

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

MTCS Policy 524

Revised: August 23, 2023

## **524 INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE AND SAFETY POLICY**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth policies and guidelines for access to Minnesota Transitions Charter Schools (MTCS) computer system and acceptable and safe use of the Internet, including electronic communications.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

In making decisions regarding student and employee access to MTCS computer system and the Internet, including electronic communications, MTCS considers its own stated educational mission, goals, and objectives. Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to preparation of citizens and future employees. Access to the MTCS computer system and to the Internet enables students and employees to explore thousands of libraries, databases, bulletin boards, and other resources while exchanging messages with people around the world. MTCS expects that faculty will blend thoughtful use of the MTCS computer system and the Internet throughout the curriculum and will provide guidance and instruction to students in their use.

### **III. LIMITED EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE**

MTCS is providing students and employees with access to the MTCS computer system, which includes Internet access. The purpose of the system is more specific than providing students and employees with general access to the Internet. MTCS system has a limited educational purpose, which includes use of the system for classroom activities, educational research, and professional or career development activities. Users are expected to use Internet access through the MTCS system to further educational and personal goals consistent with the mission of MTCS and school policies. Uses which might be acceptable on a user's private personal account on another system may not be acceptable on this limited-purpose network.

### **IV. USE OF SYSTEM IS A PRIVILEGE**

The use of the MTCS system and access to use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right. Depending on the nature and degree of the violation and the number of previous violations, unacceptable use of the MTCS system or the Internet may result in one or more of the following consequences: suspension or cancellation of use or access privileges; payments for damages and repairs; discipline under other appropriate MTCS policies, including suspension, expulsion, exclusion, or termination of employment; or civil or criminal liability under other applicable laws.

## **V. UNACCEPTABLE USES**

- A. The following uses of the MTCS system and Internet resources or accounts are considered unacceptable:
1. Users will not use the MTCS system to access, review, upload, download, store, print, post, receive, transmit, or distribute:
    - a. pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit material or other visual depictions that are harmful to minors;
    - b. obscene, abusive, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, disrespectful, or sexually explicit language;
    - c. materials that use language or images that are inappropriate in the education setting or disruptive to the educational process;
    - d. information or materials that could cause damage or danger of disruption to the educational process;
    - e. materials that use language or images that advocate violence or discrimination toward other people (hate literature) or that may constitute harassment or discrimination.
  2. Users will not use the MTCS system to knowingly or recklessly post, transmit, or distribute false or defamatory information about a person or organization, or to harass another person, or to engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks.
  3. Users will not use the MTCS system to engage in any illegal act or violate any local, state, or federal statute or law.
  4. Users will not use the MTCS system to vandalize, damage, or disable the property of another person or organization, will not make deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt equipment, software, or system performance by spreading computer viruses or by any other means, will not tamper with, modify, or change the MTCS system software, hardware, or wiring or take any action to violate MTCS's security system, and will not use the MTCS system in such a way as to disrupt the use of the system by other users.
  5. Users will not use the MTCS system to gain unauthorized access to information resources or to access another person's materials, information, or files without the implied or direct permission of that person.
  6. Users will not use the MTCS system to post private information about another person, personal contact information about themselves or other

persons, or other personally identifiable information, including, but not limited to, addresses, telephone numbers, school addresses, work addresses, identification numbers, account numbers, access codes or passwords, labeled photographs, or other information that would make the individual's identity easily traceable, and will not repost a message that was sent to the user privately without permission of the person who sent the message.

- a. This paragraph does not prohibit the posting of employee contact information on MTCS webpages or communications between employees and other individuals when such communications are made for education-related purposes (i.e., communications with parents or other staff members related to students).
- b. Employees creating or posting school-related webpages may include personal contact information about themselves on a webpage. However, employees may not post personal contact information or other personally identifiable information about students unless:
  - (1) such information is classified by MTCS as directory information and verification is made that MTCS has not received notice from a parent/guardian or eligible student that such information is not to be designated as directory information in accordance with Policy 515; or
  - (2) such information is not classified by MTCS as directory information but written consent for release of the information to be posted has been obtained from a parent/guardian or eligible student in accordance with Policy 515.

