

PENNSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT E-MAIL POLICY

PURPOSE

The Pennsville School District (PSD) provides many computing and network resources for use by students, faculty, staff and other persons affiliated with PSD. Members of the District community are encouraged to use electronic mail (e-mail) for District-related activities and to facilitate the efficient exchange of useful information. Access to e-mail is a privilege and certain responsibilities accompany that privilege. Users of e-mail are expected to be ethical and responsible in their use. Electronic mail is one of the most used and useful facilities on computer networks. To ensure maximum benefits from e-mail, a clear, defined balance between the need for open communication and the protection of the District's assets is critical. The purpose of this policy is to encourage use of e-mail as an effective and efficient business tool within the framework of the appropriate statutes.

PRIVACY

It is the nature of most e-mail systems that the physical security of messages cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, we discourage the use of e-mail to transmit messages containing sensitive data. Messages are not considered private messages. Although messages are not routinely monitored, the District may rightfully monitor or access e-mail messages if the District suspects breaches of security, harassment or other violations of other District policies or the law. The individual authorizing any search of a user's data must have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will reveal evidence that the user has violated a specific District policy, state or federal law or has committed work related misconduct. The search of the user's electronic files must and will be reasonably related in scope to the suspicion that generated the search. A user's account and password are the keys to the e-mail network and users are advised that they are responsible for the security of their respective account and password. There are major risks when a user's account and password are known to others. Transmission made using that account and password are assumed to be initiated by the account and password owner, though managers of e-mail systems who investigate complaints shall not automatically assume that the author of an offending message is the owner of the account and password.

GUIDELINES

Access to and the responsible use of modern information resources are essential to the pursuit and achievement of excellence at PSD. The District encourages appropriate use

of e-mail to enhance productivity through the efficient exchange of information in education, research, public service and the expression of ideas. Use of these resources must be consistent with these goals. As responsible members of the PSD community, everyone is expected to act in accord with the following general guidelines based on common sense, common decency, and civility applied to the networked computing environment.

1. Messages sent as electronic mail should meet the same standards for district distribution or displays as if they were tangible documents or instruments. Identify yourself clearly and accurately in all electronic communications. Concealing or misrepresenting your name or affiliation to disassociate yourself from responsibility for your actions is never appropriate. Alteration of the source of electronic mail message or posting is unethical and possibly illegal. One test of appropriateness would be to never “say” anything via e-mail that you would not be willing to say directly to a person;
2. Be sensitive to the inherent limitation of shared network resources. No computer security system can absolutely prevent a determined person from accessing stored information. While PSD has no interest in regulating the content of e-mail, it cannot guarantee the privacy or confidentiality of electronic documents. Good judgment dictates the creation of only electronic documents that may become available to the public;
3. Respect the rights of others. Do not send abusive, threatening or harassing materials. Civil discourse is at the heart of a District community free of intimidation and harassment and based upon a respect for individuals as well as a desire to learn from others. While debate on controversial issues is inevitable and essential, bear in mind that it is your responsibility to do so in a way that actually advances the cause of learning and mutual understanding;
4. You are expected to promote efficient use of network resources consistent with the instructional, research, public service and administrative goals of the PSD. Show consideration for others and refrain from engaging in any use that would interfere with their work or disrupt the intended use of network resources. You should especially avoid wasteful and disruptive practices, such as sending “chain letters,” “broadcast” messages or unwanted material. This effort is consistent with existing practices

governing other forms of communication on campus including telephone calls, bulletin board postings, the mass distribution of flyers and the use of intra-campus mail services;

5. E-mail and other network resources may not be used for commercial purposes or for personal financial gain. This does not preclude the use of e-mail to assist in the investigation and support of a vendor's products, such as the discussion of a product's relative advantages and disadvantages by users of the product, the distribution of information or technical support material by request of vendor responses to questions about their products, as long as the responses are not in the nature of a solicitation.

The same standards of conduct expected of students, faculty and staff regarding the use of telephones, libraries and other institutional resources apply to the use of e-mail. You will be held no less accountable for your actions in situations involving e-mail than you would be in dealing with other media. You are expected to abide by the security restrictions on all systems and information to which you have access. You should avoid any irresponsible behavior that is considered illegal or unethical. Irresponsible activities include but are not limited to flaming, overloading a system, sending chain letters or similar actions. Conduct which involves the use of information resources to violate a District policy or regulation or state or federal law, or to violate another's rights, is a serious abuse subject to limitation of your privileges and appropriate disciplinary and/or legal action. The District is not responsible for transmissions which are libelous or defamatory, but will do all it can to investigate and address these unwanted transmissions with the message sender.

If unsolicited or unwanted Internet transmissions are received, or if problems or issues arise regarding PSD e-mail, you should contact the appropriate systems administrator. E-mail managers and network system administrators should not monitor or access the contents of electronic files except as noted in this policy.

Complaints by any user receiving electronic transmissions through any e-mail server may be submitted to the District Superintendent. The Affirmative Action Officer will be notified of complaints regarding the transmission of discriminatory material. In the case of an employee investigation, if a violation did occur, the Superintendent shall be informed immediately. The employee's immediate supervisor, in consultation with the Superintendent, shall impose proper action in a form and process consistent with public employee laws and collective bargaining agreements.

Date: **FEBRUARY 23, 1999**