

# Lowndes County Schools Acceptable Use Agreement - Employees

(Revised May 2017)

*Please read the following carefully. Violations of the Employee Acceptable Use Agreement might result in revocation of employee's access privileges, disciplinary action by the School Board up to and including employment termination, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities or to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.*

Technology is an integral part of the learning experiences in the Lowndes County Schools. Students will use these resources to acquire knowledge, to seek, evaluate, and create information, and to communicate and collaborate with others. Similarly, teachers and administrators must model the responsible use of technology for these same purposes of acquiring, creating, evaluating, and sharing information. This Employee Acceptable Use Policy specifies the expectations for responsible use of technology for all Lowndes County Schools employees, including guidelines for communicating electronically.

## ***Expectations for employee use of system technology for instruction:***

- A. Teachers have access to a wide variety of digital resources for use in instruction and must use sound professional judgement in determining what materials are appropriate for their students. Any materials being displayed to students (for example, YouTube videos) must be carefully reviewed in their entirety and related to instructional objectives.
- B. The Lowndes County Schools System observes copyright law. Teachers should model the use of personally created, public domain, or Creative Commons licensed images in presentations and should expect their students to similarly credit and use images and information with integrity and in compliance with copyright law.
- C. When guiding students through research, teachers should provide instruction on and model the use of a variety of resources and effective search strategies to locate information. Teachers should incorporate into instruction lessons on how to evaluate accuracy, relevance, bias, and credibility of sources of information.
- D. Teachers must not use programs or websites for ongoing instruction or any program or site that requires the creation of student accounts until the software has been approved and listed on the Approved Programs List maintained by the Technology Department. Also, teachers must comply with the terms of service for any application--specifically, the teacher shall not use a site with students younger than 13 if the Terms of Service for the site restrict use to users 13 and older, and a site may not be used with any students if the Terms of Service restricts access to users 18 and older.
- E. Staff must be aware that students have access to the Internet from all of the school system's computers. Teachers must use good judgment and supervise their students' use of the Internet. The school system uses filtering software to help prevent student access to inappropriate web sites; however, it is impossible to block access to all objectionable material. While the student is responsible for not seeking or initiating access to inappropriate material, teachers must set clear expectations for appropriate use and monitor their students.
- F. Instructional staff should not allow students to use computers or computer labs unsupervised.
- G. Teachers should leave substitute teachers with specific instructions about what students may and may not do on the computers in their classroom during your absence.

- H. All staff will maintain the confidentiality of student records and information by keeping their own account credentials secure and by not posting lists of student usernames and passwords where all students can see them.
- I. To make parents partners in their children's success, teachers will maintain current class websites using system-provided tools (with [at a minimum] professional biography, contact information, class assignments), or alternately, if using Edmodo or Google Classroom, will enable parent access and maintain a current page on school website with professional biography, contact information, and instructions on accessing their class Edmodo or Google Classroom.
- J. Student pictures may be posted on district, school, or teacher web sites, provided parents have not withheld permission. Pursuant to the Lowndes County School System Student/Parent Handbook, images of students may not be published on the internet if the parent has filed a written objection within ten days of enrollment. School administrators shall inform teachers of any student for whom this permission has been withheld. Teachers should generally avoid identifying students by name on teacher or school web pages, but with the permission of the building level administrator, students may be recognized by name for their achievements.
- K. Teachers shall enforce the LCS Student Acceptable Use Agreement while supervising students. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the school administrator of any violation of the Acceptable Use Agreement.

***Expectations for employee use of system technology resources:***

- A. Any individual who is issued a password is required to keep it private and is not permitted to share it with anyone for any reason. Be careful when entering your username and password to make sure no one can see (and steal) your login information. Never allow a student to log in with a staff member's username and password or to use a computer logged in with a staff member's credentials. With a teacher's username and password, the student would potentially have access to emails, private documents in home directories, and grades.
- B. The system requires employees to change network login passwords every 45 days. Passwords should be "strong" with at least six characters and a mix of letters, numbers, upper and lowercase, and special characters. Avoid using easily guessed words as passwords. Some examples of passwords not to use: names of spouse, children or pets, school mascots, sports team, etc. Make sure any written password information is stored in a secure location. Do not leave passwords lying on your desk or in an unlocked drawer.
- C. Employees shall not use school system computers or the school district network for illegal activity, such as copying or downloading copyrighted software, music, or images, or for other violation of copyright laws. Peer-to-peer, file-sharing, and/or torrenting software may not be installed on a school system computer or laptop.
- D. Email accounts are provided to employees for professional purposes. While using the district's e-mail, users should conduct themselves appropriately and in a manner befitting an employee of the Lowndes County School System. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of an LCS professional.
- E. School system email accounts shall not be used for personal gain or to promote personal business activities.
- F. Broadcasting of unsolicited messages is prohibited. Examples of such unsolicited messages include chain letters, religious or political solicitations, virus hoaxes, and "joke" emails.
- G. LCS has established email distribution lists for each campus. Employees may send email

