

**AUTHORIZED STAFF USE OF COMPUTERS, MEDIA AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SYSTEMS (ACCEPTABLE USE) - AR**

I. Purpose

The Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) provides computer resources (including but not limited to computers, software, the internet, networks, email, data systems, cell telephones, two-way radios, and computer peripheral devices such as printers, scanners and faxes) to users to assist them in the performance of tasks associated with their positions and assignments. Users must utilize these computer resources in compliance with this policy and the TCPS Administrative Regulation EDC-AR "Authorized Staff Use of Computers, Media and Telecommunications Devices and Systems (Acceptable Use)." The computer equipment and data resources are the property of TCPS. During the work day use is generally restricted to appropriate academic, research, and employment-related activities and is governed by all federal, state, and local laws and TCPS policies. TCPS encourages users to utilize available technologies as tools to explore educational topics, process work, conduct research, and communicate with others in the context of their assigned duties as public school employees. Computers shall be available for personal use provided such use occurs during personal time and is legal, ethical, and otherwise generally accepted practice for TCPS employees.

Personal Websites and Other Internet Accounts: Teachers and other employees in a public school system are responsible for modeling and teaching high standards of decency and civic values. As individuals working with children, employees should be aware of these important professional responsibilities and must model the character they are expected to teach and exhibit, both on and off the worksite. In addition, postings and communications related to their professional role as Talbot County Public Schools employees must only be done using Talbot County Public Schools servers.

II. Acceptable Use Policy for Employees

The Board of Education of Talbot County recognizes that e-mail and other forms of electronic transmissions are an efficient form of communication that may help school system administrators and staff to better perform their public duties. The use of these forms of communication, however, raises a number of issues concerning archival storage, privacy interests, and rights under the Maryland Public Information Act (the "PIA") and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). TCPS also recognizes the value of Internet research as well as the risks involved with Internet use that is inappropriate for a school or workplace setting.

**AUTHORIZED STAFF USE OF COMPUTERS, MEDIA AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SYSTEMS (ACCEPTABLE USE)**

This Administrative Regulation is intended to address these issues and to provide guidance on the appropriate use of TCPS network communication facilities and devices.

- A. Public Purpose. TCPS provides computer hardware, software, internet, e-mail programs, cell telephones and other devices and systems as work related tools for the limited purpose of helping the TCPS' administrators and staff in the furtherance of their public duties. The use of these tools should be limited to this purpose. TCPS employees should refrain from using school system e-mail or the Internet for private purposes during business hours. Use for lobbying, commercial or illegal purposes is strictly prohibited.

- B. Public Information. Electronic communications sent or received on school system computers may be subject to public disclosure pursuant to the provisions of the PIA. Accordingly, it is essential that school administrators and staff not send information via e-mail or other electronic devices that they would not put on school system letterhead.

- C. No Expectation of Privacy. TCPS employees have no legitimate expectation of privacy in communications sent or received on school system computers or devices or in any material obtained or sent over the internet on school system computers. All such communications and related files are subject to inspection without prior notice. The following disclaimer will be placed on TCPS e-mails:

"Pursuant to Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) policies and administrative regulations, this e-mail system is to be used for official TCPS business only. All users are cautioned that messages sent and received through this system are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and Maryland public disclosure laws, and may be reviewed at any time by TCPS. There should be no expectation of privacy."

- D. Student Information. E-mails and other electronic communications containing personally identifiable student information may be considered student records for purposes of FERPA. Accordingly, such electronic communications should be kept to a minimum. In those limited circumstances where it becomes necessary to send electronic communications containing personally identifiable student information, it is important to make a paper copy of the material and save it in the student's file.

- E. Password Security. Many systems provided by TCPS need to be secure. Any system accessed via an account with a user login name and password is a system

**AUTHORIZED STAFF USE OF COMPUTERS, MEDIA AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SYSTEMS (ACCEPTABLE USE)**

that needs to be secure. Accounts are to be accessed only by the account owner. Passwords are not to be shared with anyone. The account owner is responsible to keep his/her password information confidential.

