

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of the Bellingham Public Schools computer network is to advance and promote educational opportunities, innovation and educational excellence, and to provide users access to a world wide array of educational resources. Access to the resources of the network will improve learning and teaching through research, access to information, teacher training, collaboration and dissemination of successful educational practices, methods, and materials.

The Internet

The Internet is a vast, global network, linking computers with universities, schools, laboratories and other sites. Through the Internet, one can communicate with people all over the world through discussion forums and electronic mail. In addition, many educationally valuable files may be downloaded from the Internet. Due to its enormous size and resources, the Internet's educational potential is boundless. Via its broad reach, however, the Internet also contains the potential for abuse. Bellingham Public Schools is not responsible for assuring the accuracy or usability of any information found on external networks. For safety purposes, Bellingham Public Schools employs both a filter and firewall. Bellingham Public Schools maintains compliance with CIPA – Children's Internet Protection Act.

User Access

Internet access is provided through the Bellingham Public Schools network system. All users will have access to the Internet. The use of the Internet and Bellingham network is a privilege, not a right, thus all users must submit a signed Acceptable Use Policy to gain access to the Internet and network.

- **Grades K-6:** Students in Grades K-6 will gain access to the Internet after they take part in a discussion of this policy with a parent or guardian. A parent or guardian is required to sign the Acceptable Use Policy.
- **Grades 7-12:** Students in Grades 7-12 will gain access to the Internet once the student and student's parent or guardian have submitted a signed Acceptable Use Policy.
- **Bellingham Public School Staff and visitors** will gain access to the Internet once they have submitted a signed Acceptable Use Policy.

Users' Responsibility

Your right to free speech applies to communication on the Internet. The Internet is considered a limited forum, similar to the school newspaper, and therefore the District

may restrict speech for valid educational reasons. The District will not restrict your speech on the basis of a disagreement with the opinions you are expressing.

All student use of the Internet will be conducted under faculty supervision. Nevertheless, faculty members are not expected to monitor student's use at every moment. Each student is expected to take individual responsibility for his or her appropriate use of the Internet.

Individual users shall at all times be responsible for the proper use of accounts issued in their names. Users may not share their account with anyone or leave the account open or unattended.

Passwords are confidential. All passwords should be protected by the user and not shared or displayed.

Users are responsible for making back-up copies of the documents that are critical to their use.

Users are responsible for regularly deleting e-mail as to conserve file space.

Subscriptions to Listservs, bulletin boards, and on-line services must be pre-approved by the systems administrator.

Users are responsible for immediately notifying the technology department of any possible security problems or of damage to the computer to which they are assigned.

The Bellingham Public Schools assumes no responsibility for unauthorized charges, costs or illegal uses.

Internet Access

Inappropriate conduct on the Bellingham Public Schools Internet will be subject to disciplinary action, in conformity with the Bellingham Public School Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline (which is published in school handbooks) and the disciplinary policies of individual schools. School officials may cancel user access to the network. Further, any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to the Bellingham Public Schools network.

Privacy and Administrators' Access to User Files

Bellingham Public Schools is a public entity, therefore, all records (except those specifically excluded by law), whether in electronic or hardcopy form, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and open to public inspection. **Network storage areas (including user files) will be treated like school lockers may be subject to inspection.** Internet (email) messages are public communication and are not private. All communications including text and images may be subject too applicable law enforcement or other third parties without prior consent of the sender or the receiver.

Network administrators may review communications (email, attachments, files) to maintain integrity system-wide and ensure that users are using the system in a responsible manner. Users should not assume that uses of the Bellingham Public Schools network are private. All users are expected to use appropriate judgment and caution in communications concerning students and staff to ensure that personally identifiable information remains confidential.

Personal Safety

The Internet is accessible to the public. Unfortunately, this includes people who want to make contact with students for inappropriate purposes or under false pretenses. Although Bellingham Public Schools employs both a filter and firewall, screening the Internet for such inappropriate uses is still difficult. Therefore, users should never reveal their full name, address or telephone number, nor should they arrange a meeting with a person who was met on-line. Users should promptly inform their school administrator of any on-line communication that is threatening, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate.

