

Provincial School Network Access and Use Policy

Effective Date: July 2016

To ensure you are accessing up-to date information, please refer to the online version of this policy at ednet.ns.ca/document-depot.

1. Policy Statement

Access to information, opportunities to collaborate, and the creation of digital resources are vital to intellectual inquiry for staff and students and the achievement of learning outcomes for students.

Students in public schools in Nova Scotia will access and use information from a variety of sources, including the Internet, and will collaborate with peers and experts, to support and extend their learning.

School board staff will use the Public School Network (the Network) to fulfill requirements of their employment and for professional learning. Access to and use of the Network will allow users to access local, national, and international electronic information sources and tools.

Students, parents or guardians, teachers, support staff, volunteers, principals, school board staff, and school boards share a responsibility for demonstrating good digital citizenship and respect through appropriate and responsible behaviour when using technology to access the Network.

The [Education Act](#) requires that all school boards cooperate with government departments and agencies in fostering an orderly and safe learning environment, including the promotion of safe and respectful use of network and electronic communications. This policy is intended to provide a balance between supporting access to the Network to facilitate learning, managing risk, and outlining responsibilities for anyone using the Network.

2. Definitions

“Cyberbullying” means any electronic communication through the use of technology including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing; computers, other electronic devices, social networks and media, text messaging, instant messaging, websites and electronic mail, typically repeated or with continuing effect, that is intended or ought reasonably be expected to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress, or other damage or harm to another person’s health, emotional well-being, self-esteem, or reputation, and includes assisting or encouraging such communication in any way.

“Department” means the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

“Digital citizenship” means appropriate and responsible use of digital resources.

“Digital resource” means an electronic document or file such as a video or audio file, or a text-based file such as a Word document or PowerPoint presentation.

“Distributed Learning” means public school program courses offered through Correspondence Studies, or through the Nova Scotia Virtual School.

“Internet” means the public Internet.

“Intranet” means a private network accessible only to those who are authorized to have access.

“Network” means any or all of a public school system’s local area networks or Intranet sites that are used to access the public Internet, online education, services, applications, and resources.

“Network user” includes any student, teacher, other school board staff, school board member, parent/guardian, volunteer, or school advisory council member, or any other person given authorized access to a Network.

3. Policy Objectives

Proper implementation of this policy will achieve the following objectives:

- ensure that Network users have the information they need to demonstrate good digital citizenship, sensitivity, and respect through appropriate and responsible behaviour when using technology to access the Network
- clarify expectations and responsibilities related to use of the Network
- ensure an awareness of provincial policy and legislation, such as the Education Act

4. Application

The [Education Act](#) requires the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to establish a Provincial Public School Network Access and Use Policy to ensure safe and respectful use of the public and private networks in schools.

In response to the issues of abuse and misuse of Network resources, the Education Act also requires the Minister to define consequences for misuse of the network by students and staff of a school. This policy and the [Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy](#) together provide the consequences for unacceptable behaviours including cyberbullying and misuse of Network or online resources (see Section 5.4: Consequences of Unacceptable Use of the Network).

This policy applies to all Network users.

5. Policy Directives

5.1 Network Management

Data communication services are provided to schools, libraries, and related institutions through EDnet, a wide area network managed and maintained by the provincial government for the purposes of connection to the public Internet, administrative applications, and online learning (e.g., Nova Scotia Virtual School).

School boards and schools must,

- create a unique network access account for each Network user
- ensure terms of licensing agreements between software and hardware vendors and the school board are observed

5.2 Acceptable Use of the Network

All Network users must adhere to this policy and its procedures.

All Network users must

- use the Network in a responsible and ethical manner consistent with the educational and information purposes for which it is provided
- use the Network for authorized purposes only
- maintain appropriate online behaviour with all users of the Network
- exercise caution when releasing one's own or another person's personal information online
- respect their own and others' intellectual property as outlined in the [Public School Programs](#) document and [Provincial Privacy of Student Information Policy](#)
- install and access only authorized software and hardware on school- or board-provided devices
- report suspected vandalism, unauthorized file access, or inappropriate use of the Network to a teacher, principal, or appropriate school board office personnel

5.3 Unacceptable Use of the Network

The following uses of the Network are unacceptable:

