

Reading Public Schools

Computer Network and Internet Acceptable Use Policy For Students Of The Reading Public Schools

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers that provides an opportunity for users to communicate with each other, no matter how far apart they are geographically. The Internet provides an almost limitless amount of information that can be used for educational purposes, but the potentially limitless amount of information available on the Internet creates the potential for the posting or retrieval, intentionally or unintentionally, of inappropriate or harmful material. It is the purpose of these guidelines to assist all users of the Reading Public Schools Computer Network to use this resource safely and appropriately.

The Reading Public Schools Computer Network, which includes World Wide Web access and electronic mail capability, exists solely for educational purposes, which are defined as classroom activities, research projects directly related to class assignments, career and professional development, and high quality self-discovery activities of an educational nature. The Reading Public Schools computer network is not intended for use as a public forum or for any purpose that is not directly related to the delivery of educational services.

Members of the Reading Public Schools community are responsible for good behavior on school computer networks just as they are in a classroom or school hallway. Communications on the network may reach larger audiences than face to face conversations or telephone discussions. General school rules for behavior and communication apply. Access to network services will be provided to those who act in a considerate and responsible manner.

The Reading Public Schools believes that the benefits to students from access to information resources and opportunity for collaboration available through the Internet exceed the 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 Reading Public Schools respects each family's right to decide whether or not their child will have independent access to the World Wide Web and an individual email account at school. In making this decision, families should be aware that the Reading Public Schools intends to incorporate network use, Web access, and email in schools according to grade level as follows:

- a. Grades kindergarten through four: Students at these grade levels will not have individual computer network passwords or email accounts. During school time, teachers of students in grades kindergarten through two will guide them toward appropriate materials. Web access at these grade levels will be limited to teacher-directed and teacher demonstrated use. Students will not be conducting independent research on the world wide web, nor will they be sending or receiving electronic mail independently.
- b. Grades five through twelve: Students in grades five through twelve may be given individual access passwords and receive individual Reading Public School student email accounts. They may have the opportunity to access the Web and conduct independent, self-directed research, both during classroom instruction and outside of classroom instruction, under the supervision of a teacher or other staff member.

For students to be permitted to gain independent access to the web or individual email accounts, they must agree to and abide by the rules set out below. For students under 18, parents must provide written permission forms before students will be permitted to gain independent access to the web or individual email accounts. If the Reading Public Schools does not receive a signed user agreement and, if applicable, a signed parental permission form, students will not gain independent access to the web or individual email accounts, but they may still have exposure to the Internet during classroom instruction or library research exercises.

The Reading Public Schools will make every reasonable effort to minimize the risk that users will encounter objectionable material on the Internet. However, there is no absolute guarantee that this will not happen.

The Reading Public Schools intends to utilize any blocking or filtering safeguards required by law. With these measures, in addition to user education, implementation of this policy and grade-appropriate supervision, the Reading Public Schools believes that the Internet can be used safely to enhance the delivery of educational services.

Rules:

1. 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 Reading Public Schools. A violation of the terms of this Acceptable Use 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 Reading Public Schools and could also result in criminal prosecution where applicable. The Reading Public Schools will cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in any investigation relating to misuse of the Reading Public Schools computer network.
2. Violations of this Acceptable Use Policy include, but are not limited to, the following conduct:
 - a. Cyberbullying, which is the repeated use by one or more students of an electronic expression (including transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including but not limited to, the electronic mail, the internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications, creation of web pages or blogs in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, or the distribution of communications to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that be me accessed by one or more persons), alone or in combination with any written or verbal expressions or physical acts or gestures, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (2) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or damage to his property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school. See Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 370.
 - b. Using profane, vulgar, threatening, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise objectionable or criminal language in a public or private message.
 - c. Sending messages or posting information that would likely result in the loss of a recipient's work or system.
 - d. Sending "chain letters" or "broadcast" messages to lists or individuals, subscribing to "listserves" or "newsgroups" without prior permission, or using the Internet access for any other personal use, without prior permission.
 - e. Participating in other types of use which would cause congestion of the network or interfere with the work of others.
 - f. Using the network in a manner that would violate any U.S. or state law. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening material and spreading of computer viruses.
 - g. Accessing or transmitting materials that are obscene, sexually explicit, or without redeeming educational value.
 - h. Accessing any prohibited sites on the Internet.
 - i. Revealing the personal address or telephone number or oneself or another person.
 - j. 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.
 - k. Attempting to gain unauthorized access to system programs or computer equipment, including attempts to override, or to encourage others to override, any firewalls established on the network.
 - l. Attempting to harm, modify or destroy data of another user.