Network Etiquette

Users are expected to learn and to abide by generally accepted rules of Internet network etiquette, as well as rules of school decorum. These include common courtesy, politeness, and the avoidance of vulgar language. Try to avoid sarcasm and humor; without face-to-face communication, your **comments** may be misinterpreted or viewed as criticism. Don't publicly criticize or anger others. Use all capitals only to highlight a word; if you use them for an entire message, people will think you're shouting at them.

Unacceptable Uses of the Bellingham Public Schools Network

The following are unacceptable uses of the Bellingham Public Schools network:

- Posting private or personal information about another person.
- Attempting to access system files, security files or another person's files.
- Accessing or transmitting obscene or pornographic material.
- Posting chain letters or engaging in "spamming." ("Spamming" means sending annoying or unnecessary messages to large numbers of people.)
- Engaging in sexual harassment. The Bellingham Public Schools Sexual Harassment Policy, which is included in the individual schools' handbooks, is applicable to Internet conduct.
- Participating in any communications that facilitate the illegal sale or use of drugs or alcohol; that facilitate criminal gang activity; that threaten, intimidate, or harass any other person; that facilitate gambling. The system/network may not be used for illegal purposes, in support of illegal activities or for any activity prohibited by district policy.
- Communications. Users are responsible for the content of all text, audio or images that they place or send over the Internet. Fraudulent, harassing or obscene messages are prohibited. No abusive, profane or offensive language should be

used to communicate on the Bellingham Public Schools Network or on the Internet. Plagiarism. "Plagiarism" means taking material created by others and presenting it as if it were one's own words. The Bellingham Public School's policy on "plagiarism" (which is published in school handbooks) is applicable to Internet conduct.

- Infringing copyrights. One copy of copyrighted material may be downloaded for a user's personal use. Copyright infringement occurs when a person inappropriately reproduces or transmits material that is protected by copyright. For example, most software is protected by copyright and may not be copied without the permission of the copyright owner and systems administrator.
- Inappropriate materials. Access of material that has been deemed inappropriate for educational use is prohibited. Should users encounter such material by accident, they should disengage.
- Participating in **private or commercial** activities that are not directly related to educational purposes of the Bellingham Public Schools.
- No user shall engage in communication that represents personal views as those of the Bellingham Public Schools or that could be misinterpreted as such.

Behaviors And Consequences

Appropriate Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Measures are outlined in school handbooks and the Bellingham Public School's Policy Manual.

- Tampering with computer security systems and/or applications and/or documents and/or equipment will be considered vandalism, destruction, and defacement of school property (see school handbook). Please be advised, it is a federal offense (Felony) to break into any security systems. Financial and legal consequences of such actions are the responsibility of the user (staff, volunteer, student) and student's parent or guardian.
- Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges, disciplinary action and restitution for costs associated with hardware, software, and system restoration. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, the Internet, hardware, software or the network. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses.
- In the event that there is a claim that a **user** has violated any of the Acceptable Use Policy, she/he will be provided with written notice of the suspected violation and given an opportunity to be heard by his/her school administrator.

Notifications

Any student, teacher, staff member or volunteer must notify the systems administrator or assistant systems administrator if they have identified a possible security problem. Do not go looking for security problems, as this may be construed as an illegal attempt to gain access to inappropriate areas. Further, they should report encounters with inappropriate material to their school administrator immediately.

Changes in Bellingham Acceptable Use Policy

The Bellingham Public Schools reserve the right to change this policy at any time. Students, parents and/or guardians will receive written notification of any changes.

Please note: A copy of this policy will be distributed to all employees of the District and must be incorporated into all student handbooks published in the District.

