

# Computer Network Policy

## Internet, E-Mail, and Computer Network Safety Policy For Students of the Newton Public Schools

The Newton Public School (NPS) system offers Internet access to its students at all levels. Access to the school computer network and to Internet and e-mail services is a privilege, not a right. The intent of this policy is to ensure that students utilize this access in a responsible manner consistent with the purpose of providing these services.

### **PURPOSE**

The Internet is a vast, global network linking computers around the world. Internet use provides valuable opportunities for research, curriculum support, and career development. The Newton Public Schools computer network exists solely for educational purposes, which are defined as classroom activities, career and professional development and high quality self-discovery activities of an educational nature. The NPS computer network is not a resource intended for use as a public forum or for any purpose that is not directly related to the delivery of educational services. The NPS system reserves the right to place reasonable limits on materials posted or accessed through its computer network.

Because of its enormous size, the Internet's potential is without boundaries. With such great possibilities for education also comes the potential for abuse. Members of the Newton Public Schools community are responsible for good behavior on school computer networks just as they are in a classroom or school building. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. Access to network services will be provided to those who act in a considerate and responsible manner.

The Newton Public Schools will make every reasonable effort to minimize the risk that users will encounter objectionable material on the Internet. Through education, supervision and responsible use, the Newton Public Schools believe that the Internet can be used safely and effectively. However, there is no absolute guarantee that this will happen.

The Newton Public Schools believes that the benefits to students from access to information resources and the opportunity for collaboration available through the Internet exceed any potential disadvantages. However, the parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. To that end, the Newton Public Schools respects each family's right to decide whether or not their child will have access to the Internet and electronic mail at school.

In order for a member of the Newton Public Schools Community to use the computer network, s/he must read the following guidelines and sign the User Contract. For users under the age of 18, a parent or guardian must sign the User Contract.

## **NETWORK USAGE GUIDELINES:**

Network access is a privilege, not a right. The use of the network must be consistent with, and directly related to, the educational objectives of the Newton Public Schools.

***Violations of this Internet Safety Policy include, but are not limited to, the following conduct:***

1. Revealing personal information such as last names, addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, etc. that could identify the user or other students.
2. Revealing one's password to anyone else, using anyone else's password, or pretending to be someone else when sending information over the computer network. (Passwords and IDs are provided for each user's personal use only and should not be shared with anyone.)
3. Using profane, vulgar, threatening, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise objectionable or criminal language in a public or private message.
4. Violating copyright laws. (Users should assume that all materials available on the Internet are protected by copyright.)
5. Sending "chain letters" or "broadcast" messages to lists or individuals or subscribing to "listserves" or "newsgroups" without prior permission.
6. Seeking, accessing, or downloading material that is not relevant to assignments or course work.
7. Using the computer network for recreational purposes or activities relating to personal hobbies. For example, accessing "chat rooms" is prohibited, and games must not be played, accessed, or downloaded.
8. Participating in other types of use which would cause congestion of the network or interfere with the work of others.
9. Attempting to harm, modify or destroy data of another user.
10. Distributing or intentionally accessing materials that are obscene, sexually explicit, or without redeeming educational value.
11. Attempting to gain unauthorized access to system programs or computer equipment, including attempts to override any firewalls established on the network.
12. Vandalizing school computers by causing physical damage, reconfiguring the computer system, or destroying data.
13. Failing to log off the computer network at the request of system administrators.
14. Using the Newton Public Schools technology network for political campaigning purposes, including attempts to influence ballot questions or to promote or oppose a candidate for public office.
15. Using the Newton Public Schools technology network for commercial purposes. Users may not create web pages or use network services to advertise or sell products or services and may not offer, provide, or purchase products or services through the Newton Public Schools network.
16. Using the network in a manner that would violate any U.S. or state law or subject the user or the Newton Public Schools to any civil or criminal action. This includes, but is not limited to, the transmission of threatening material, the spreading of computer viruses, participating in software piracy, using the Newton Public Schools technology network for gambling, or arranging for the sale or purchase of drugs or alcohol.

17. Receiving or transmitting information pertaining to dangerous instruments such as bombs or other explosive devices, automatic weapons or other firearms, or other weaponry.

***The Newton Public Schools assumes no responsibility for:***

- Any financial obligations arising out of unauthorized use of the system.
- Any cost, liability or damages caused by a user's violation of these guidelines.
- Any information or materials that are transferred through the network.
- The reliability of the data connection. The Newton Public Schools shall not be liable for any loss or corruption of data resulting while using the network.
- A student's illegal distribution (pirating) of software.

If a user finds materials that are inappropriate while using the Newton Public Schools technology network, s/he shall refrain from downloading this material and shall not share the material with other students.

Should a user encounter any material that s/he feels may constitute a threat against the safety of fellow students, staff members or the property of the Newton Public Schools, that user is obligated to report his/her discovery of such material to a teacher or to his/her principal.

You must immediately disclose to your teacher any message that you receive that you believe is inappropriate or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

## **PRIVACY**

Internet and email messages are public communication and are not private. Electronic mail messages and other use of electronic resources by students are the property of the Newton Public Schools and should not be considered confidential. Copies of all information created, sent or retrieved are stored on the computer network's back-up files.

While the Newton Public Schools does not plan to review cache files or back-up files on a regular basis, it reserves the right to access and monitor all messages and files on the computer system as it deems necessary and appropriate in the ordinary course of its business. These purposes include, but are not limited to, ensuring proper use of resources and conducting routine network maintenance. Network storage areas will be treated like school lockers that may be inspected at anytime. Where appropriate, communication including text and images may be disclosed to law enforcement or other third parties without prior consent of the sender or receiver.

## **PENALTIES AND VIOLATIONS**

A violation of the terms of this Internet Safety Policy may result in suspension or termination of network access privileges (other than directly supervised access during classroom instruction) and may also result in other disciplinary action consistent with the disciplinary policies of the Newton Public Schools and could also result in criminal prosecution where applicable.

In the event that there is a claim that a student has violated any of the guidelines in this policy, s/he will be provided with written notice of the suspected violation and an opportunity to be heard.

The Newton Public Schools will cooperate fully with local, state, and federal law enforcement officials in any investigation relating to any illegal activities conducted through the Newton Public Schools computer network.