



Guidelines for Responsible Computing

Introduction

The computing resources in the Hopewell Valley Regional School District support the instructional, research, and administrative activities of the school district. Examples of these computing resources include, but are not limited to, the administrative computing facilities and operations, local and wide networks, electronic mail, and access to the Internet. Users of these services and facilities have access to a vast amount of resources.

Consequently, it is appropriate for all users to behave in a responsible, ethical and legal manner. In general, appropriate use means respecting the rights of other computer users, the integrity of the physical facilities and all pertinent license and contractual agreements. Individual departments and schools may have additional guidelines regarding computing equipment held in those departments and schools. Interested parties should contact the K-12 Supervisor of Technology, the building principal, the school technology specialist or a member of the technology support staff for more information concerning computing guidelines in a specific department or school.

Access to the school district's computing facilities is a privilege granted to school district students and employees. The Hopewell Valley Regional School District vests the responsibility for ensuring the integrity and performance of its computing systems in various system administrators. While respecting the rights of all users, when the integrity of the system is threatened, systems administrators are authorized to take those actions necessary to maintain the system.

The guidelines apply to all users of computing resources owned or managed by the Hopewell Valley Regional School District, including, but not limited to faculty, staff, students, guests of the administration, and approved external individuals or organizations.

Account Security, Passwords, and Integrity

The person to whom an account is allocated is the only person allowed to use that account. No password sharing is permitted. Additionally, it is the user's job to be sure he or she does not create a security hole in the system. For instance, users must select passwords that are not guessable or "breakable" and should not write the password down anywhere. Breakable passwords are ones found in any common dictionary, parts of the user's name, etc. The best passwords tend to be multiple words utilizing both numbers and characters.

The Hopewell Valley Regional School District provides reasonable security against intrusion and damage to files stored on district computers. The district provides some facilities for archiving and retrieving files specified by users and for recovering files after accidental loss of data. However, neither the Hopewell Valley Regional School District nor its computing staff can be held accountable for unauthorized access by other users, nor can they guarantee protection against power or media failure, fire, flood, or other disaster. Users have the use of recordable CD ROMs in all of our schools. These are available to record individual user files only and are not intended for the copying of installed programs which are found on the hard drives of district-owned computer hardware. The use of personal USB keys are acceptable as long as their use doesn't violate other components of these guidelines.

Although the school district backs up departmental/school file servers and makes reasonable attempts to protect those file servers from intrusion, it does not provide the same level of protection or offer restoration of files stored on the local drives of computer workstations. Therefore, it is especially important that users save their files to the fileserver(s) and use all available means to protect their data.

Privacy

The Hopewell Valley Regional School District participates in a range of computing networks, and many members of the school district community regularly use these networked computers in their work. Statements in public files in this medium are protected by the same laws, policies, and guidelines, and are subject to the same limitations, as communications in other media. The same holds true for personal electronic files and communications (e.g. email). However, users should exercise caution when committing confidential information via email because the confidentiality of such material cannot be guaranteed. Always assume that your files are readable by anyone on the network. The systems staff does its best to ensure that this is not the case, but you should always assume the worst when dealing with security.

Network and system administrators are expected to treat the contents of electronic files as private and confidential and to respect the privacy of all users. Members of the computing staff are forbidden to log on to a user account or to access a user's files unless the user gives explicit permission. An exception to this would be the accessing of K-12 students computer lab accounts by staff members for grading and student assistance purposes. Another exception to these privacy guidelines may be made when an individual is suspected of abusing the Hopewell Valley Regional School District Guidelines For Responsible Computing. In such instances, the system administrator will immediately notify the district Supervisor of Technology and/or the building principal.

Encountering Controversial Material

Users may encounter material which is controversial and which users (parents, students, teachers, staff, and administration) may consider inappropriate or offensive. This is much more easily monitored and tracked on the Hopewell Valley Regional School District computing resources. A content filtering software application is utilized to minimize encounters of controversial material. If it is believed a website is blocked in error, please note this to district technical support personnel. However, on a global network such as the Internet, it is impossible to control effectively the content of data and an industrious user may discover controversial material. It is the user's responsibility not to initiate access to such material.

Changes in the Computing Environment

When significant changes in hardware, software, or procedures are planned, the Hopewell Valley Regional School District community will be notified through electronic and other media to ensure that all users have enough time to prepare for the changes and to voice any concerns that they might have. This is usually done through the district email and conferencing system as well as building-based announcements.

Appropriate Computer Behavior

Those who avail themselves of the district computing resources are required to behave in their use of the technology in a manner consistent with the Hopewell Valley Regional School District's discipline policies as well as the Guidelines For Responsible Computing.

