



**WRITING A RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY**

# WRITING A RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY

Every school with computers and/or other technology communication equipment should have a Responsible Use Policy (RUP) or an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) so that students, staff and visitors understand the rules for appropriate use, and the consequences for inappropriate use, of technology. When writing or revising your RUP, avoid “over-legislating;” write general guidelines.

Review the school’s academic philosophies and strategies that will be supported by access to technology. All policies in the RUP should have a direct correlation to the school’s academic focus.<sup>i</sup>

Within the all-encompassing RUP, write separate sections to guide student use and staff use.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The definition of “technology” should not be limited to computers or tablets that belong to the school; “technology” should also include cell/smart phones, notebooks, e-readers or other portable technology that users may bring with them on to school property.
2. Write an inclusive policy that covers all aspects of use of technology within the school (see “Policy Topics” below).
3. Solicit input from administrators, staff (teachers, administrative assistants, aides, custodians, bus drivers, resource consultants), students and parents before finalizing the document. LISTEN to their input and be open-minded.
4. Implement filters and functions to protect both the user and the equipment from unauthorized content or downloads.
5. Decide what ages will be allowed to use the technology and under what circumstances. Address the use from an age and topic-appropriate point of view.<sup>ii</sup>
6. Write the RUP in a vocabulary that is easily understood by the age-specific reader i.e. the lower elementary students need simpler language than the upper elementary students.
7. Describe why a specific policy is important to the school, and frame the policy in a positive manner.
8. Review the RUP with students in the fall of each year; stress changes from previous policies.

9. Translate the RUP into the language of the home (if not English) and distribute it in both English and the home language.
10. Insist that the RUP be reviewed, agreed to, and signed by anyone with access to the technology (including both parent and student), and the signed/dated document returned to the school.
11. Check with your school's insurance company to determine liability and restrictions that must be enforced.

# POLICY TOPICS

## Internet access

Will Internet access be available throughout the school? Will the staff and/or students have passwords to log on to the system; if so, how will the passwords be issued and protected? Will Internet access be limited by age, need, experience? Will access be limited by time of day? How will you enforce limited access?

**Sample Student Policy:** John Doe School has a local area network (LAN) that services the school. Each user will have an individual password provided by the school administration for the school year 2011-2012. Passwords must be protected as private information.

## Email: user accounts for staff and students

Will staff email accounts be used only for academic communication, or will personal communication be acceptable? Will email "blasts" be encouraged? Will staff email addresses be posted on the school's Website? Is the staff encouraged to email parents of students; if so, who should be copied on the emails?

Will students be assigned private email accounts to be used within the school intranet? Will students have access to public email accounts when using the school computers?

**Sample Student Policy:** Students will be assigned an email address that is specific to him/her and part of the school's private intranet. Any email sent by the student will automatically include the homeroom teacher as one of the recipients. This email address is used by students only to communicate about school projects and academic topics.

### **Internet filtering and monitoring**

The content of many Internet Websites is inappropriate or unnecessary for students in a school setting. What filtering process and Internet access controls are implemented? Will you use key word blocks, site scans? Who is responsible for updating the controls and how often will they be reviewed?

**Sample Student Policy:** John Doe School has a system of filters to reduce the chance of inappropriate Websites being displayed or inappropriate information being accessed. Students will limit their exploration of the Internet to sites and information as recommended by their teachers and related to their course work.

### **Plagiarism and copyright infringement**

Understanding plagiarism and copyright infringement is important. This instruction starts as early as reminding students not to copy from another's work in the first-grade classroom. Who on the staff is responsible for instructing students in responsible use of another person's work on the Internet?

**Sample Student Policy:** Plagiarism is copying or using another person's work without giving credit (or payment) to the author and is against the law. All information copied and used by students will be appropriately referenced by author, source, date of publication, and/or Website link.

### **Harassment and bullying**

Harassment and bullying is an escalating problem in schools, and the administration/staff need to be pro-active in stopping it. Besides recognizing the obligation of one human to respect and protect another, check your city, state and federal laws to be sure that your school is providing adequate protection for your students and staff.

**Sample Student Policy:** Each student at John Doe School is an individual worthy of respect and his/her work is considered personal property. Every student will respect the personal and academic rights of his/her fellow students.

### **Social media (including chatrooms, blogs, Wikis, YouTube, photo sites)**

Many social media sites are available for student-student/student-teacher interaction. Most public sites are open to students when they are 12 years or older. Will you encourage/discourage student-teacher interaction on Facebook, for example?

Will your teachers encourage parent interaction and communication, and to see student work by creating class Wikis and blogs accessible by password? Will the Wikis and blogs be available via the school Website? How will you monitor the content?

**Sample Student Policy:** Students will access social media sites (including chatrooms, blogs, Wikis, YouTube, photo sites) during the school day only when specifically directed by their teachers in the classroom and/or for academic purposes.

