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Information Technology Services

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF SCHOOL BOARD RULE:  
FINAL READING 6Gx13- 6A-1.112, ACCEPTABLE USE  
POLICY FOR THE NETWORK**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY, AND GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS**

**LINK TO DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPROVE AND EXPAND CURRENT  
CURRICULUM**

At the School Board meeting of August 4, 2008, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-9, proffered by Ms. Ana Rivas Logan, Member, directing the Superintendent to amend School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.112, Acceptable Use Policy for the Network, in order to set policy with regard to the acceptable use of "blogs." The proposed amended rule was presented and approved by The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, on October 15, 2008. The Board announced its intention to amend the subject rule at its regular meeting on November 18, 2008. At the October 15, 2008 meeting, the School Board authorized to include language proposed by Ms. Evelyn Langlieb Greer, Member, to impose disciplinary action if a user other than a student or a staff member uses the system inappropriately. Loss of the privilege of using the district's network, possible loss of status or position, and termination of contract with the District were proposed. The proposed amendment to the rule will:

- update existing District standards for acceptable use of computer systems to communicate via "weblogs" or "blogs";
- clarify expected user behavior; and
- set forth the consequences for failing to abide by these standards.

The Notice of Intended Action was published in the *Miami Daily Business Review* on October 20, 2008 posted in various places for public information and mailed to various organizations representing persons affected by the amended rule and to individuals requesting notification.

The time to request a hearing or protest the amendment of this rule has elapsed.

In accordance with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, this rule is presented to The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, for adoption and authorization to file the rule in the official records of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Attached are the Notice of Intended Action and the proposed amended Board Rule. Changes from the current rule are indicated by underscoring words to be added and ~~striking through~~ words to be deleted.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, adopt amended School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.112, Acceptable Use Policy for the Network, and authorize the Superintendent to file the rule with The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, to be effective November 18, 2008.

## NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, announced on October 15, 2008, its intention to amend Board Rule, 6Gx13- 6A-1.112, Acceptable Use Policy for the Network, at its meeting on November 18, 2008.

**PURPOSE AND EFFECT:** The purpose of the proposed amended Board rule is to provide the district with a policy containing the standards and guidelines for the acceptable use of the communications medium called “weblogs”, or “blogs”.

**SUMMARY:** The proposed rule change contains language describing acceptable uses and activities of blogs.

**SPECIFIC LEGAL AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH RULEMAKING AUTHORITY IS AUTHORIZED:** 1001.41(1)(2); 1001.42(23); 1001.43(10) F.S.

**LAW IMPLEMENTED, INTERPRETED, OR MADE SPECIFIC:** 1001.42 (5) and (6); 1012.53 F.S.

IF REQUESTED, A HEARING WILL BE HELD DURING THE BOARD MEETING OF November 18, 2008 which begins at 1:00 p.m., in the School Board Auditorium, 1450 N.E. Second Ave., Miami, Florida, 33132. Persons requesting such a hearing or who wish to provide information regarding the statement of estimated regulatory costs, or to provide information regarding the statement of estimated regulatory costs, or to provide a proposal for a lower regulatory alternative as provided by Section 120.541(1), Florida Statutes, must do so in writing by November 10, 2008, to the Superintendent of Schools, Room 912, at the same address.

ANY PERSON WHO WISHES TO APPEAL THE DECISION made by The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, with respect to this action will need to ensure the preparation of a verbatim record of the proceedings, including the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based (Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes).

A COPY OF THE PROPOSED AMENDED RULE is available at cost for inspection and copying by the public in the Citizen Information Center, Room 158, 1450 N.E. Second Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132.

Originator:	Ms. Ana Rivas Logan	} Revised Subsequent to Initial Reading on 10/15/2008
Date:	November 6, 2008	

Instruction-Elementary and Secondary**ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR THE NETWORK****Purpose of the rule**

The purpose of this rule is to establish a policy for the acceptable use of the network as a tool for learning in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) (hereinafter referred to as District). The M-DCPS network is defined as all computer resources, including software, hardware, lines and services that allow connection of District computers to other computers, whether they are within the District or external to the District. This includes connection to the Internet. In summary, the rule affirms that no user may use the network to take any action or receive and/or communicate any language that the employee or student could not take or communicate in person. Users are defined as anyone authorized by administration to use the Network. This includes, but is not limited to, staff, students, parents, vendors, contractors, and volunteers. Prohibitions in applicable federal, state and/or local law or regulation, collective bargaining agreements and Board Rules are included. Additionally, this rule reflects that there is no expectation of privacy in the use of e-mail or network communications when such communications occur over M-DCPS provided equipment by M-DCPS employees, students, or others.

**Purpose of Access to the Network**

Networks give schools the ability to share educational and research resources from around the world with all students. These resources include access to instructional applications, interactive collaboration between teachers, students and other users, document sharing, communications of all forms with people from around the world and libraries, museums and research facilities.

