

Introduction

The Westford Public Schools support student and staff access to a variety of rich information resources. In a free and democratic society, access to information is a fundamental right. Access to telecommunications enables students and staff to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and bulletin boards. Internet access to the district computing environment is accessible by the community at all times.

Staff is encouraged to analyze and evaluate resources for use with students. It is expected that staff will blend thoughtful use of such information throughout the curriculum and provide students with guidance and instruction in the appropriate use of such resources. Electronic materials used for instruction shall be consistent with District curriculum. The selection and use of electronic resources will take into account varied instructional needs, learning styles, abilities and developmental levels of the students.

Telecommunications, because it may lead to any publicly available computer in the world, opens up classrooms to electronic information resources that have not been screened by educators for use by students. The District believes that the benefits to students, from accessing information resources and having opportunities for collaboration, far exceed the disadvantages. The District expects and encourages all employees to use electronic mail (e-mail) and other telecommunications tools. It further expects that the electronic resources it provides will be applied by staff in appropriate ways during the performance of tasks associated with their positions, responsibilities and assignments.

Definition

The District Computing Environment is a system of resources that provides employees and students with access to the environment that includes, but is not limited to, Internet access and computers, network infrastructure, printers, and other peripheral equipment.

Purpose of the District Computing Environment

1. Westford Public Schools provides employees and students (users) with access to the District's Computing Environment, which includes, but is not limited to, Internet access and computers, network infrastructure, printers, and other peripheral equipment.
2. The Computing Environment has an educational purpose that includes the use of the District Computing Environment for classroom activities, professional or career development, and other educational activities.
3. Users may not use any component of the District's Computing Environment for commercial purposes, defined as offering or providing goods or services. Employees may use the District's Computing Environment to purchase goods or services only when those goods or services are related to the District's educational purpose.
4. Users may not use the Computing Environment for political lobbying, or like advocacy for organizations or causes.

District Responsibilities

1. The Superintendent or designee will serve as the coordinator to oversee the District Computing Environment and will work with appropriate regional or state organizations, as necessary.
2. The Principal or designee will serve as the site coordinator for the District Computing Environment. The site coordinator will establish a process for the allocating, monitoring, and protecting site-specific components of the District's Computing Environment. In addition, the site coordinator is responsible for interpreting the District Acceptable Internet Use Policy at the site level.
3. The Superintendent or designee shall establish a process for the allocation, monitoring, and protection of District-wide shared components of the District's Computing Environment. Principals or designees will coordinate with the Superintendent or designee.

Access to the System

1. *World Wide Web.* All District employees and students will have access to the Web through the District's networked computers.
2. *Classroom Accounts.* Students in grades K - 8 will be granted e-mail access only through a classroom account. These students may be provided with an individual account under special circumstances as sponsored by their teacher.
3. *Individual E-mail Accounts for Students.* Students in grades 9 - 12 may be provided with individual e-mail accounts.
4. *Individual E-mail Accounts for District Employees.* District employees will be provided with individual accounts.
5. *Remote Access to the Computing Environment.* The District Computing Environment will not provide dial-up access to the system. Users may gain access to the District Computing Environment via the Internet.
6. *Guest Accounts.* Guests may receive an individual account with the approval of a site- or District-level administrator if there is a specific, District-related purpose for requiring such access. Use of the system by a guest must be specifically limited to the District-related purpose.
7. *Information Resources.* The district computing environment contains many sources of information of interest to the community at large as well as **to** employees and students. Subject to appropriate security access constraints, those resources will be made available over the internet.

Parental Notification and Responsibility

1. The District has adopted an Acceptable Use Policy that will be published annually in the schools' student and staff handbooks.
2. The District will notify parents/legal guardians about the District Computing Environment and the policies and regulations governing its use. Parents/legal guardians will be notified that students may be granted access to individual

accounts for educational purposes. According to the Student Handbook Policy, a signature on the student handbook will signify that a parent/legal guardian has read the District Acceptable Internet Use Policy and reviewed it with his/her child.

3. Parents/legal guardians of students under the age of 18 have the right to access the current contents of their child(ren)'s files, including e-mail.
4. The District Acceptable Internet Use Policy contains restrictions on accessing and sending inappropriate material. There is a wide range of material available on the Internet, some of which may not fit with the values of a student's family. The District cannot monitor and enforce a wide range of social values in student use of the Internet. The District will encourage parents/legal guardians to specify to their child(ren) what material is and is not acceptable for their child(ren) to access through the District Computing Environment.
5. The District will provide students and parents/legal guardians with guidelines for student safety while using the Internet.

District Limitation of Liability

The District makes no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, that the functions or the services provided by or through the District Computing Environment will be error-free or without defect. The District will not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service. The District is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through or stored on the District Computing Environment. The district shall take reasonable care to ensure that the school district and each school in the district will comply with the District Acceptable Internet Use and the District Computing Environment policies. In the event that information is posted or action is taken that is contrary to this policy, the school principal or designee shall be immediately notified and every reasonable effort will be made to correct the situation.

Due Process

Students are responsible for good behavior in the District Computing Environment just as they are elsewhere in the school.