### **Personal communication devices**

Students often come to school with a variety of devices – smart phones, touch tablets, e-readers. The school can welcome the addition of technology to its site, but establish practices for its use.

**Sample Student Policy:** Students may use personal electronic devices with low volume during the student's personal time. All devices with an on/off button must be in the "off" position when students are in the classroom unless specifically instructed to turn them on by a teacher.

### **Right to privacy**

If your school issues laptops to teachers or personal learning devices to students, how will you monitor their use? Will you collect them at intervals and review stored information? How will you deal with any personal work done and/or stored on the school's equipment?

**Sample Student Policy:** John Doe School has the right at any time to access information stored in any user directory, on the computer hard drive, disks/USB drives or email that is provided by the school and used by the student.<sup>iii</sup>

### **System security**

The school has the obligation to protect its property from unlawful use and from damage. How are student records protected? What kind of firewalls are in place and what virus and malware protection software is installed? Who is responsible for the protection, and how often will it be updated? If equipment isn't functioning properly, how is it reported and who will be responsible for its repair?

**Sample Student Policy:** All equipment (technology hardware, software and peripherals) is the property of John Doe School and loaned to the users. The

student will use equipment as directed by teachers, practice responsible care and report any malfunctions.

### **Consequences**

Consider reasonable and logical consequences for students/staff who do not comply with the policies. Extreme punitive measures probably will not reflect the philosophy of the school or may hinder a student's right to education.

**Sample Student Policy:** Use of John Doe School's resources by staff, students, and/or visitors ... in an illegal or unethical manner may result in disciplinary action, including loss of privileges to use the system, school sanctions, and referral to appropriate law enforcement authorities. Users may be required to make full financial restitution.<sup>iv</sup>

**Sample Student Policy:** The school may take disciplinary action against those... who violate the Responsible Use of Technology Policy...by means of inappropriate use of technology. Disciplinary action may also be taken against those who use telecommunication devices to cause mental or physical distress to other members of the school community, whether these incidents take place on or off the school property. Disciplinary action taken by school authorities may include revocation of access to technical resources, suspension, expulsion, and/or possible legal action.<sup>v</sup>

### **A disclaimer of responsibility, limitation of liability and Indemnification**

By providing access to technology, and more specifically the Internet, the school, staff and students become more vulnerable to outside influences and criticism. Consult your local school regulations, city/state/federal laws, and your insurance provider to be sure that your policies are in compliance.

Sources:

i.. [www.iste-community.org/group/sigtc/forum/aups-acceptable-use-policies](http://www.iste-community.org/group/sigtc/forum/aups-acceptable-use-policies)

ii. <http://www.rockpointschools.ort/aup.html>

iii. <http://www.rockpointschools.ort/aup.html>

iv. iii. <http://www.rockpointschools.ort/aup.html>

v. <http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/ministries-offices/catholic-schools-office/school-resources/technology>





SAMPLE  
RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY

- John Doe School has a local area network (LAN) that services the school. Each user will have an individual password provided by the school administration for the school year 2011-2012. Passwords must be protected as private information.
- Students will be assigned an email address that is specific to him/her and part of the school's private intranet. Any email sent by the student will automatically include the homeroom teacher as one of the recipients. This email address is used by students only to communicate about school projects and academic topics.
- John Doe School has a system of filters to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate Websites being displayed or inappropriate information being accessed. Students will limit their exploration of the Internet to sites and information as recommended by their teachers and related to their course work.
- Plagiarism is copying or using another person's work without giving credit (or payment) to the author and is against the law. All information copied and used by students will be appropriately referenced by author, source, date of publication, and/or Website link.
- Each student at John Doe School is an individual worthy of respect and his/her work is considered personal property. Every student will respect the personal and academic rights of his/her fellow students.
- Students will access social media sites (including chatrooms, blogs, Wikis, YouTube, photo sites) during the school day only when specifically directed by their teachers in the classroom and/or for academic purposes.
- Students may use personal electronic devices with low volume during the student's personal time. All devices with an on/off button must be in the "off" position when students are in the classroom unless specifically instructed to turn them on by a teacher.
- John Doe School has the right at any time to access information stored in any user directory, on the computer hard drive, disks/USB drives or email that is provided by the school and used by the student.
- All equipment (technology hardware, software and peripherals) is the property of John Doe School and loaned to the users. The student will use equipment

as directed by teachers, practice responsible care and report any malfunctions.

- The school may take disciplinary action against those who violate the Responsible Use of Technology Policy by means of inappropriate use of technology. Disciplinary action may also be taken against those who use telecommunication devices to cause mental or physical distress to other members of the school community, whether these incidents take place on or off the school property. Disciplinary action taken by school authorities may include revocation of access to technical resources, suspension, expulsion, and/or possible legal action.

A disclaimer of responsibility, limitation of liability and Indemnification by the school

I have read and discussed the above policies with my child/parent.

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_