Our thanks are extended to Masconomet Jr/Sr High School, The Massachusetts Assoc. of School Committees, and the public school systems of Shawsheen, Lexington, Haverhill, and Westfield for allowing Bellingham to use parts of their Acceptable Use Policies in creating Bellingham’s Acceptable Use Policy.

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

SIGNATURE/AGREEMENT PAGE

For Parents/Guardian of Students in Grades K-6

I have read and reviewed the **Bellingham Public Schools** Acceptable Use Policy with my child. I agree to have my child abide by all the rules listed in the Bellingham Public Schools Acceptable Use Policy. I release the Bellingham Public School System and all other organizations related to the Bellingham Internet Connection from any liability or damages that may result from the use of the Computer System. In addition, I will accept full responsibility and liability for the results of any actions with regards to my child’s use of the Network and the Internet. I release the school and related organizations from any liability relating to consequences from my child’s use of the Internet.

Student's Name _____ **(Please print!)**

Teacher’s Name _____ **Grade** _____ **Room**
Number _____

Parent or Guardian’s Signature _____ **Date**

I ___ give / ___ do not give permission for my child to participate in the district’s system/network. (Please place a check next to your preference.)

I ___ give / ___ do not give permission for my child’s name to appear on school web pages. (Please place a check next to your preference.)

I ___ give / ___ do not give permission for my child’s photo to appear on school web pages. (Please place a check next to your preference.)

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

SIGNATURE/AGREEMENT PAGE

For Parents/Guardian of Students in Grades 7-12

My child and I have read the **Bellingham Public Schools** Acceptable Use Policy. We agree to abide by all the rules listed in the Bellingham Public Schools Acceptable Use Policy. We understand that violation of these provisions may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension or revocation of privileges, suspension or expulsion from school, and criminal prosecution. We release the Bellingham Public School System and all other organizations related to the Bellingham Internet Connection from any liability or damages that may result from the use of the Computer System. In addition, we will accept full responsibility and liability for the results of any actions with regards to the use of the Network and the Internet. We release the school and related organizations from any liability relating to consequences from my use of the Internet.

Student Name (Please print!) _____

Signature of Student _____ **Grade** ____ **Date**

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ **Date**

_____ **We accept the conditions of Bellingham’s AUP and plan to access the district’s system/ network.**

_____ **We do not accept the conditions of Bellingham’s AUP and will not access the district’s system/network.**

We ____ give ____ do not give permission for _____’s name to appear on school web pages. (Please place a check next to your preference.)

We ____ give ____ do not give permission for _____’s photo to appear on school web pages. (Please place a check next to your preference.)

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCEPTABLE USE

**POLICY SIGNATURE SHEET STAFF,
VOLUNTEERS, GUESTS**

I have read the **Bellingham Public Schools** Acceptable Use Policy and agree to abide by all the rules listed in the Bellingham Public Schools Acceptable Use Policy. I understand

that violation of these provisions may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension or revocation of privileges, suspension or **dismissal** from **employment**, and criminal prosecution. I release the Bellingham Public School System and all other organizations related to the Bellingham Internet **services** from any liability or damages that may result from the use of the Computer System. In addition, I will accept full responsibility and liability for the results of any actions with regards to the use of the Network and the Internet. I release the school and related organizations from any liability relating to consequences from my use of the Internet.

Name (Please print!)

Signature _____

School _____ **Grade** _____ **Date** _____

I accept the conditions of Bellingham’s AUP and plan to access the district’s system/network.

I do not accept the conditions of Bellingham’s AUP and will not access the district’s system/network.

I **give** **do not give permission for my name to appear on school web pages.**

(Please place a check next to your preference.)

I **give** **do not give my permission for my photo to appear on school web pages.**

(Please place a check next to your preference.)

Revised by the Bellingham School Committee and Adopted on February 12, 2002

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to the public schools of Bellingham, for admittance to State and Federally funded grant programs, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and course of study presented in these schools, on account of race, color, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or homelessness. This non-discrimination applies to all persons, whether or not the individual is a member of a conventionally defined “minority group”.