messages to the distribution list for their assigned campus, but may not send to any other campus email distribution list. If an employee has an email of interest to the system, the employee must send it to his or her building level administrator for approval. If approved, the building level administrator will forward the message to the system technology director or his designee for distribution. Employees may not send directly to the system vikings-I distribution list.

- H. Users are responsible for the appropriate storage and backup of their data.
- I. Employees are responsible for ensuring that any computers or computing devices, diskettes, CDs, memory sticks, USB flash drives, or other forms of storage media that they bring in from outside the school are virus free and do not contain any unauthorized or inappropriate files.
- J. Employees shall not install software on a school system computer unless licensed and specifically authorized. The technology department will maintain a listing of open source software that may be installed.
- K. Employees shall not use school system computers for any commercial purpose, such as operating a home business or creating items for sale.
- L. Employees may connect a personally-owned device to the school or school system network or wireless network, and all access must be in accordance with this Acceptable Use Agreement. Use of any personally-owned technology on the premises of the Lowndes County Schools System—including smartphones, tablets, laptops—must be in compliance with this Employee Acceptable Use Agreement.
- M. Users will not use Lowndes County School System technology to access inappropriate material on the Internet, including (but not limited to) abusive, obscene or sexually-oriented material, or hate speech. It is the user's responsibility to avoid initiating access to inappropriate material when using the Internet. Any accidental access to inappropriate material should be reported immediately to the user's supervisor. Employees who repeatedly access or attempt to access inappropriate sites, specifically pornographic sites, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Deliberate violations of this nature that occur in a classroom setting will result in immediate termination.
- N. The district realizes that from time to time the user may make incidental personal use of the Lowndes County School System technology resources. Such use may not consume more than a trivial amount of technology resources and cannot interfere with employee productivity or with the supervision of students. In addition, such use may not preempt any legitimate activity of the district, nor may it violate any portion of this use and implementation regulation.
- O. All employees, instructional and non-instructional, must conform to the Expectations for Communicating Electronically in their use of any electronic resource for communicating with students and/or their parents.

### ***Instructional Programs:***

A program is any instructional software, whether installed on a mobile device, computer, or network server or accessed over the Internet. Apps and web-based programs must be reviewed and approved prior to purchase or use if the programs are used for ongoing instruction or require creation of student accounts, regardless of cost or funding source. The Technology Department can provide the current Software Adoption Procedure document and answer any questions.

This review process will evaluate the need for the program, determine if the program duplicates programs currently in use, verify compatibility with our computers and networks, establish what student information will be collected and compliance with Georgia law on data privacy [Student

Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act (2015)], assess if the program meets the accepted standards for data security, assess the impact of the program on the time available for other instructional programs in use.

### ***Monitoring:***

Employees should have no expectation of privacy in their use of and storage on the Lowndes County School System network or on any online storage solution provided by the school system. Any access on the school system network, including internet browsing and use of electronic mail, is subject to monitoring and may be visible through routine maintenance. By using the district's technology and network, the user consents to routine monitoring and maintenance of the district's technology performed in the ordinary course of business to maintain security and integrity of the network. Monitoring and maintenance may lead to the discovery that a user is violating this use policy and implementing regulation, other Lowndes County School System's policies, or the law. Such violations will be reported and appropriate action taken.

Monitoring by the technology department of a specific user's use of technology may also occur upon the instruction of the superintendent. The district reserves the right to search archives of employees' email messages and to review any materials or assignments stored or created on the school district's computer systems with or without the user present and without the permission from individual users. Such mandated examination or review will be conducted by a member of the technology department.

### ***Expectations for Communicating Electronically***

Lowndes County Schools (LCS) recognizes that today's students and parents use public social media networks such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to communicate with friends, family, and their larger social networks. These forms of communications may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating in an education environment.