1. District Policy and Regulations will govern the District's cooperation with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to any illegal activities conducted through the District Computing Environment.
2. In the event there is an allegation that a student has violated the District Acceptable Internet Use Policy, the student will be provided with a written notice of the alleged violation. After notification, the student will then have the opportunity to be heard in the manner set forth in the Code of Conduct of the student's school.
3. Disciplinary actions will be tailored to meet specific concerns related to the violation and to assist the student in gaining the self-discipline necessary to behave appropriately on the District's Computing Environment. If the alleged violation also involves a violation of other District policy(ies) and/or the school's Code of

Conduct, the violation will be handled in accordance with the applicable provision of the school's Code of Conduct.

4. The Superintendent, Principals and/or designees may terminate the account privileges of a guest user. Any accounts not active for more than thirty days may be removed at the District's discretion, along with the user's files without notice to the user.

Privacy, Search and Seizure

The District does not guarantee the privacy of personal files, accounts, and accesses to the system or communication in the District Computing Environment. As owner of the system, the Westford Public Schools reserve the right to allow the Superintendent or designee to access, search, and copy (seize) any files or other information contained within it at any time for any purpose. Additionally, routine maintenance and monitoring of the environment may lead to discovery that a user has violated or is violating the District Acceptable Internet Use Policy, the Code of Conduct of the school, or the law.

Copyright and Plagiarism

1. Copyright Law will govern the use of material accessed through the District Computing Environment. Given that the extent of copyright protection of some works found on the Internet is unclear, all environment users will request permission from the copyright holder of the work if use of the material has the potential of being an infringement. Teachers will instruct students to respect copyright laws and to request permission to use information when appropriate.
2. The copyright statute prohibits:
 - a. Duplicating software for profit.
 - b. Making multiple copies for use by different users within an organization.
 - c. Giving an unauthorized copy of software to another individual.
 - d. Commercial renting, leasing or lending of software without expressed written permission.

Therefore, users of the District Environment shall not download or upload copyrighted software.

3. Plagiarism of material accessed through the District Computing Environment shall be prohibited. Teachers will instruct students in appropriate research and citation practices.

Academic Freedom, Selection of Material, Student Rights to Free Speech

1. The Westford Public Schools Policies, P6122 – Controversial Issues and to P6119 – Library Materials Selection and Adoption, and legislation relating to Academic Freedom and Free Speech will govern the use of the Internet material in the classroom.

2. When using the Internet for class activities, teachers will select materials that are appropriate and relevant to the course objectives. Teachers will preview and determine the appropriateness of the material and sites they require or recommend that their students access. Teachers will provide guidelines and lists of resources to assist their students with their research activities. Critical thinking skills are essential to research on the Internet. Teachers will assist their students in developing the ability to ascertain the truthfulness of information and to distinguish fact from opinion. Teachers will engage in discussions about controversial issues while demonstrating tolerance and respect for those who hold divergent or opposing views.
3. Information resources contained within the district computing environment shall be subject to the responsible publication process as outlined in policy P6115 Student Publications/Photos, Images, Audiotapes and Exhibits.
4. Student's files and individual e-mails are considered student works incidental to their education and are not considered student records.

District Web Site

1. District Web Site. The Westford Public Schools have established a Web site that consists of Web pages that present information about the District. The District Webmaster, as designated by the Superintendent, will be responsible for maintaining the District Web site and will establish a process for approving material prior to posting on the district Web site (including pointers to other Web sites.) The building Principal will establish a process for approving material prior to posting on the school Web sites (including pointers to other Web sites.)
2. School or Class Web Pages. Westford Public Schools encourages each school and class to post and maintain its own Web page. Schools and classes may establish Web pages that present information about the school, class, or individual student activities. The Principal will designate an individual to be responsible for managing the school Web site. Teachers will be responsible for maintaining their class site in accordance with all District policies.
3. Student Web Pages. Students may not establish personal Web pages on the District's Computing Environment without a faculty sponsor. The sponsor will have authority over student Web pages and will assume responsibility for ensuring the content is in accordance with the District Computing Environment.
4. Extracurricular Organization Web Pages. With the approval of the Principal, extracurricular organizations may establish Web pages. Material presented on the organization Web page must relate specifically to organization activities. The Web page referring to Extracurricular Organizations must include a notice that the following pages represent extracurricular organizations and that opinions expressed on those pages shall not be attributed to the District.

Massachusetts General Law References:

- M.G.L. 71:34D – Student Records: Regulations
- M.G.L. 71:34E – Inspection of Student Records by Parent
- M.G.L. 71:37H – Publication of School Committee Rules and Regulations Relative to the Conduct of Teachers and Students
- M.G.L. 76:5 – Place of Attendance; Discrimination
- M.G.L. 151B:3A – Policy on Sexual Harassment

Other References:

- Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 23.00: Student Records

Federal Law References:

- “Fair Use Doctrine” of Copyright Law 17 U.S.C. Section 107 1988 e. and Sup. IV.
- Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Westford Public Schools Policy References:

- P4110 – Confidentiality
- P4203 – Harassment
- P5301 – Student Conduct
- P5302 – Student Handbooks
- P5303 – Harassment
- P5304 – Bullying
- P5310 – Searches of Student Lockers
- P5502 – Safety
- P6111 – Student Records
- P6115 - Student Publications/Photos, Images, Audiotapes and Exhibits.
- P6118 – Library Materials Selection and Adoption
- P6121 – Teaching about Controversial Issues
- P6302 – District Acceptable Internet Use

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