- attempting to access or make public, the private or personal materials, information, or files of others without appropriate consent
- using technology for the purposes of cyberbullying
- causing disruption of the Network
- vandalizing, damaging, or disabling the work of another individual or organization
- accessing, manipulating, altering, or attempting to damage, disable, or destroy technology or files belonging to others
- accessing, creating, soliciting, communicating, or distributing harassing, pornographic, obscene, racist, sexually explicit, or threatening material, imagery, or language
- using the Network for commercial purposes, unless directed by a teacher in fulfillment of public school outcomes
- any use that violates provincial or federal laws outlined in Section 8 of this policy

5.4 Consequences of Unacceptable Use of the Network

Any unacceptable use of the Network must be reported to a teacher, principal, or other appropriate school board office personnel. Students must report to the teacher or other appropriate adult attempts by an unauthorized/inappropriate person to make contact with them.

Unacceptable use of the Network by students will be addressed, in accordance with the applicable procedures of the [Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy](#).

Unacceptable use of the Network by a school board employee shall be determined through the board's disciplinary investigation and response processes resulting in appropriate disciplinary measures up to

and including discharge. Where appropriate, this may include loss of access to the Network and/or referral or involvement of law enforcement.

Unacceptable use of the Network by a parent or guardian will be addressed by the principal or designate and may include loss of access to the Network and/or referral or involvement of law enforcement.

Unacceptable use of the Network by a volunteer will be addressed by the principal or their designate and may include conditions to, suspension of, or termination of volunteering, loss of access to the Network and/or referral or involvement of law enforcement.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for

- developing the policy
- communicating the policy to all Network users participating in Distributed Learning courses
- communicating the policy to all school boards

School Boards are responsible for

- developing procedures consistent with this policy and other applicable legislation and provincial policy, for all schools and sites under its management and control
- distributing this policy to those employed and served by the school board and to those external partners and service providers who access the Network
- supporting schools and offices to educate staff, students, and volunteers in the appropriate use of the network, with emphasis on the development of digital citizenship
- monitoring compliance with this policy for all schools and other users within their school board

Principals are responsible for

- facilitating staff development related to access and use of the Network by teachers, students, and other approved Network users at the school
- informing Network users and the parents and/or guardians of students using the Network of the purposes, benefits, and risks associated with the use of the Network
- monitoring compliance with this policy within their school

Teachers are responsible for

- instructing students on the acceptable use of the Network and communicating the expectation that all Network users will demonstrate proper digital citizenship and compliance with provincial and school board policies and applicable legislation
- ensuring that use of the Network is consistent with the curriculum outcomes of the Nova Scotia public school program
- evaluating digital learning resources prior to recommending them for student use
- educating students about the risks of making personal information available over the Internet

- overseeing student use of the Network within their assigned teaching areas or when acting in a supervisory role
- reporting to the principal, or other person in charge of a school, the conduct of any student who engages in unacceptable use of the Network
- modelling digital citizenship by maintaining appropriate professional relationships with students and others when using the Network

Students are responsible for

- demonstrating proper digital citizenship

7. Monitoring

The department will monitor this policy, including evaluating its suitability and effectiveness, and will ensure that the policy is reviewed every two years.

8. References

This policy operates along with and as a supplement to existing statutes, policies, guidelines, and regulations governing the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information, including the following:

Canada. Copyright Act. R.S.C. 1985, c. C-42. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/>.

— . Criminal Code. R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/>.

Nova Scotia. Education Act. S.N.S. 1995-1996, ch. 1. <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/education.pdf>.

— . Ministerial Education Act Regulations. S.N.S. 1995-1996, ch. 1. <https://www.novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/edmin.htm>.

— . [2013]. "Nova Scotia Government Website Privacy Policy Statement." *Province of Nova Scotia*. <http://novascotia.ca/govt/privacy/>.

— . Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act. S.N.S. 2006, ch. 3. <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/freedom%20of%20information%20and%20protection%20of%20privacy.pdf>.

Nova Scotia Department of Education. 2002. *Racial Equity Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/RacialEquityPolicy_Webversion.pdf.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2016. *Provincial Privacy of Student Information Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/document-depot>.

— . 2015. *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/pubdocs-pdf/provincialschoolcodeofconduct.pdf>.

— . n.d. *Public School Programs*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. <https://sapps.ednet.ns.ca/Cart/index.php?UID=MDNBdWcyMDE2MTI1MjI0MTk4LjE2Ni4yMTQuNQ>.