**I. Acceptable Use Policy**

Utilization of the network by users must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the District. When utilizing the network all users must adhere to the provisions of this rule and the standards of conduct established in the *M-DCPS Code of Student Conduct* (both elementary and secondary), *Code of Conduct for Adult Students*, the *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in the State of Florida*, the *M-DCPS Network Security Standards* and School Board Rule 6Gx13- 4A-1.21, Responsibilities and Duties.

- A. Transmission of any material in violation of local, state, and federal law or regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to copyright material, threatening or obscene material or material protected by trade secret.
  - 1. Obscene material is that material which:
    - a. The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find, taken as a whole, appeals solely to the prurient interest; and

- b. Depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct as defined in Section 847.001 (11) F.S. (1995); and
  - c. Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
- B. Procedures concerning the protest of instructional materials and educational media as they are accessed through the Internet are governed by School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.26, Instructional Materials and Resources.
- C. School Board Rule 6Gx13- 1C-1.06, Politics--Participation of Staff, governs the use of the Internet for political activities.
- D. Use of the network for product advertisement, commercial activities, political campaigning or solicitation is prohibited.
- E. The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires school districts to prevent students from viewing objectionable material. Pursuant to CIPA, M-DCPS uses an Internet Content Filter to prevent user access to prohibited material.

Users of the M-DCPS network are charged with notice that besides obscene material, there are other potentially objectionable materials available on the Internet, including sites with adult content, nudity, and gambling, as well as sites advocating violence and illegal activities. No content filter will ever be 100% accurate, and on occasion either objectionable material may get through or non-objectionable material may be blocked.

Bypassing the M-DCPS content filter without authorization is strictly prohibited. M-DCPS has procedures in place to evaluate requests from users to block or unblock sites as necessary.

Students, parents and staff should be aware that connection to any Internet or network provider not under District control may be unfiltered. This is particularly true of open wireless connections, which can be found almost anywhere. The District is not responsible for unfiltered content that may be viewed or downloaded on M-DCPS equipment that has been provided to individuals for use outside District property. The District is also not responsible for issues caused by the connection of personal devices to the district's network or improper use of the District's network or equipment.

## **II. Privilege**

Accessing the Internet through District equipment is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use, including violation of this rule may result in cancellation of the privilege.

- A. School, regional center, and District administrators are delegated the authority to determine appropriate and acceptable use as provided under this rule.
- B. Any user account may be closed, suspended or revoked at any time a school, regional center, or District administrator determines an account user or holder has used the network in an inappropriate or unacceptable manner in violation of this or any other applicable District rule.
- C. Inappropriate or unacceptable use is defined as use that violates the District's purpose in providing students and employees access to the Internet and use that violates the M-DCPS *Code of Student Conduct* (both elementary and secondary), *Code of Conduct for Adult Students*, the *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in the State of Florida*, the *M-DCPS Network Security Standards*, and School Board Rule 6Gx13- 4A-1.21, or any local, state, or federal law or regulation.
- D. Access to the Internet from the district network as a tool for learning will be automatic. Parents must notify the school in writing if they do not want their child to access the Internet.

### **III. Monitoring**

Administration reserves the right to review any material on user accounts for purposes of maintaining adequate filespace and monitoring appropriateness of material accessed through the network. In reviewing and monitoring user accounts for the purpose of determining adequate filespace, the District shall respect the privacy rights of user accounts.

### **IV. Network Etiquette**

All users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These standards of conduct include, but are not limited to the following:

- A. Users should be polite. The use of abusive language is prohibited.
- B. Use appropriate language. The use of profanity, vulgarities or any other inappropriate language is prohibited.
- C. Engaging in activities which are prohibited under local, state or federal law is prohibited.
- D. Activities which violate the M-DCPS *Code of Student Conduct* (both elementary and secondary), *Code of Conduct for Adult Students*, the *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in the State of Florida*, the *M-DCPS Network Security Standards* and School Board Rule 6Gx13- 4A-1.21, are prohibited.

- E. Do not reveal your personal address and/or telephone number or that of other users unless compelled to by law.
- F. Electronic mail (e-mail) is not guaranteed to be private. People who operate the system do have access to all mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities will be reported to the authorities.
- G. Do not use the network in such a way that other users would be unable to get the full benefit of information available. This includes, but is not limited to: running applications that deny the network's services to others, tying up computers without a legitimate educational or school district or school business purpose while others are waiting, damaging software or hardware so that others are unable to use it, or any conduct that would be prohibited by Section 815.06 Fla. Stat.
- H. Do not use the network to send or receive messages that discriminate based on gender, race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs, marital status, age, sexual orientation, social and family background, linguistic preference, disability or that are inflammatory.