In addition, prior to posting any personal contact or personally identifiable information on a school-related webpage, employees shall obtain written approval of the content of the postings from the building administrator.

- c. These prohibitions specifically prohibit a user from utilizing the MTCS system to post personal information about a user or another individual on social networks, including, but not limited to, social networks such as "Facebook," "Twitter/"X," "Instagram," "Snapchat," "TikTok," "Reddit," and similar websites or applications.
7. Users must keep all account information and passwords on file with the designated MTCS official. Users will not attempt to gain unauthorized access to the MTCS system or any other system through MTCS system, attempt to log in through another person's account, or use computer accounts, access codes, or network identification other than those assigned to the user. Messages and records on the MTCS system may not be encrypted without the

permission of appropriate school authorities.

8. Users will not use the MTCS system to violate copyright laws or usage licensing agreements, or otherwise to use another person's property without the person's prior approval or proper citation, including the downloading or exchanging of pirated software or copying software to or from any school computer, and will not plagiarize works they find on the Internet.
  9. Users will not use the MTCS system for conducting business, for unauthorized commercial purposes, or for financial gain unrelated to the mission of MTCS. Users will not use the MTCS system to offer or provide goods or services or for product advertisement. Users will not use the MTCS system to purchase goods or services for personal use without authorization from the appropriate MTCS official.
  10. Users will not use the MTCS system to engage in bullying or cyberbullying in violation of the MTCS's Bullying Prohibition Policy, Policy 514. This prohibition includes using any technology or other electronic communication off school premises to the extent that student learning or the school environment is substantially and materially disrupted.
- B. A student or employee engaging in the foregoing unacceptable uses of the Internet when off MTCS premises also may be in violation of this policy as well as other MTCS policies. Examples of such violations may include, but are not limited to, serious or severe bullying or harassment targeting particular individuals, threats aimed at teachers or other students, failure to follow rules concerning lessons, the writing of papers, the use of computers, or participation in other online school activities, and breaches of school security devices. If MTCS receives a report of an unacceptable use originating from a non-school computer or resource, MTCS may investigate such reports to the best of its ability. Students or employees may be subject to disciplinary action for such conduct, including, but not limited to, suspension or cancellation of the use or access to the MTCS computer system and the Internet and discipline under other appropriate MTCS policies, including suspension, expulsion, exclusion, or termination of employment.
- C. If a user inadvertently accesses unacceptable materials or an unacceptable Internet site, the user shall immediately disclose the inadvertent access to an appropriate MTCS official. In the case of a MTCS employee, the immediate disclosure shall be to the employee's immediate supervisor and/or the building administrator. This disclosure may serve as a defense against an allegation that the user has intentionally violated this policy. In certain rare instances, a user also may access otherwise unacceptable materials if necessary to complete an assignment and if done with the prior approval of and with appropriate guidance from the appropriate teacher or, in the case of a MTCS employee, the building administrator.

## **VI. FILTER**

All computers equipped with Internet access and available for student use at each school site will be equipped to restrict, by use of available software filtering technology or other effective methods, all student access to materials that are reasonably believed to be obscene, child pornography or harmful to minors under state or federal law. Software filtering technology shall be narrowly tailored and shall not discriminate based on viewpoint.

## **VII. CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES**

Use of the MTCS computer system and use of the Internet shall be consistent with MTCS policies and the mission of MTCS.

