

**MICHIGAN CITY AREA SCHOOLS POLICY -
ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SERVICES
AND NETWORKS
(MCAS Acceptable Use Policy)**

Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the right to freedom of speech and the corollary right to receive information. Such rights extend to minors as well as adults. Schools facilitate the exercise of these rights by providing access to information regardless of format or technology. In a free and democratic society, access to information is a fundamental right of citizenship. Toward that end, Michigan City Area Schools will provide access to the Internet for its students and staff. Such use shall be in conformance with all policies and administrative guidelines of the Corporation and all applicable state and federal statutes.

In making decisions regarding access to the Internet, the Corporation considers its own stated educational mission, goals, and objectives. Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to preparation of citizens and future employees. Access to the Internet enables students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, bulletin boards, and other resources as well as exchange messages with people around the world. The Corporation expects that the faculty will blend thoughtful use of the Internet throughout the curriculum and will provide guidance and instruction to students in its use. As much as possible, access from school to Internet resources should be structured in ways which point students to those resources and locations which have been evaluated prior to use. While students will be able to move beyond those resources to others that have not been previewed by staff, they shall be provided with guidelines and lists of resources particularly suited to learning objectives.

Outside of school, families bear responsibility for the same guidance of Internet use as they exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, radio, movies, and other possibly offensive media. However, material copied from some Internet locations can be much worse.

Students utilizing Corporation-provided Internet access must first have the permission of their parents or guardian, and then of the Corporation's professional staff, which must supervise them. Students utilizing school-provided Internet access are responsible for good behavior when on-line just as they are in a classroom or other area of the school. The same general rules for behavior and communications apply.

Staff utilizing Corporation-provided Internet access must first have the permission of the Instructional Technology Director. General rules for professional behavior and conduct apply.

The purpose of Corporation-provided Internet access is to facilitate communications in support of research and education. To remain eligible as users, students' and staffs' use must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the Corporation. Access is a privilege, not a right. Access entails responsibility.

Users should not expect that files stored on school-based computers will always be private. Electronic messages and files stored on school-based computers may be treated like school lockers. Administrators and faculty may review files and messages to maintain system integrity and to ensure that users are acting responsibly.

The following uses of school-provided Internet access are not permitted:

- a. to access, upload, download, or distribute pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit material;
- b. to transmit obscene, abusive, or sexually explicit language;
- c. to violate any local, state or federal statute;
- d. to vandalize, damage, or disable the property of another individual or organization;
- e. to access another individual's materials, information, or files without permission; and
- f. to violate copyright or otherwise use the intellectual property of another individual or organization without permission.

Any violation of Corporation policy and rules may result in loss of Corporation-provided access to the Internet. Additional disciplinary action may be determined in keeping with existing procedures and practices regarding inappropriate language or behavior. When and where applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.

The Corporation makes no warranties of any kind, neither expressed nor implied, for the Internet access it is providing. The Corporation will not be responsible for any damages users suffer, including, but not limited to, loss of data resulting from delays or interruptions in service. The Corporation will not be responsible for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information stored on Corporation diskettes, hard drives, or servers; nor for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information gathered through Corporation-provided Internet access. The Corporation will not be responsible for personal property used to access Corporation computers or networks or for Corporation-provided Internet access. The Corporation will not be responsible for unauthorized financial obligations resulting from Corporation-provided access to the Internet.

Parents of students in the Corporation shall be provided with the following information:

The Corporation is pleased to offer its students access to the Internet. The Internet is an electronic highway connecting hundreds of thousands of computers and millions of individual users all over the world. This computer technology will help propel our schools through the communication age by allowing students and staff to access and use resources from distant computers, communicate and collaborate with other individuals and groups around the world, and significantly expand their available information base. The Internet is a tool for life-long learning.

Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or potentially offensive to some people. In addition, it is possible to purchase certain goods and services via the Internet which could result in unwanted financial obligations for which a student's parent or guardian would be liable.

While the Corporation's intent is to make Internet access available in order to further educational goals and objectives, students may find ways to access other materials as well. Even should the Corporation institute technical methods or systems to regulate students' Internet access, those methods could not guarantee compliance with the Corporation's acceptable-use policy. That notwithstanding, the Corporation believes that the benefits to students of access to the Internet exceed any disadvantages. Ultimately, however, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources.

Toward that end, the Corporation makes the Corporation's complete Internet policy and procedures available upon request for review by all parents, guardians, and other members of the community; and it provides parents and guardians the option of requesting for their minor children alternative activities not requiring Internet use.

Parents and students will be required to sign the form "Network and Internet Access Agreement for Students" prior to any student being granted access to the Internet.

Staff members shall be required to execute the agreement "Network and Internet Access Agreement for Staff Members" before being permitted access.

NOTICE: This policy and all its provisions are subordinate to state and federal statutes.

BOARD ADOPTED 1/9/97

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