## **V. Services**

Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at the user's own risk. The District will not be responsible for any damages a user may incur. This includes, but is not limited to, loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by negligence, errors, or omissions.

The District is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the network. All users need to consider the source of any information they obtain through the network, and evaluate the accuracy of the information.

## **VI. Security**

Security on any computer network is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users.

- A. If a user can identify a security problem on the network, the user must notify a system administrator. The user must not demonstrate the problem to others.
- B. Users must not use another individual's account without written permission from that individual. Attempts to log into the system as any other user will result in disciplinary action as described in Section X - Disciplinary Actions for Improper Use contained herein.
- C. Any user that has been determined by administrators to have violated this rule may be denied future access to the Internet through the District network.

- D. A user with a history of utilizing other computer systems in an inappropriate or unacceptable manner may be denied access to the District network.
- E. Users of the network will be held responsible for all activity associated with the user's account. Users should not share their passwords with anyone, engage in activities that would reveal anyone's password or allow anyone to use a computer to which they are logged on.
- F. Accessing chat rooms or instant messaging while using the M-DCPS network is prohibited- unless there is a legitimate work-related purpose.
- G. The use of Internet tools such as blogs and discussion boards are intended for educational purposes only.
- H. Downloading pictures, sounds, video clips, text documents or any material without authorization and without confirmation that the material is not copyrighted is prohibited (see School Board Rule 6Gx13- 4C-1.061 through 4C-1.063, Copyrights – Educational Media, Electronic Media, and Compliance and Fair Use).
- I. Downloading games, video files, audio files or running streaming media without educational value and without authorization by a teacher or a local administrator is prohibited. These applications tie up a great deal of bandwidth and storage and many of the files infringe on the owners' copyrights.
- J. Downloading or installing software applications without authorization is prohibited.
- K. Using the District's wireless equipment while on M-DCPS property to connect to any wireless networks but those provided by M-DCPS without authorization is prohibited. External signals will not provide content filtering and access to private networks may be illegal.

## **VII. Vandalism and Harassment**

Vandalism and harassment when utilizing the Internet will result in cancellation of user privileges. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses and the attempt to destroy, harm or modify data of another user.

## **VIII. Procedures for Use**

Student users must always get permission from their teachers or facilitators before using the network or accessing any specific file or application. Student users must also follow written and oral classroom instructions.

- A. All users have the same right to use the computer resources. Therefore, users shall not play games without educational value or use the computer



resources for non-academic activities when other users require the system for academic purposes.

Personal use of the M-DCPS network, including e-mail and the Internet, is permitted as long as that use does not interfere with an employee's duties, a student's learning activities and/or system operation and abides by all district policies and standards, state and federal statutes, and codes of conduct. This use is a privilege, not a right, and any unacceptable use may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

- B. Teachers are responsible for teaching proper techniques and standards for participation, for guiding student access to appropriate sections of the Internet, and for assuring that students understand that if they misuse the network they will lose their privilege to access the Internet from the classroom environment. Students should not be provided with network access unless they are properly supervised by an individual trained to provide the guidance students require.
- C. Blogging is the activity of writing entries in, adding material to, or maintaining a "weblog." Employees are not to engage in blogging activities during working hours or by using district-owned equipment unless are specifically required to perform the employees' responsibilities and duties. District users are reminded that during non-working hours they are representatives of M-DCPS and should behave in a manner that does not bring disrespect or discredit the education profession. Unless engaging an officially sanctioned District activity, employees using "blogs" should clearly specify that any opinions or statements are the employee's and do not reflect the views of the District. Employees are prohibited from using officially sanctioned school district logos, school mascots, and other official symbols.

## **IX. Inappropriate Material**

On a global network it is impossible to control effectively the content of data and an industrious user may discover inappropriate material. Inappropriate material is that material that is determined inconsistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the educational mission of the District.

## **X. Disciplinary Actions for Improper Use**

The act of accessing the Internet through the District's network signifies that the user will abide by the provisions of this rule.

Disciplinary action for inappropriate use by students will be based on the tiered actions described in the codes of student conduct (Elementary, Secondary or Adult) and may include, but is not limited to, loss of privilege, suspension or expulsion. Disciplinary action for inappropriate use by staff will be as provided for in the applicable collective bargaining agreements. Disciplinary action for inappropriate use by third-parties may include, but is not limited to, loss of this privilege, loss of status or position that afforded the privilege of the use of the District's network, and/or termination of contract in accordance with the terms of the contract.

Added  
Pursuant  
to Board  
Direction  
on  
10/15/2008

Specific Authority: 1001.41(1)(2); 1001.42(23); 1001.43(10) F.S.  
Law Implemented, Interpreted, or Made Specific: 1001.42(5) and (6) and 1012.53 F.S.

History THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

New: 10-23-96

Technical Change: 5-1-98

Amended: 6-13-07