- F. E-mail Archives. Most e-mail communications have no archival value. Therefore, most e-mail communications should not be saved or backed-up. Any e-mail communication that must be saved should be archived as soon as possible after it is sent or received. E-mail communications not archived will be deleted except as required by current regulation.

- G. Inappropriate Material. When e-mail and other electronic communications received from outside sources contain material such as jokes, greeting cards, defamatory statements, discriminatory statements, obscenities, or pornographic images, they should be deleted as soon as possible. These items should not be circulated to other administrators or staff or to persons outside the school system. Such material may only be saved or forwarded for the purpose of conducting a disciplinary investigation. TCPS employees must not, at any time, intentionally receive or distribute material on school system computers that is abusive, harassing, libelous, obscene, profane, pornographic, threatening, sexually explicit, or illegal or purports to speak for the TCPS or any employee of TCPS. The Assistant Superintendent for Support Services or the Technology Manager should be advised when inappropriate materials are received for assistance in the prevention of future occurrences.

- H. Disruption of Systems. TCPS employees must not use or permit or enable others to use the TCPS' network and related resources to infiltrate, disrupt, or harm computer systems within or outside TCPS' local or wide area network.

- I. Personal Websites and Other Internet Accounts. Teachers and other employees in a public school system are responsible for modeling and teaching high standards of decency and civic values. As individuals working with children, employees should be aware of these important professional responsibilities and must model the character they are expected to teach and exhibit, both on and off the worksite. If employees post messages or pictures which diminish their professionalism or discredit their capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents, it will impair their ability to serve as a role model for children and their overall fitness for duty. This type of material would include (but not limited to) text, graphics or pictures involving hate speech, nudity, obscenity, vulgarity, or sexually explicit content.

**AUTHORIZED STAFF USE OF COMPUTERS, MEDIA AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SYSTEMS (ACCEPTABLE USE)**

- J. Work Related Websites and Postings. Teachers and other employees providing postings and communications related to their professional role as Talbot County Public Schools employees must only do so by using Talbot County Public Schools servers **unless expressly approved by the Superintendent.**
- K. Disciplinary Action. Failure to abide by the terms of this Administrative Regulation may result in disciplinary action which, in the discretion of the Superintendent and the Board, may include suspension or termination of employment in appropriate cases.
- L. Employee Training and Receipt. All employees will be provided a copy of this Administrative Regulation and appropriate instruction as needed to assure understanding. Employees will sign the receipt provided at the end of this Administrative Regulation which will be placed in their personnel file.

III. Violations

Examples, although not all-inclusive, which would violate this administrative regulation are listed below:

- A. Knowingly accessing, uploading, downloading, distributing, or communicating files in violation of licensing and/or copyright laws including but not limited to music, video and digital images.
- B. Creating and/or communicating offensive, threatening, or discriminatory interpersonal communications.
- C. Vandalizing, damaging, or disabling TCPS equipment, systems or software.
- D. Knowingly loading or communicating electronic files (such as viruses) which would have the effect of vandalizing, damaging, or disabling TCPS equipment.
- E. Accessing TCPS or another individual's materials, information, or files without authority.
- F. Installing, keeping, or using a copy of unauthorized software, password-breaking or unauthorized encryption software on TCPS equipment, systems or software.
- G. Using TCPS equipment, systems or software for personal gain or profit.

AUTHORIZED STAFF USE OF COMPUTERS, MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SYSTEMS (ACCEPTABLE USE)

- H. Allowing anyone other than an authorized TCPS Information Technology authorized technician or supervisor to use your authorized account password(s).
- I. Allowing an unauthorized user to use your authorized account(s), e-mail address, or web page.
- J. Unauthorized access to the account of an authorized user, or possession or use of software that can be used to obtain unauthorized data.

-END-

RECEIPT FORM FOLLOWS

**TALBOT COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MD 21601**

**POLICY CODE
5.8- AR
ADOPTED
REVISED**

RECEIPT

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I have received a copy of the EDC-AR Administrative Regulation noted above, been instructed in its content and agree to comply with its terms.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Original copy: Personnel file