## **VIII. LIMITED EXPECTATION OF PRIVACY**

- A. By authorizing use of the MTCS system, MTCS does not relinquish control over materials on the system or contained in files on the system. Users should expect only limited privacy in the contents of personal files on the MTCS system.
- B. Routine maintenance and monitoring of the MTCS system may lead to a discovery that a user has violated this policy, another MTCS policy, or the law.
- C. An individual investigation or search will be conducted if school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover a violation of law or MTCS policy.
- D. Parents have the right at any time to investigate or review the contents of their child's files and e-mail files. Parents have the right to request the termination of their child's individual account at any time.
- E. MTCS employees should be aware that MTCS retains the right at any time to investigate or review the contents of their files and e-mail files. In addition, MTCS employees should be aware that data and other materials in files maintained on the MTCS system may be subject to review, disclosure, or discovery under Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act).
- F. MTCS will cooperate fully with local, state, and federal authorities in any investigation concerning or related to any illegal activities or activities not in compliance with MTCS policies conducted through the MTCS system.

## **IX. INTERNET USE AGREEMENT**

- A. The proper use of the Internet, and the educational value to be gained from proper Internet use, is the joint responsibility of students, parents, and employees of MTCS.
- B. This policy requires the permission of and supervision by the school's designated professional staff before a student may use a school account or resource to access

the Internet.

- C. The Internet Use Agreement form for students must be read and signed by the user, the parent or guardian, and the supervising teacher. The Internet Use Agreement form for employees must be signed by the employee. The form must then be filed at the school office. As supervising teachers change, the agreement signed by the new teacher shall be attached to the original agreement.

## **X. LIMITATION ON MTCS LIABILITY**

Use of the MTCS system is at the user's own risk. The system is provided on an "as is, as available" basis. MTCS will not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including, but not limited to, loss, damage, or unavailability of data stored on MTCS diskettes, tapes, hard drives, or servers, or for delays or changes in or interruptions of service or mis-deliveries or non-deliveries of information or materials, regardless of the cause. MTCS is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of any advice or information obtained through or stored on the MTCS system. MTCS will not be responsible for financial obligations arising through unauthorized use of the MTCS system or the Internet.

## **XI. USER NOTIFICATION**

- A. All users shall be notified of the MTCS policies relating to Internet use.
- B. This notification shall include the following:
  - 1. Notification that Internet use is subject to compliance with MTCS policies.
  - 2. Disclaimers limiting MTCS's liability relative to:
    - a. Information stored on MTCS diskettes, hard drives, or servers.
    - b. Information retrieved through MTCS computers, networks, or online resources.
    - c. Personal property used to access MTCS computers, networks, or online resources.
    - d. Unauthorized financial obligations resulting from use of MTCS resources/accounts to access the Internet.
  - 3. A description of the privacy rights and limitations of school sponsored/managed Internet accounts.
  - 4. Notification that, even though MTCS may use technical means to limit student Internet access, these limits do not provide a foolproof means for enforcing the provisions of this acceptable use policy.
  - 5. Notification that goods and services can be purchased over the Internet that

could potentially result in unwanted financial obligations and that any financial obligation incurred by a student through the Internet is the sole responsibility of the student and/or the student's parents.

6. Notification that the collection, creation, reception, maintenance, and dissemination of data via the Internet, including electronic communications, is governed by Policy 406, Public and Private Personnel Data, and Policy 515, Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records.
7. Notification that, should the user violate MTCS's acceptable use policy, the user's access privileges may be revoked, school disciplinary action may be taken and/or appropriate legal action may be taken.
8. Notification that all provisions of the acceptable use policy are subordinate to local, state, and federal laws.

## **XII. PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY; NOTIFICATION OF STUDENT INTERNET USE**

- A. Outside of school, parents bear responsibility for the same guidance of Internet use as they exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, radio, movies, and other possibly offensive media. Parents are responsible for monitoring their student's use of the MTCS system and of the Internet if the student is accessing the MTCS system from home or a remote location.
- B. Parents will be notified that their students will be using MTCS resources/accounts to access the Internet and that MTCS will provide parents the option to request alternative activities not requiring Internet access. This notification should include:
  1. A copy of the user notification form provided to the student user.
  2. A description of parent/guardian responsibilities.
  3. A notification that the parents have the option to request alternative educational activities not requiring Internet access and the material to exercise this option.
  4. A statement that the Internet Use Agreement must be signed by the user, the parent or guardian, and the supervising teacher prior to use by the student.
  5. A statement that MTCS's acceptable use policy is available for parental review.

