Blossom Park School Council

Proper Use of Technology Policy
Suggestions

1. There is a need for a clear distinction between the different stakeholders. Teachers, supervisors and managers on one hand need a different statement of the policy and its consequences; as opposed to other users, like students and parents.

2. **Format:** In the section "*Specific Directives*", it may be worthwhile giving each point (5.1-5.7) a title in boldface that captures the intended audience and the matter of discussion.

3. **Cyberbullying, Online Harassment, Discrimination and Threatening**:

   - Students should be informed, before they have access to OCDSB technology, that cyberbullying, online harassment, discrimination and threatening are all considered inappropriate use of technology that will be dealt with seriously. Students need to know in advance that those who engage in such actions will face repercussions (counselling sessions, getting parents involved and having tougher measures in case of repetition).

   - The approach in handling students' misuse of technology has to be different from that when dealing with other adult users in the OCDSB. Therefore, it is suggested that this point be addressed separately in the revised policy.

   - While "cyberbullying" is a topic that is introduced in the Health and Physical Education curriculum of intermediate grades, it is important that it is discussed with junior students as well, outside the health curriculum, especially that some students may choose to opt out of the health class.

   - All students should be informed beforehand of how to report cyberbullying incidents, and there is a need to create a mechanism for

them to confidentially reach out to a teacher or a school counselor for help.

4. When posting information on a publicly accessible platform or a website using an OCDSB account, it is important that the user makes it clear that the posted opinion is personal rather than representing the school or the Board.

5. **Privacy and Freedom:**

   - It is important to clearly state in the policy that, while OCDSB offers users this technology facility, OCDSB is also committed to maintaining respect for freedom of speech, communication and research while making sure they are practised responsibly and safely in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Board.

   - OCDSB should consider providing more clarification and examples to users on situations where the Board might examine, monitor or access user's files or accounts.

   - Students need to be assured that their personal freedom and privacy rights are protected while responsibly using their OCDSB email accounts.

   - Both students and parents need to be addressed using a simpler, more straightforward language regarding their privacy rights. For instance, Item 5.6 in *Specific Directives* refers to the "Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act". The Act is a long formal document that uses legal jargon, which might be inaccessible or challenging to comprehend by both students and parents; instead, a short document written in simplified English can be modified and made available to OCDSB technology users, through a link, as part of their Consent Form process.

6. Parents who do not speak or read English should be provided access to translated versions of the Appropriate Use of Technology Consent Form.

7. Students should be notified at the start of every school year of where they are allowed to use their OCDSB Google accounts and where they cannot

use them. e.g. Can students use their OCDSB emails to create accounts on Kahoot or Spotify?

8. **Web Filters:**

There is a need to update the OCDSB's web filters. The filters which are currently used to manage cybersecurity seem to be working in a reactive rather than a proactive mode of security, which does not respond to the needs of today's numerous online threats and emerging websites and social media platforms.

Efficient web filters can restrict students' access to unsafe or distracting content online without impeding their learning or access to useful educational sites.

9. **Technology Use Awareness Process:**

The generic clauses in the Policy need to be supported by a clear, consistent and on-going process of educating the students about the proper use of technology and making them fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. This must be a continuous process throughout the school year through:

- Handouts with clear instructions and expectations, customized for each age group, distributed to students and discussed in class with the teacher at the start of each school semester
- Dedicating several classes during the school year for Technology Use Awareness based on consistent materials and instruction in all OCDSB schools
- Both parents and students should be provided access to resources, including workshops on the proper use of technology.
- Providing more workshops and training to staff on the use of technology in learning. Training provided on PA days is not sufficient to meet today's technology-use challenges.