

Mansfield Board of Education Policy

CODE: FECCA

CLASSIFICATION: Equipment

EMPLOYEE USE OF THE DISTRICT'S COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Computers, computer networks, Internet access, and E-mail are effective and important technological resources in today's educational environment. The Board of Education has installed computers, a computer network, including Internet access and an E-Mail system (referred to collectively as "the computer systems"), in order to enhance both the educational opportunities for our students and the business operations of the district.

These computer systems are business and educational tools. As such, they are made available to Board employees for business and education related uses only. The Administration shall develop regulations setting forth procedures to be used by the Administration in an effort to ensure that such computer systems are used only for appropriate business and education related purposes.

ADOPTED: June 24, 1999

Introduction.

Computers, computer networks, Internet access, and Electronic mail (popularly known as "Email") are effective and important technological resources in today's educational environment. The Board of Education has installed computers, a computer network, including Internet access and an Email system, to enhance the educational and business operations of the district. In this regulation, the computers, computer network, Internet access and E-mail system are referred to collectively as "the computer systems."

These computer systems are business and educational tools. As such, *they are being made available to employees of the district solely for district-related educational and business purposes.* All users of the computer systems must restrict themselves to appropriate district-related educational and business purposes at all times.

These computer systems are expensive to install, own and maintain. Unfortunately, these computer systems can be misused in a variety of ways, some of which are innocent and others deliberate. Therefore, in order to maximize the benefits of these technologies to the district, our employees and all our students, this regulation shall govern *all* use of these computer systems.

Monitoring

It is important for all users of these computer systems to understand that the Board of Education, as the owner of the computer systems, intends to monitor the use of the computer systems to ensure that they are being used only for appropriate business and education purposes. The Board of Education intends to monitor in a limited fashion, but will do so as needed to ensure that the systems are being used solely for district-related educational and business purposes and to maximize utilization of the systems for such business and educational purposes.

Why Monitor?

The computer systems are expensive for the Board to install, operate and maintain. For that reason alone it is necessary to prevent misuse of the computer systems. However, there are other equally important reasons why the Board intends to monitor the use of these computer systems, reasons that support its efforts to maintain a comfortable and pleasant work environment for all employees.

Sadly, these computer systems can be used for improper, and even illegal purposes. Experience by other operators of such computer systems has shown that they can be used for such wrongful purposes as sexual harassment, intimidation of co-workers, threatening of co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, copyright infringement and the like.

Monitoring will also allow the Board to continually reassess the utility of the computer systems, and whenever appropriate, make such changes to the computer

systems as it deems fit. Thus, the Board monitoring should serve to increase the value of the system to the district on an ongoing basis.

Privacy Issues.

Employees must understand that the Board has reserved the right to conduct monitoring of these computer systems and can do so *despite* the assignment to individual employees of passwords for system security. Any password systems implemented by the district are designed solely to provide system security from unauthorized users, not to provide privacy to the individual system user.

The system's security aspects, message delete function and personal passwords can be bypassed for monitoring purposes.

Therefore, in addition to the prohibition against personal use found below, employees must be aware that *they should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of these computer systems.*

Prohibited Uses.

Certain specific types of system misuse are expressly prohibited, including but not limited to the following:

- ◆ Sending any form of solicitation not directly related to the business of the Board of Education;
- ◆ Sending any form of slanderous, harassing, threatening, or intimidating message, at any time, to any person (such communications *may* also be a *crime*, pursuant to Public Act 95-143, and other laws);
- ◆ Gaining or seeking to gain unauthorized access to computer systems;
- ◆ Sending any message that breaches the Board of Education's confidentiality requirements, including the confidentiality rights of students;
- ◆ Sending any copyrighted material over the system;
- ◆ Sending messages for any purpose prohibited by law.

In addition, if a particular behavior or activity is generally prohibited by law and/or Board of Education policy, use of these computer systems for the purpose of carrying out such activity and/or behavior is also prohibited.

Disciplinary Action.

Misuse of these computer systems will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Because no two situations are identical, the Board reserves the right to determine the appropriate discipline for any particular set of circumstances.

Complaints of Problems or Misuse.

Anyone who is aware of problems with, or misuse of these computer systems, should report this to his or her supervisor or to the superintendent of schools.

Most importantly, the Board urges *any* employee who receives *any* harassing, threatening, intimidating or other improper message through the computer systems to report this immediately. It is the Board's policy that no employee should be required to tolerate such treatment, regardless of the identity of the sender of the message. *Please report these events!*

Implementation.

This regulation is effective as of June 24, 1999.

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Notification

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Employee Use of the District's Computer System

(To be posted in a conspicuous place readily available for viewing by employees)

In accordance with the provisions of Public Act 98-142, the Board of Education hereby gives notice to all its employees of the potential use of electronic monitoring in its workplace. While the Board may not actually engage in the use of electronic monitoring, it reserves the right to do so as the Board and/or the Administration deem appropriate in their discretion, consistent with the provisions set forth in this Notice.

"Electronic monitoring," as defined by Public Act 98-142, means the collection of information on the Board's premises concerning employees' activities or communications, by any means other than direct observation of the employees. Electronic monitoring includes the use of a computer, telephone, wire, radio, camera, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical systems. The law does not cover the collection of information (A) for security purposes in any common areas of the Board's premises which are open to the public, or (B) which is prohibited under other state or federal law.

The following specific types of electronic monitoring may be used by the Board in its workplaces:

- Monitoring of e-mail and other components of the Board's computer systems for compliance with the Board's policies and regulations concerning use of such systems.
- Video and/or audio surveillance within school buildings (other than in restrooms, locker rooms, lounges and other areas designed for the health or personal comfort of employees or for the safeguarding of their possessions), on school grounds and on school buses and other vehicles providing transportation to students and/or employees of the school system.
- Monitoring of employee usage of the school district's telephone systems.

The law also provides that, where electronic monitoring may produce evidence of misconduct, the Board may use electronic monitoring without any prior notice when the Board has reasonable grounds to believe employees are engaged in conduct that (i) violates the law, (ii) violates the legal rights of the Board or other employees, or (iii) creates a hostile work environment.

Questions about electronic monitoring in the workplace should be directed to the Superintendent.

Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes:
Section 31-48b
Section 31-48d