## **XIII. NOTIFICATION REGARDING TECHNOLOGY PROVIDERS**

- A. "Technology provider" means a person who:
  1. contracts with MTCS, as part of a one-to-one program or otherwise, to provide a school-issued device for student use; and

2. creates, receives, or maintains educational data pursuant or incidental to a contract with MTCS.
- B. “Parent” means a parent of a student and includes a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or a guardian.
- C. Within 30 days of the start of each school year, MTCS must give parents and students direct and timely notice, by United States mail, e-mail, or other direct form of communication, of any curriculum, testing, or assessment technology provider contract affecting a student’s educational data. The notice must:
1. identify each curriculum, testing, or assessment technology provider with access to educational data;
  2. identify the educational data affected by the curriculum, testing, or assessment technology provider contract; and
  3. include information about the contract inspection and provide contract information for a school department to which a parent or student may direct questions or concerns regarding any program or activity that allows a curriculum, testing, or assessment technology provider to access a student’s educational data.
- D. MTCS must provide parents and students an opportunity to inspect a complete copy of any contract with a technology provider.
- E. A contract between a technology provider and MTCS must include requirements to ensure appropriate security safeguards for educational data. The contract must require that:
1. the technology provider’s employees or contractors have access to educational data only if authorized; and
  2. the technology provider’s employees or contractors may be authorized to access educational data only if access is necessary to fulfill the official duties of the employee or contractor.
- F. All educational data created, received, maintained, or disseminated by a technology provider pursuant or incidental to a contract with a public educational agency or institution are not the technology provider’s property.

#### **XIV. SCHOOL-ISSUED DEVICES**

- A. “School-issued device” means hardware or software that MTCS, acting independently or with a technology provider, provides to an individual student for that student’s dedicated personal use. A school-issued device includes a device issued through a one-to-one program.
- B. Except as provided in paragraph C, MTCS or a technology provider must not



electronically access or monitor:

1. any location-tracking feature of a school-issued device;
  2. any audio or visual receiving, transmitting, or recording feature of a school-issued device; or
  3. student interactions with a school-issued device, including but not limited to keystrokes and web-browsing activity.
- C. MTCS or a technology provider may only engage in activities prohibited by paragraph B if:
1. the activity is limited to a noncommercial education purpose for instruction, technical support, or exam-proctoring by MTCS employees, student teachers, staff contracted by MTCS, a vendor, or the Minnesota Department of Education, and notice is provided in advance;
  2. the activity is permitted under a judicial warrant;
  3. MTCS is notified or becomes aware that the device is missing or stolen;
  4. the activity is permitted under a judicial warrant;
  5. the activity is necessary to comply with federal or state law, including but not limited to Minnesota Statutes section 121A.031; or
  6. the activity is necessary to participate in federal or state funding programs, including but not limited to the E-rate program.
- D. If MTCS or a technology provider interacts with a school-issued device as provided in paragraph C, clause 4, it must, within 72 hours of the access, notify the student to whom the school-issued device was issued or that student's parent and provide a written description of the interaction, including which features of the device were accessed and a description of the threat. This notice is not required at any time when the notice itself would pose an imminent threat to life or safety, but must instead be given within 72 hours after that imminent threat has ceased.

## **XV. CELL PHONE USE**

1. Students are prohibited from using cell phones and other electronic communication devices during the instructional day. Students also are prohibited from using a cell phone or other electronic communication device to engage in conduct prohibited by MTCS policies including, but not limited to, cheating, bullying, harassment, and malicious and sadistic conduct.
2. If MTCS has a reasonable suspicion that a student has violated a school policy, rule, or law by use of a cell or other electronic communication device, MTCS may search the device. The search of the device will be reasonably related in

scope to the circumstances justifying the search.

