

## Houston Independent School District

### Appropriate Use Policy for Electronic Services for Students

The Houston Independent School District strongly believes in the educational value of electronic services and recognizes the potential to support curriculum and student learning by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

Access to the Internet allows students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, museums, and other repositories of information. Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet may contain items that are inappropriate, inaccurate, or potentially offensive. While the purposes of the school are to use electronic resources for constructive educational goals, students may find ways to access other materials. We believe that the benefits to students from electronic services in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration exceed the disadvantages. But 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. Therefore, we support and respect each family's right to deny electronic services to their student by submitting an "opt-out" form. This form is available online and should be completed and returned to your student's school.

As services become available to your student's school, access to electronic services will enable students to access *The SOURCE*, HISD's student portal, to exchange personal communication with other users, and to view their own attendance and grades. HISD will provide students access to a computer network for electronic services including mail, software applications, network services, and access to the Internet.

In compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), the Houston Independent School District has implemented filtering and/or blocking software to restrict access to Internet sites containing pornography, obscene depictions, or other materials harmful to minors under 18 years of age. Additionally, content and spam filtering software is applied to all external e-mail correspondence on HISD's electronic mail system. The software will work by scanning for objectionable words or concepts, as determined by HISD. However, no software is foolproof, and there is still a risk a user may be exposed to a site or message containing such materials. A user who incidentally connects to such a site or receives inappropriate communications must immediately disconnect from the site and notify a teacher or supervisor. If a user sees another user is accessing inappropriate sites or engaging in inappropriate communication, he or she should notify a teacher or supervisor immediately. To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the HISD computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications. Specifically, as required by CIPA, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities, and (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Under FERPA, parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. As services become available to your student's school, students and qualified parents can view certain educational records of the student online through *The SOURCE*, HISD's student portal. These records are safeguarded through all available means and access will be restricted to parents/guardians and the student through the use of user names and passwords.

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior on the school's computer network just as they are in a classroom or on a school playground. Communications on the network are often public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. It is expected that users will comply with district standards and the specific rules set forth below. The use of the network is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. The user is personally responsible for his/her actions in accessing and utilizing the school's computer resources. Students are advised never to access, keep, or send anything that they would not want their parents or teachers to see.

**Privacy**—Network storage areas may be treated like school lockers. Network administrators may review communications to maintain system integrity to ensure that students are using the system responsibly. The system administrators will deem what is inappropriate use and their decision is final. Also, the system

administrators may close an account at any time as required. The administration, faculty, and staff of HISD may request the system administrator to deny, revoke, or suspend specific user accounts.

**Storage capacity**—Users are expected to remain within allocated disk space and delete e-mail or other material which take up excessive storage space.

**Illegal copying**—Students shall never download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto network drives or disks, unless they have written permission from the Network Administrator. Nor should students copy other people's work or intrude into other people's files.

**Inappropriate materials or language**—No profane, abusive, or impolite language shall be used to communicate nor should materials be accessed which are not in line with the rules of school behavior. A good rule to follow is never view, send, or access materials which you would not want your teachers and parents to see. Should students encounter such material by accident, they should report it their teacher immediately.

**These are rules to follow to prevent the loss of HISD network privileges.**

- Do not use a computer to harm other people or their work.
- Do not damage the computer or the network in any way.
- Do not interfere with the operation of the network by installing illegal software, shareware, or freeware.
- Do not violate copyright laws.
- Do not view, send, or display offensive messages or pictures.
- Do not share your password with another person or offer access to any person via your account.
- Do not reveal your personal address or phone numbers or those of other students or colleagues.
- Do not waste limited resources such as disk space or printing capacity.
- Do not trespass in another's folders, work, or files.
- Do notify an adult immediately, if by accident, you encounter materials which violate the rules of appropriate use.
- **BE PREPARED** to be held accountable for your actions and for the loss of privileges if the Rules of Appropriate Use are violated. The HISD *Code of Student Conduct* addresses the consequences for violations.

The use of the Internet is an integral part of learning and teaching. It is important that students know where and how to find content relative to their needs and gain skills for collaboratively constructing, using, and communicating knowledge.

All HISD students are granted access to all electronic services available. If you **DO NOT** want your student to have access to electronic services, please complete and submit the opt-out form and access will be denied. If assignments require the use of the Internet, alternatives will be provided.