The school district subscribes to the statement on software and intellectual rights distributed by EDUCOM, the non-profit consortium of colleges and universities committed to the use and management of information technology in higher education, and the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), a computer software and services industry association which states:

- Respect for intellectual labor and creativity is vital to academic discourse and enterprise. This principle applies to work of all authors and publishers in all media. It encompasses respect for the right to acknowledgment, right to privacy, and right to determine the form, manner, and terms of publication and distribution.
- Because electronic information is volatile and easily reproduced, respect for the work and personal expression of others is especially critical in computer environments. Violations of authorial integrity, including plagiarism, invasion of privacy, unauthorized access, and trade secret and copyright violations, may be grounds for sanctions against members of the academic community.

The following list does not cover every situation that pertains to proper or improper use of computer resources, but it does suggest some of the responsibilities that you accept if you choose to use a computer resource or the network access that the Hopewell Valley Regional School District provides.

1. If you have any computer account, you are responsible for the use made of that account. You should set a password which will protect your account from unauthorized use, and which will not be guessed easily. If you discover that someone has made unauthorized use of your account, you should change the password and report the intrusion to a network or systems administrator. You should change your password on your account(s) on a regular basis to assure continued security of your account. You should only use a computer account that belongs to you.
2. You must not intentionally seek information about, browse, obtain copies of, or modify files, passwords, or tapes belonging to other people, whether in the Hopewell Valley Regional School District or elsewhere, unless specifically authorized to do so by those individuals. You must not attempt to decrypt or translate encrypted material to which you are not entitled. Nor may you seek to obtain system privileges to which you are not entitled. Attempts to do any of these things will be considered serious transgressions.
3. If you encounter or observe a gap in system or network security, you must report the gap to a system or network administrator. You must refrain from exploiting any such gaps in security.
4. You must refrain from any unauthorized action that deliberately interferes with the operating system or accounting functions of either individual workstations or of network servers. This would include the creation and distribution of destructive and interfering programs such as worms and viruses.

5. You must be sensitive to the public nature of shared facilities, and take care not to display on screens in such locations images, sounds, or messages that could create an atmosphere of discomfort or harassment for others. You must also refrain from transmitting to others in any location inappropriate images, sounds or messages which might violate the Hopewell Valley Regional School District policies on harassment.
6. You must avoid the following activities: tying up shared computing resources for excessive game playing or other trivial applications; sending frivolous or excessive email or messages locally or over an affiliated network; or printing excessive copies of documents, files, images or data. You must refrain from using unwarranted or excessive amounts of storage, printing documents or files numerous times because you have not checked thoroughly for all errors and corrections, or deliberately running grossly inefficient programs when you know the efficient ones are available. You must be sensitive to special needs for software and services available in only one location to those whose work requires the special items.
7. You must not prevent others from using shared resources by running unattended processes or placing signs on devices to reserve them without authorization. Your absence from a public workstation should be very brief. A device unattended for more than ten minutes may be assumed to be available for use, and any process running on that device terminated. You must not lock a workstation or computer that is in a public computing facility.
8. You must not create, send or forward, electronic chain letters.
9. Non-district hardware or software is not to be installed on the district networks without authorization. This includes laptops, network hubs, wireless routers, etc.
10. In general, Hopewell Valley Regional School District-owned hardware, software, manuals, and supplies must remain at district computing sites. Any exception to the rule requires proper authorization.
11. Use of Hopewell Valley Regional School District computing resources for personal financial gain or for political purposes is not permitted
12. Use of impolite or abusive language will not be tolerated.
13. Student use of on-line resources such as the Internet will be by teacher/administrative approval. Staff supervision will accompany any on-line usage by students.
14. Copying of commercial software in violation of copyright laws will not be tolerated. In addition, no installation of computer programs, commercial or otherwise, will be configured on district computers without the knowledge of network and/or systems administrators.
15. No vandalism. Vandalism is defined as a malicious attempt to harm, modify, and destroy data of another user as well as the hardware equipment and software of the school district.

Violations of the Guidelines for Responsible Computing

Violations of the Hopewell Valley Regional School District Guidelines for Responsible Computing are to be treated like any other legal or ethical violation as outlined in the Student Handbook, relevant contractual agreements, and applicable faculty and staff handbooks. Violators may also be subject to prosecution under applicable Federal and New Jersey statutes.

Any violation of the policy may result in a cancellation of network computing privileges and/or disciplinary action. The administration, faculty and staff of the Hopewell Valley School District may request through each building administrator or their designees that the network administrators deny, revoke, or suspend specific use privileges. Anyone identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to the Hopewell Valley Regional School District wide area network and Internet resources.

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