

Suggestions for Appropriate Use of

Google your name

Using tools like www.google.com and www.pipl.com, you can see what appears when people search your name. This will alert you not only to what material about you is available online but also to any fake profiles that may have been created about you.

Be aware that students can misuse technology at school

The internet has created a whole new host of temptations and capabilities for students. Monitor how students under your supervision are using school computers and be sure to respond to or report any misuse or cyber bullying.



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This brochure is a general guide for MNEA members and is not intended to provide complete information or legal advice on specific problems. Changes in laws and cases may modify the information provided.

With the ever increasing miniaturization and complication of technology, it has never been easier to stay connected to each other and to the internet. While this presents an opportunity for teachers to interact with students in a new medium and “reach them where they live,” it also creates new dangers for the unaware. It is crucial that all educational employees, from those who have grown up with computers and cell phones to those who are learning for the first time, acquaint themselves with the risks of using technology. Failure to do so may cost you your job.

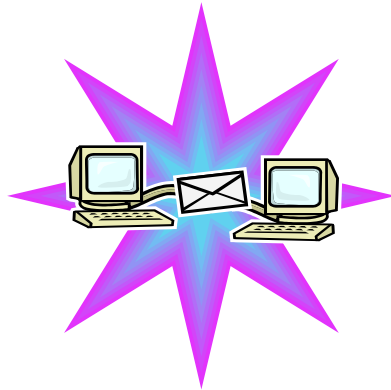
Review your district's internet and technology use policy

Every district has different policies regarding when and how employees are allowed to use district computers and personal cell phones. Missouri statute requires that district policies address both “work-related” internet sites and “non work-related” internet sites. If the internet site, including social networking sites and weblogs, is not used primarily for educational purposes it is “non work-related.” Teachers are not allowed to maintain “non work-related” internet sites that provide special access or information to current or former students that is not available to the general public.

Electronic communications must be professional communications

The ease and immediacy of electronic communications makes texting and email seem more akin to conversations than letter writing but the informality of the medium has tripped up more than one educational professional. Whenever you are communicating with supervisors, co-workers, or, most importantly, students, it is your responsibility to maintain a professional tone. One useful tool is to imagine that every communication, including email and text message, is being sent on district letterhead to the superintendent. This means that all communications should be free of slang, abbreviations (such as LOL or ROFL), emoticons (smiley faces), and profanity.

The professional nature of electronic communication means that it is also inappropriate for sending jokes or forwarding non-work related stories. What one person finds amusing, another may find insulting, and once it is sent there is a permanent record of the communication.



If it is done on a district computer, it can be seen by district administrators

Whenever you are using district computers, all of your activity can be monitored and stored by the district. Information including every website you visit, every email you send (including personal emails), and any documents you download can be seen by supervisors. Therefore, if you wouldn't visit the website or write the email if your boss was looking over your shoulder, you shouldn't do it on a district computer. Additionally, once a file is downloaded onto a district computer, IT specialists can find evidence of that file even if you have deleted it, so save personal internet activity for home.

Protect your personal information

Social networking sites like Facebook and Myspace are a great way to connect with people, but they are also an easy avenue for an individual's personal information to become public. Familiarize yourself with the privacy settings of any social networking sites you use and be sure that all of your personal information is only accessible by family and close friends. Keep in mind that, in some situations, visitors to your friends' profiles may still be able to see information you would like to keep private.

Remove inappropriate material from social networking sites and blogs

Employers are becoming ever more adept at searching the internet for information about employees. Therefore, be sure to remove any inappropriate content, posts, or images from any online location. If you have any doubts about whether a post or image is inappropriate, it is better to proactively remove it then try to explain it when discipline is threatened.



Students and social networks are a dangerous combination

Unless there is a specific, district-approved reason, teachers and students should not mix on social networking sites. Teachers should not “friend” students, communicate with students on social networking sites, or even discuss students. Disclosing information related to students may violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or district policies related to technology use.