering offered by an Internet service provider⁶.

The single most important concept to address with parents is the critical importance of remaining involved in their child's activities related to the Internet and not overreacting if their child reports to them or if they find that their child has inadvertently or intentionally gotten into the Information superhighway gutter.

In a survey taken by the Kaiser Family Foundation and National Public Radio in 2001, it was noted that about three-fourths of the parents said that they had rules related to the use of the Internet, but only half of their children reported the existence of such rules. Only 38% of older children, those aged 14 - 17, said that their parents knew "alot" about the things they do on the Internet and the Web sites they visit.

Of greatest concern is a finding in a study of girls' use of the Internet conducted by the Girl Scouts.

Girls are aware of the varied dangers of the Internet, but want more proactive involvement rather than prohibitive don'ts from parents. All too often, these computer-savvy teenage girls are still naive and emotionally vulnerable, and they report grappling with issues such as how to react to sexual online content they unwittingly encounter.

A startling example: 30 percent of girls responding to the study reported that they had been sexually harassed in a chat room, but only 7 percent told their mothers or fathers about the harassment, most fearing their parents would overreact and ban computer usage altogether⁷.

Parents simply *must recognize* that if their children fear that their reaction to a report of problems encountered on the Internet will be to get angry, blame the child, and restrict Internet access, children are simply *not* going to make such reports. As a result, children will essentially be on their own when facing the dark side of the Internet.

Schools are the institutions in our society that have the most direct relationship with parents. Schools should undertake the important responsibility of providing parent education related to use of the Internet.

National Research Council. *Youth, Pornography, and the Internet* (Dick Thornburgh & Herbert S. Lin, eds., 2002). URL: http://bob.nap.edu/html/youth_internet/ at Section 12.1.1, footnote 10.

⁷ Whitney, R. (2002) *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media*. Girl Scout Research Institute, New York. URL: <http://www.girlscouts.org/about/PDFs/NetEffects.pdf>

Instruction for Students

Outline of Safe and Responsible Use Issues

The following is a recommended outline of issues to address related to the safe and responsible use of the Internet. An overarching instructional focus should be on media and information literacy, which will provide an important foundation for the following topics.

- Avoiding unintentional access – effective search skills, URL porn-napping.
- Dealing with accidental access – getting out of mouse-traps, reporting.
- Recognizing and dealing with unwanted SPAM.
- Communication safety skills – protection of privacy, recognizing predators, reporting predators, protecting friends.
- Protection of privacy – personal privacy, privacy of others, privacy on commercial sites, profiling.
- Harmful speech – defamation, harassment, violation of privacy, abusive language, flame wars, etiquette, recognizing harmful speech/hate sites, consequences for offenders, effective victim responses.
- Responsible speech – free speech rights, effective online advocacy, disability IT access.
- Copyright – rights and responsibilities.
- Plagiarism.
- Computer security – unlawful computer activities.
- Network security and resource limits – passwords, viruses, quotas, downloads, group lists.
- Online addiction – sexual, violent games, gambling, other.

Please consider the book, *Computer Ethics, Etiquette, and Safety for the 21st Century Student*, by Nancy Willard, published by the International Society for Technology in Education⁸. Additional resources for professional development and parent education are under development by the Responsible Netizen Institute.

Internet Use Policy as the Foundation

As noted in the chapter entitled "Internet Use Policy," the policy provisions can be considered the foundation for an instructional program for administrators, staff, and students, related to the safe and responsible use of the Internet. A district objective should be that all administrators,

⁸ Available through ISTE's online bookstore at URL: <http://www.iste.org>

staff, and secondary students know the provisions of the Internet Use Policy and regulations and, more importantly, understand the underlying reasons for the policy and regulation language.

Transition at Middle School

For students, the time that instruction about the Internet Use Policy will be most important is in preparation for use of the Internet in middle school. This is the time when students are generally granted more freedom of the use of the Internet at school. This is also the time when they are most likely expanding their use of the Internet at home.

Establishing a specific instructional program where students will engage in an in-depth analysis of the district's Internet Use Policy and the reasons for the provisions should occur in conjunction with the transition to middle school. Such instruction might occur during the last half of the year in elementary school or as an entry course in middle school.

As a result of successful completion of this course, students could obtain some form of certification, an Internet "driver's license," that would enable them to have the privilege of more open use of the Internet. It will be necessary to establish some manner of providing for instruction of those students who transfer into the district at a later time.

Care will need to be taken to help students understand what provisions of the policy are related specifically to activities that are not considered to be appropriate in school and what provisions set forth good guidelines for safe and responsible use in any location.

Elementary School

Students in elementary school are presumably using the Internet in safe Internet spaces while at school. Students in these grades, and their parents, still should receive instruction in essentially Internet safety skills, especially those related to avoiding the inadvertent access of inappropriate sites and skills for independently dealing with the potential of accessing such sites. These essential skills are addressed below.

Incorporation into the Curriculum

Issues related to the safe and responsible use of the Internet should be incorporated, where appropriate, into specific areas of the curriculum. Logical courses that should be adapted to incorporate Internet use issues include:

- Sex education classes – Internet pornography, predation and victimization, online addiction.
- History and social science – online hate/harmful speech, free speech/responsible speech, digital divide, effective online advocacy.
- Writing instruction – copyright and plagiarism.
- Technology classes – copyright, technology ethics, computer security.
- Web development projects – copyright, plagiarism, harmful speech, free speech, privacy, disability IT access.

- Consumer education – online profiling and marketing, Internet scams and frauds

Media and information literacy should be addressed throughout curriculum.