

SECTION XVI

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE AND SAFETY POLICY

The Board recognizes that, as advances in technology increase and improve access to and communication of information, those changes may also improve and enrich instruction and student learning. The Board generally supports access by students to rich information resources along with the development of appropriate analysis and evaluation skills. In a free and democratic society, access to information is a fundamental right of citizenship.

Information technology resources have significantly altered the information landscape for schools. Board Policy 3.50 requires that all materials be consistent with district-adopted guidelines, supporting and enriching the curriculum while taking into account the varied instructional needs, learning styles, abilities, and developmental levels of students. In the past, instructional and library media materials could usually be screened prior to use by committees of educators and community members intent on subjecting all such materials to reasonable selection criteria. Digital resources, which can be accessed through the Internet from any publicly available fileserver in the world, open classrooms to electronic information that may not have been screened by educators for use by students of various ages.

Information literacy skills, in a digital world, are fundamental for the preparation of digitally literate citizens and 21st century employees. The Board expects that staff will blend thoughtful use of such skills throughout the curriculum and that the staff will provide guidance and instruction to students in the appropriate use of digital tools and resources. Staff will consult the guidelines for instructional materials contained in the system's guidelines and will honor the goals for selection of instructional materials contained therein.

Network and Internet access is provided as a tool for education. Access will be provided to students who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Students are responsible for good behavior on the school computer network and Internet just as they are in a classroom or a school hallway. As communications on the network and Internet are often public in nature, general school rules for behavior and communications apply (see *Student Handbook and Code of Conduct*). Independent but supervised student use of digital resources will be permitted upon the submission of the agreement form located on the Student Enrollment Card.

Access to the network and Internet enables students to explore a seemingly infinite number of resources. The Board believes that the benefits of student access in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration exceed the disadvantages. Ultimately, however, parents/guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using digital resources.

The Mobile County Public School System will not be liable for the actions of any person, student or staff, connected to the Internet through the Mobile County Public School System. All users shall assume full liability—legal, financial, or otherwise—for their actions.

CORE RULES FOR SAFE AND ACCEPTABLE USE OF THE INTERNET

The use of Internet resources accessed from any computer that is the property of the school system or any computer connected to a local area network within any school system facility is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in the cancellation of those privileges

and/or punishment for such violations as prescribed in the *Student Handbook and Code of Conduct*. Mobile County Public School System will utilize filtering software or other technologies to prevent students from accessing materials that are (1) obscene, (2) pornographic, or (3) harmful to minors. Schools will also monitor the online activities of students, through direct observation and/or technological means.

Unacceptable uses of the school network and Internet include the following:

- Using the network to access or send pornography (both written and graphic), inflammatory material, profane or obscene material.
- Using the network to access or send any material not specifically related to the instructional lesson, objective, or assignment.
- Deliberate introduction of malevolent software or programming code, including viruses, worms, Trojan horses, malware, or spyware.
- Activities, including hacking, that interfere with or disrupt network users, services, or equipment.
- Using the network for financial gain, for commercial activity, or for any illegal activity.
- Cyber-bullying or any harassing behavior which threatens the health and/or welfare of any person and is inappropriate for school, through any digital means.
- Lending passwords to other students and/or adults.
- Altering and forwarding personal communication without the author's prior consent.
- Spoofing or otherwise attempting to send anonymous messages of any kind.
- Copying and/or distributing commercial software in violation of copyright laws.
- Using copyrighted materials in reports without permission.
- Using the network for sending and receiving a large number of personal messages.
- Any other use that is unacceptable or not in keeping with the mission or goals of the Mobile County Public School System.

All users should be aware that the inappropriate use of Internet resources could be a violation of local, state, and federal laws.

Contract Regarding the Safe and Acceptable Use of the Internet

By signing the Parent/Guardian and Student Acknowledgment for the *Student Handbook and Code of Conduct*, which is found on the Student Enrollment Card, the parent/guardian agrees to the rules and regulations stated in the Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy.

The parent/guardian of this student has read the terms and conditions for system Internet access privileges. The parent/guardian understands this access is for educational purposes and that the Mobile County Public School System has taken reasonable precautions in forewarning and educating all interested parties of the controversial material that is accessible through the Internet. The parent/guardian also recognizes that it is impossible for the Mobile County Public School System to restrict access to all controversial materials. The parent/guardian will not hold the Mobile County Public School System or its employees responsible for materials acquired by their child over the school system network. The parent/guardian accepts that inappropriate behavior may lead to penalties, including revoking of Internet access, disciplinary action, and/or legal action. The student agrees to abide by all rules that are listed in the Mobile County Public School System's *Core Rules for Safe and Acceptable Use of the Internet*. The student realizes that the primary purpose of the Mobile County Public School System's Internet connection is educational, and that as such, educational purposes shall take precedence over all others. The student realizes that the use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right.