

TECHNOLOGY USES AND ABUSES

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Texting...Facebook...MySpace...iPods...MP3...These are words that only recently have entered into our vocabulary. Technology is a remarkable tool when properly used, but can cause serious problems when abused. This flyer provides information for educators, and is based in part upon information prepared and distributed by the American Federation of Teachers.

EDUCATORS SHOULD NOT SEND TEXT MESSAGES TO STUDENTS WITHOUT FIRST CHECKING SCHOOL BOARD POLICY. A new Louisiana law passed in 2009 restricts and limits educators from sending text messages to students. School employees should closely read and follow school board policy before texting any student.

EDUCATORS SHOULD CONSIDER CANCELING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, OR AT LEAST USING MAXIMUM PRIVACY SETTINGS. The best way to prevent a problem with a social networking site such as MySpace, Facebook, etc. is to simply not have one. If you do have one, you should take steps to ensure that your information remains private.

If you have a "Facebook" account, make sure your settings indicate "Settings" "Only Friends," and that you hide your profile from Facebook search.

If you have a "MySpace" account, make sure that your settings have your profile viewed by "My Friends Only".

There are always ways to circumvent privacy settings. You should not post any material that others may consider offensive and you should not "friend" your students or permit students to "friend" you. Consider using something other than your full name, for example, "John S".

Students or others might post information about you on the Internet. Use simple Web searches to periodically check whether information has been posted about you, and print any false or defamatory information that you find about yourself.

Most websites that allow posting by the public have methods for you to contest information that has been posted about you. YouTube will generally remove unauthorized videos, for example, and sites such as MySpace will usually remove fake profiles when alerted by the actual person who has been profiled.

EDUCATORS SHOULD CLOSELY MONITOR STUDENT USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Check your school or school district policy governing student possession and use of cell phones and other electronic devices, and know what remedies are available if a student takes unauthorized photographs or videos.

Students are very savvy about use of the internet and text messaging. Unfortunately, some students are using these tools to cheat. For example:

- Students can access digital notes, secretly communicate with classmates and search the Internet for answers during a test, all from their desk. You should closely monitor your students to make sure electronic devices including cell phones and iPods are stored.
- Students can save information on their cell phones in their contacts list or with a notes application.
- Students can send text messages to other students taking the test in the same room or students taking the test in a later class period.
- Students can save pictures of exam questions taken with built-in digital cameras on cell phones which they send to other students, similar to text messages.
- Many phones have Internet and e-mail capabilities, like laptops, except they are easier to hide. Pulling up a Web browser allows students to read e-mails or view information – including answers to tests.
- Students can transfer text files to a device such as an iPod or MP3 Player. This allows them to access large amounts of text to use while answering test questions.
- Students can record notes through a voice recorder that plugs into any iPod. Long sleeves can hide the cord while the student rests his head in his hand to cover the earpiece. Students with long hair may try to hide headphones underneath their hair.
- Some calculators have math programs that allow students to program notes and equations into their calculator before exams.
- Students have designed programs that pretend to clear the memory by showing the normal “MEM CLEARED” screen without actually clearing the memory. To prevent this, Texas Instruments has developed TestGuard 2.0, a program that deletes all applications and programs in calculators.
- Hand-held video gaming systems such as Nintendo allow students to use the touch screen to send text messages to someone with a Nintendo within a 30-foot radius.

For further information, see AFT Publication Number 39-00901 “Classroom Tips: Appropriate Uses of Modern Technology”, at www.aft.org, and keep up with information through search engines (such as Google, Bing, etc.)