LCS has adopted these Expectations for Communicating Electronically to provide direction for employees when participating in online activities. By accessing, creating, or contributing to any online discussions, blogs, wikis, or social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these expectations. Please read them carefully before creating or participating in any online communication intended for classroom, school, or district use.

All employees must adhere to the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators  
<http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf> .

The expectations outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of protecting the students, staff, and the school system and raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students and parents. All members of the LCS professional community will adhere to the following expectations when communicating with students and parents electronically.

Electronic communication with students and parents should always be Transparent, Accessible, and Professional, as defined below:

1. The communication is **transparent**. – ALL electronic communication between staff, students,

and parents should be transparent. As a public school district, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility, and accountability with regard to all communications.

2. The communication is **accessible**. - ALL electronic communication between staff, students and parents are a matter of public record and/or should be accessible by others.
3. The communication is **professional**. – ALL electronic communication from staff to student or parent should be written as a professional representing LCS. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a LCS professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

### **Acceptable Communications Methods**

- Infinite Campus– Teachers can use-Infinite Campus to communicate directly to parents regarding real-time grades, attendance, comments, and assignments from their gradebooks.
- District Email - Use of district email is always an appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents. District email is archived, which maintains a record of the communication. For this reason, only the district-provided email system (your @lowndes.k12.ga.us address) should be used for communication with students and parents and for any-school-related communication.
- Remind or any other group messaging system that preserves a history of sent messages.
- GSuite for Education applications, including Sites, YouTube, Blogger, Classroom and any other system-provided communication tools. Through these services, teachers can maintain an online presence for their classrooms with the ability to post information, calendars, photo galleries, blogs, podcasts, discussion boards, and more. Content must be transparent, accessible, and professional.

### **Unacceptable Communications Methods**

- Non-District Email Accounts – LCS employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate with students.
- Text Messaging - Staff members should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can easily be misinterpreted by a parent or by the student. Records of such text messaging are not preserved or easily accessible. With available options such as Remind, there is no reason for any staff member to text an LCS student. Likewise, any other messaging service, such as Kik or WhatsApp, should not be used as a means to communicate between teacher and student.
- Sending private messages or direct messages to students within social networks such as Facebook or Twitter is unacceptable.
- Online Games and Related Activities – While many people enjoy a variety of gaming systems (Wii, Xbox, etc.) and recreational websites that allow them to compete with others through the Internet, this is not an acceptable activity for staff members to knowingly engage in with students.

## **Social Media Guidance**

School administrators are encouraged to engage with their school's stakeholders by establishing an official social media presence using sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These official accounts will be designated with logos and language to maintain the branding of the schools and the system.

When expressly permitted by their building administrator, individual teachers or system employees may use social media for communication and promotion of a class or sponsored student activity. Building administrators will maintain a list of these approved staff social media accounts. These accounts must clearly indicate in their posted description that the account is sanctioned by the school.

These social media accounts must be registered using the employee's @lowndes.k12.ga.us address. Any content staff members publish on these social media accounts must never compromise the professionalism, integrity, and ethics in their role as an LCS professional. No photograph of a student shall be published of a student for whom a parent or guardian has withheld permission to post images.

## **Reminders for Employees who use Facebook, Twitter, or other Social Media Sites for Personal Purposes**

Staff members shall not post images of students on any personal social media network without written parental consent, except for images of students taken in the public arena, such as at competitions or sporting events, fine arts performances, or public honors assemblies and graduation.

Staff members should never "friend" or "follow" students who are currently enrolled in any of the Lowndes County Schools. The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated. Where employees have established outside relationships with students of our system--for example, through extended family or an outside organization, they may follow a student only with written permission of the student's parent or guardian.

Any content staff members publish, pictures they post, or dialogue they maintain on social media should never compromise the professionalism, integrity, and ethics in their role as an LCS professional. Staff members who are presently using social media sites to communicate with friends, family, and their personal networks, should be cognizant of the privacy settings they have enabled on their accounts. Nonetheless, social networking sites are by their nature public places.

A good question that staff members should ask themselves before posting a photo or message is, "Would I mind if that information appeared on the front page of the local newspaper?" If the answer is "yes," then do not post it.

## **Questions?**

Staff members should contact their building principal or director of technology with any questions.