3. Students who use an electronic communication device during the school day and/ or in violation of MTCS policies may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to MTCS's discipline policy. In addition, a student's cell phone or electronic communication device may be confiscated by MTCS and, if applicable, provided to law enforcement. Cell phones or other electronic communication devices that are confiscated and retained by MTCS will be returned in accordance with school building procedures.

***[Note: This language aligns with the provisions found in the MSBA Model Student Handbook. As an alternative to stating specific cell phone rules in a school district policy, a school board could choose to direct school administration to establish cell phone rules. This approach enables administrators to craft flexible and specific rules that are specific to grade levels and buildings.]***

## **XVI. LIMIT ON SCREEN TIME FOR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN**

A child in a publicly funded preschool or kindergarten program may not use an individual-use screen, such as a tablet, smartphone, or other digital media, without engagement from a teacher or other students. This section does not apply to a child for whom the school has an individualized family service plan, an individualized education program, or a 504 plan in effect.

## **XVII. IMPLEMENTATION; POLICY REVIEW**

- A. MTCS administration may develop appropriate user notification forms, guidelines, and procedures necessary to implement this policy for submission to the MTCS Board for approval. Upon approval by the MTCS Board, such guidelines, forms, and procedures shall be an addendum to this policy.
- B. The administration shall revise the user notifications, including student and parent notifications, if necessary, to reflect the adoption of these guidelines and procedures.
- C. MTCS Internet policies and procedures are available for review by all parents, guardians, staff, and members of the community.
- D. Because of the rapid changes in the development of the Internet, the MTCS Board shall conduct an annual review of this policy.

***Legal References:*** Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 13.32 (Educational Data)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (School Student Bullying Policy)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.166 (Limit on Screen Time for Children in Preschool and Kindergarten)  
Minn. Stat. § 125B.15 (Internet Access for Students)  
Minn. Stat. § 125B.26 (Telecommunications/Internet Access Equity Act)  
15 U.S.C. § 6501 *et seq.* (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act)

17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.* (Copyrights)  
 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)  
 47 U.S.C. § 254 (Children’s Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA))  
 47 C.F.R. § 54.520 (FCC rules implementing CIPA)  
*Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B.L.*, 594 U.S. \_\_\_, 141 S. Ct. 2038 (2021)  
*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)  
*United States v. Amer. Library Assoc.*, 539 U.S. 1942003)  
*Sagehorn v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 728*, 122 F.Supp.2d 842 (D. Minn. 2015)  
*R.S. v. Minnewaska Area Sch. Dist. No. 2149*, 894 F.Supp.2d 1128 (D. Minn. 2012)  
*Tatro v. Univ. of Minnesota*, 800 N.W.2d 811 (Minn. App. 2011), *aff’d* on other grounds 816 N.W.2d 509 (Minn. 2012)  
*S.J.W. v. Lee’s Summit R-7 Sch. Dist.*, 696 F.3d 771 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2012)  
*Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. v. Camdenton R-III Sch. Dist.*, 853 F.Supp.2d 888 (W.D. Mo. 2012)  
*M.T. v. Cent. York Sch. Dist.*, 937 A.2d 538 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2007)

***Cross References:*** MTCS Policy 403 (Discipline, Suspension, and Dismissal of School District Employees)  
 MTCS Policy 406 (Public and Private Personnel Data)  
 MTCS Policy 506 (Student Discipline)  
 MTCS Policy 514 (Bullying Prohibition Policy)  
 MTCS Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)  
 MTCS Policy 521 (Student Disability Nondiscrimination)  
 MTCS Policy 522 (Student Sex Nondiscrimination)

MTCS Policy 603 (Curriculum Development)

MTCS Policy 806 (Crisis Management Policy)

MTCS Policy 904 (Distribution of Materials on School District Property by  
Non-school Persons)