- m. Exhibiting any other action, whatsoever which would in any way subject the user or the Reading Public Schools to any civil or criminal action.
 - n. Discussing highly sensitive or confidential school department information in e-mail communications.
 - o. Using the Reading Public Schools technology network to buy, sell or advertise anything.
 - p. Using social networking sites, discussion groups, chat rooms, instant messaging, or other forms of online conversation unless authorized in advance by the teacher and directly tied to a school assignment or classroom project.
 - q. Using the Reading Public Schools technology network for gambling.
 - r. Using the Reading Public Schools technology network for political campaigning purposes, including attempts to influence ballot questions or to promote or oppose a candidate for public office.
 - s. Failing to log off the computer network at the conclusion of a work session or at the request of system administrators.
 - t. Using the computer network for recreational purposes or activities relating to personal hobbies.
3. The Reading Public Schools assumes no responsibility for:
- a. Any unauthorized charges or fees, including telephone charges, long distance charges, per minute surcharges and/or equipment or line costs.
 - b. Any financial obligations arising out of unauthorized use of the system for the purchase of products or services.
 - c. Any cost, liability or damages caused by a user's violation of these guidelines.
 - d. Any information or materials that are transferred through the network.
4. The Reading Public Schools makes no guarantee, implied or otherwise, regarding the reliability of the data connection. The Reading Public Schools shall not be liable for any loss or corruption of data resulting while using the network.
5. All messages and information created, sent or retrieved on the network are the property of the Reading Public Schools. Electronic mail messages and other use of electronic resources by students and staff, including accessing web pages, should not be considered confidential. Copies of all information created, sent or retrieved, including but not limited to web sites visited (cache files), are stored on the computer network's back-up files. While the Reading 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, including web pages accessed, as it deems necessary and appropriate in the ordinary course of its business for purposes including, but not limited to, ensuring proper use of resources, investigating allegations of improper use and conducting routine network maintenance. By participating in the school district's computer network, users are indicating their consent to such monitoring and access. Where appropriate, communications including text and images may be disclosed to law enforcement or other third parties without prior consent of the sender or receiver.
6. Any users caught illegally obtaining software or transferring such software through the network, and any whose accounts are found to contain such illegal files, shall immediately have their accounts permanently revoked. In such event, the user's network access will be limited to directly supervised use during classroom instruction. In addition, all users should be aware that software piracy is a federal offense and is punishable by fine or imprisonment.
7. Because of size, many kinds of materials eventually find their way to the network. If a user finds materials that are inappropriate while using the Reading Public Schools technology network, s/he shall refrain from downloading this material and shall not identify or share the material. It should be understood that the transfer of certain kinds of materials is illegal and punishable by fine or imprisonment.

8. Should a user, while using the Reading Public Schools Technology Network, encounter any material that s/he feels may constitute a threat against the safety of fellow students, staff members or the property of the Reading Public Schools, that user is obligated to report his/her discovery of such material to a teacher or to his/her principal.
9. Cyberbullying that either (a) is committed through the use of technology or devices that are owned, leased or used by the school district or (b)(i) is committed using technology or devices not owned leased or used by the school, and (ii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of the school, should be reported by following the school district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and Procedures. See Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 37O.
10. The Reading Public Schools administration reserves the right to amend this policy at any time without prior notice.
11. The Reading Public Schools reserves the right to seek restitution from any user for costs incurred by the district, including legal fees, due to such user's inappropriate use of electronic resources.

