

## **Hopatcong Borough Schools Policy on District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks**

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.

In making decisions regarding student access to the Internet, the Hopatcong Borough Schools 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 while exchanging messages with people around the world. The District expects that 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 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.

Students utilizing District-provided Internet access must first have the permission of and be supervised by the Hopatcong Borough Schools professional staff. Students utilizing school-provided Internet access are responsible for good behavior and proper communications etiquette.

The purpose of District-provided Internet access is to facilitate communications in support of research and education. To remain eligible as users, students use must be in support of research and education. To remain eligible as users, students' use must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the Hopatcong Borough Schools. 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 will be treated like school lockers. Administrators and faculty may review files and messages to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are acting responsibly.

Students utilizing District-provided internet may not:

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

(See Back)

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

The Hopatcong Borough Schools makes no warranties of any kind, neither expressed nor implied, for the Internet access it is providing. The District 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 District will not be responsible for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information stored on District diskettes, hard drives, or servers; nor for the accuracy, nature, or quality of information gathered through District-provided Internet access. The District will not be responsible for personal property used to access District computers or networks or for District-provided Internet access. The District will not be responsible for unauthorized financial obligations resulting from District-provided access to the Internet.

Parents of students in the Hopatcong Borough Schools shall be provided with the following information:

- The Hopatcong Borough School District 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 District's intent is to make Internet access available in order to further educational goals and objectives, student may find ways to access other materials as well. Even though the District institutes technical methods and systems to regulate students' Internet access, those methods cannot guarantee compliance with the District's acceptable use policy. That notwithstanding, the District believes that the benefits to students of access to the Internet exceed any disadvantages. Ultimately, 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 Hopatcong Borough School District makes the district's complete Internet policy and procedures available on request for review by all parents, guardians, and other members of the community; and provides parents and guardians the option of requesting for their minor children alternative activities not requiring Internet use.

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