

# Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) White Paper

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## **What Are AUPs?**

With the increasing use of the Internet and other technologies in schools, Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) are becoming a necessity.

These written agreements, which are signed by teachers, students, and parents/guardians, ensure the appropriate use of technology resources in K–12 instruction.

AUPs are not only found in schools; they are also found in libraries, businesses, listservs, newsgroups, and on Websites. With the vast amount of information that can be retrieved on the Internet, these policies are helping to guide technology users in a variety of environments. In this paper, only educational AUPs are discussed, although there are many similarities across the board.

## **What Is the Purpose of AUPs?**

According to the University of Delaware's Acceptable Use Policy Guide (n.d.), an AUP should fulfill the following functions:

1. Reflect the circumstances unique to your school or district and the electronic system used.
2. Serve as a legal document.
3. Be complete.
4. Be adaptable.
5. Be unique to your school.
6. Protect the students.

## **Why Are AUPs Important?**

The Internet and other new technologies provide invaluable resources for information-gathering and communication, and it is imperative that students be provided access to them. However, these technology uses are not without risk. AUPs help by serving as a set of guidelines for use of these resources.

AUPs serve a variety of purposes and are therefore important in a number of ways as well.

- **They help protect the schools and/or districts in liability issues.** For example, if a student does something unethical using a school computer or Internet connection, the student has signed the AUP claiming all responsibility.
- **They enlist parental guidance.** By having the parents sign the AUP as well, the schools are bringing in another responsible party to help watch over the students. As co-signers on the agreement, parents are more likely to pay attention to what

students are doing on the Internet and are more aware of the technology capabilities and access that their children are obtaining at school.

- **They help establish personal responsibility skills in students that will help them both in school and in future and other uses of technology.** Students need to be held accountable for how they use technology. Responsibility is a life skill that is well-suited to the use of technology.

### **What Do AUPs Include?**

The Acceptable Use Policies of different schools and districts do vary, as each must be individualized to the different location, student population, and school needs. However, there are many commonalities seen throughout most of them. Following are examples of two sets of components of an AUP.

The University of Delaware's Acceptable Use Policy Guide (n.d.) lists the components of an Acceptable Use Policy as follows:

1. A description of the instructional philosophies, strategies, and goals to be supported by Internet access in schools.
2. A statement explaining the availability of computer networks to students and staff members in your school/schools.
3. A statement regarding the educational uses and advantages of the Internet in your school or district.
4. A statement explaining the responsibilities of educators, parents, and students when they use the Internet.
5. A code of conduct governing behavior on the Internet.
6. A description of the consequences of violating the AUP.
7. A description of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of the Internet.
8. A description of the rights of individuals using the networks in your school/district (e.g., right to free speech, right to privacy, etc.)
9. A disclaimer absolving the school district, under specific circumstances, from responsibility.
10. A statement that the AUP is in compliance with state and national telecommunication rules and regulations.
11. A form for teachers, parents, and students to sign indicating their agreement to abide by the AUP.

The New Hampshire Educational Media Association, in their Internet Policy Toolkit, lists the following components as necessary:

1. Philosophy Statement
2. Statement of Policy

3. Statement of User Rights
4. Statement of User Responsibilities
5. Statement of Need to Respect Privacy of Others
6. Usage Guidelines—Acceptable Uses, Unacceptable Uses, Code of Conduct (Netiquette)
7. Statement regarding purchases made over the Internet
8. Statement of Liability
9. Following areas may also need addressing: Administration and Enforcement of the school policy/guidelines; (2) Administration of Accounts; and (3) Consequences of Improper Use
10. Account Application forms
11. Security Issues

### **Creating an AUP for Your School**

Given the differences in AUPs discussed above—even in the basic outlines of suggested components, it is important for schools to take all factors into consideration in order to develop an AUP policy that best suits their particular conditions.

When creating an AUP for a school or district, perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is the inclusion of all invested parties. “Students, teachers, parents, and administrators all need to have confidence that their concerns are well represented.” (Kinnaman 1995). “Unless the origin of the AUP is credible, it rests on a weak foundation.” Each group will have different concerns and issues that they want addressed in the AUP.

## References

- Kinnaman, Dave. (June 1995). Critiquing Acceptable Use Policies. Retrieved June 13, 2002, from <http://www.io.com/~kinnaman/aupessay.html>
- New Hampshire Educational Media Association. (1999). *The Internet Policy Toolkit*. Retrieved June 13, 2002, from <http://www.nhste.org/membership/intpol.html>
- University of Delaware, (n.d.). *Writing an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)*. Retrieved June 13, 2002, from <http://www.ash.udel.edu/ash/teacher/AUP.html>

## **Sample AUPs**

Policy on Student Access to Networked Information Resources

Monroe County Community School Corporation

<http://www.mccsc.edu/policy.html>

The Use of Computers, the Internet and Electronic Mail Permission Form

Rice University

<http://www.rice.edu/armadillo/aupenglish.html>

Appropriate Use Policy

Eugene School District 4J Internet Services

<http://www.4j.lane.edu/4jnet/>

## Resources

Acceptable Internet Use Policies: A Handbook  
Virginia Department of Education  
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/go/VDOE/Technology/AUP/home.shtml>

Acceptable Use Policies  
netc technology plans resources online  
[http://www.netc.org/tech\\_plans/aup.html](http://www.netc.org/tech_plans/aup.html)

Acceptable Use Policy  
Indiana Department of Education, Office of Learning Resources  
<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/olr/aup/welcome.html>

Acceptable Use Policy Guide  
University of Delaware  
<http://www.ash.udel.edu/ash/teacher/AUP.html>

“Creating Board Policies for Student Use of the Internet.” McKenzie, Jamie, Ed.  
*From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 7, May 1995.  
<http://www.fno.org/fnomay95.html>

Critiquing Acceptable Use Policies  
by Dave Kinnaman, June 1995  
<http://www.io.com/~kinnaman/aupessay.html>

Develop an “Acceptable Use Policy” (AUP)  
The Internet Advocate  
<http://www.monroe.lib.in.us/~lchampel/netadv3.html>

The Internet Policy Toolkit  
New Hampshire Educational Media Association, New Hampshire affiliate of the  
International Society for Technology in Education  
<http://www.nhste.org/membership/intpol.html>