

3.10.1 INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE

Librarians have a responsibility to provide students a safe and healthy environment in which to learn. That responsibility has taken on multiple new dimensions with the availability of the Internet. Student safety is being addressed in three ways: filtering, Acceptable Use Agreements, and teaching students the ethical and safe use of information.

Filtering

The Department of Education has installed filtering software “in an attempt to block user access to inappropriate and/or harmful text on the Internet. The software works by scanning web site addresses, web site content, e-mail and other documents for objectionable words or concepts.”

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm#filter>

The filter is set in levels from the most restrictive to the least restrictive depending on the age level of the students. Some content falls into the intermediate area where the context of the use determines its acceptability (e.g., breast cancer).

Because any filtering software cannot make perfect determinations of acceptability, sometimes sites are blocked that students need to access for legitimate research purposes. In that case, librarians may follow a process to request that a particular site be unblocked.

1. Verify the legitimacy of the site in question
2. Consult with your principal
3. Go to:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/WWWForms/default.htm> to download the form. You must be on a Department of Education administrative computer to access this form (probably located at a secretary’s desk or in an assistant principal or principal’s office).

4. Ask the principal to send to DIIT
3. DIIT unblocks the site

Acceptable Use Agreement

All students and staff are governed by the Department of Education Acceptable Use Policy which prescribes that all use of the Internet and e-mail must be for legitimate educational purposes. All students are expected to abide by the requirements outlined in the policy:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm#filter>.

All of your students should have signed an AUP (Acceptable Use Policy). They may have signed it through a technology class/teacher or it may be through the library. You

should check with your administration to see how this is being handled in your school. The Department of Education AUP can be found at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/Offices/FinanceandAdministration/DIIT/WebServices/iaup/default.htm>

This is the policy statement from the DOE. Your school should have some kind of AUP contract or pledge that is signed by student (age appropriate) and guardian. **[See the sample Acceptable Use Policy in the following pages.]**

Teaching Ethical Use

Librarians have a major responsibility to teach students the ethical use of information and technology. In fact, the third standard of the Information Fluency Continuum is “Demonstrating Social Responsibility: An independent learner contributes to the learning community by seeking multiple perspectives, sharing his or her understandings with others, and using information and resources ethically.”

The teaching of Internet ethics and web site assessment should be integrated into your lessons. For ideas and resources to help you with this, see the Information Fluency Continuum.

The main indicators in the Information Fluency Continuum that serve as the basis for teaching social responsibility skills include:

Importance of Information to a Democratic Society

- Seeks diverse sources and multiple points of view.
- Respects the principle of equitable access to information.
- Understands that democracy is built on access to information without censorship.

Effective Social Interaction to Broaden Understanding

- Shares knowledge and information with others.
- Respects others’ ideas and backgrounds, and acknowledges their contributions.
- Collaborates with others to solve problems.
- Collaborates with others to access and use information effectively.
- Uses technology to collaborate with others.
- Uses a variety of media to share information with others.

Ethical Behavior in Use of Information

- Respects the principles of intellectual freedom.
- Respects intellectual property rights.
- Uses information technology responsibly.

Conversation about the ethical use of information and technology should begin in elementary school and build through the years. Every student must learn to evaluate the accuracy and validity of Internet information, to use information without plagiarizing, and to seek and respect others' ideas.

The following websites will be useful in teaching ethical and analytical approaches to the Internet:

<http://www.novemberlearning.com/>

<http://joycevalenza.com/>

See "Evaluation of Internet Information" for the criteria students and teachers can use to determine the reliability and validity of Web sites.

Teaching Safe Use of the Internet

Children can be taught to use the Internet safely through a series of lessons. Two sites offer cyber-safety lessons for free:

<http://www.cybersmart.org>

This site offers a cyber-safety curriculum, lesson plans, and resources.

<http://www.isafe.org>

This site is a free project with materials offered by the US Department of Justice.