

Thomaston-Upson County Schools Employee Acceptable Use Policy

Policy on Network and Internet Access

Internet access is available to all employees of the Thomaston-Upson County School System. The goal in providing this service to employees is to promote educational excellence in the Thomaston-Upson County School System by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. Network and Internet users are expected to use the network and Internet as educational resources. The following procedures and guidelines have been established to help ensure appropriate use of the Network and Internet within the Thomaston-Upson County School System.

Privileges

The use of the network and Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use may result in cancellation of this privilege. Based upon the acceptable use guidelines outlined in this document, district administrators will deem what is inappropriate use and the decisions of district administrators will be final. Also, at the direction of a district administrator, the system network administrator may close an account at any time as necessary.

Expectations in Use of the Internet

- a. Employees shall not access material that is obscene or is child pornography.
- b. Employees shall not write or send abusive messages to others or use inappropriate language.
- c. Student names and/or photographs are not to be published on the Internet without parental permission on the Thomaston-Upson County School System Contract for Internet and Network Use.
- d. In addition, the following conduct is prohibited: accessing, sending, creating, or posting materials or communications that are – damaging to another persons reputation, abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening or demeaning to another persons gender, race, or ethnicity, contrary to the school system's policy on harassment, harassing, or illegal.

Any violation of the Acceptable Use Policy may result in loss of access to the network and/or Internet. Additional disciplinary action may be determined in keeping with existing procedures and practices. When and where applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.

Expectations for Communicating Electronically

Thomaston-Upson County Schools (TUCS) recognizes that today's students and parents engage in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family, and their larger social networks. TUCS too has turned to e-mail, websites, blogs, text messaging, and use of public social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents.

TUCS realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of staff, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning. To this aim, TUCS has developed the Expectations for Communicating Electronically section of the system's Acceptable Use Policy to provide direction for employees when participating in online social media activities. It is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability; keeping in mind that information produced by TUCS employees is a reflection of the entire district. By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these expectations. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog, wiki and/or podcast.

All employees must adhere to the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators (<http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf>) as stated in TUCS Board Policy.

The expectations outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of

1. Protecting students, staff, and the District;
2. Raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students and parents; and
3. Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students and parents.

The following is a set of expectations that all members of the TUCS professional community will adhere to when communicating with students and parents electronically.

Does the communication pass the TAP Test? Electronic communication with students and parents should always be **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional 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 may 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 TUCS. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a TUCS professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

Acceptable Communications Methods

PowerSchool and Edmodo – Within PowerSchool, staff can communicate information related to grades, attendance, and assignments. With Edmodo and similar learning platforms, staff can provide some of the same types of communication that public social media networks provide while also offering access to curriculum and learning resources beyond the classroom walls. Edmodo allows for effective online learning by supporting online discussions, secure chat rooms, online delivery of assessments, and the sharing of documents, images and other media, all in a secure, password protected environment.

District Email and Phone - Use of District email and phone is always a very appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents. District email provides the staff member with a record of the communication. For this reason, district-provided email system (your @upson.k12.ga.us address) and district-provided phone numbers and extensions should be used. Please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for best practice guidelines in its use.

District and School Websites – Within school websites, individual web pages are available to all teachers. The website also has the ability to post blogs, surveys, calendar items, and news.

Social Media for Instructional Purposes – Any content, pictures, or dialogue staff members publish, whether in Facebook, Twitter, a blog, a discussion thread or other website, should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in their role as a TUCS professional. A good question that staff members should ask themselves before posting or emailing a 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. Social networking sites are very public places.

Less Acceptable Communications Methods

Text Messaging – Text messaging is typically between individuals and highly personal. Because texting is such a quick and convenient way of communication, a simple message may lead to an extended texting conversation that can get “off topic.” Therefore staff members should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can easily be misinterpreted by a parent. If a staff member plans to use texting for immediate and urgent contact with students/team members, they must be transparent about such use. He/she must make parents aware at the beginning of the school year or season that he/she may use texting. A variety of instructional tools such as Remind101 are available which take advantage of texting capabilities. Staff should always communicate with parents ahead of time regarding the use of such tools.

Unacceptable Communications Methods

Non-District Email and Instant Messaging TUCS employees should never use personal email accounts or instant messaging to communicate with students about school matters.

Important Reminders: Social Media Sites for Personal Purposes

Staff members presently using social media sites, such as Facebook, to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks should ensure that their privacy settings are set to “Only Friends.” If the “Friends of Friends” or “Networks and Friends” settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. Employees should not use their District email address or phone number for communications on social media networks for personal accounts. The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated. Employees should always ensure that their comments and opinions are identified as their own and not as “official” comments or opinions of the school(s) and/or system.

Responsible Use Guidelines for Thomaston-Upson County Schools' Community

The mission of Thomaston-Upson County Schools (TUCS) is for every individual to achieve excellence every day. The district provides ongoing student instruction that develops graduated digital citizenship for using technology as a tool to achieve this mission. Information and Communication Technology is an integral part of TUCS' curriculum across subjects and grades in developmentally appropriate ways.

I understand that using digital devices (whether personal or school owned) and the TUCS network is a privilege, and when I use them according to the guidelines in the Acceptable Use Policy, I will keep that privilege.

All members of Thomaston-Upson County Schools' community agree to follow the Thomaston-Upson County Schools' Acceptable Use Policy, district policies, school rules and commit to the following responsible use guidelines.

I will:

- Use digital devices, networks and software in school for educational purposes and activities.
- Keep my personal information and that of others private.
- Show respect for myself and others when using technology including social media.
- Give acknowledgement to others for their ideas and work.
- Report inappropriate use of technology immediately.

Enforcement of Policy

- a. The Thomaston-Upson County School System uses web filtering hardware and software as a technology protection measure to block or filter access to Internet sites that violate the terms of this acceptable use policy.
- b. The technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access may be disabled by a school system administrator for bona fide research purposes by an adult.
- c. The school system technology director may also override the technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access for a student to access a site with legitimate educational value that is wrongly blocked by the technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access.
- d. Thomaston-Upson County School System staff will monitor students' use of the Internet, through either direct supervision, or by monitoring Internet use history, to ensure enforcement of the policy.

Terms and Conditions

All terms and conditions as stated in this document are subject to the policies of the Thomaston-Upson County School System Board of Education. These terms and conditions reflect the entire agreement of the parties and supersede all prior oral or written agreements and understandings of the parties. These terms and conditions shall be governed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia, United States of America.

Liability

The school system will not be held liable for information maintained on school corporation diskettes, hard drives, or servers, information retrieved through the school corporation computers, networks, or online resources, personal property used to access school corporation computers, networks, or online resources, or unauthorized financial obligations resulting from the use of school corporation resources and accounts to access the Internet.

The Thomaston-Upson County School System Internet Acceptable Use Policy, Approved by the Thomaston-Upson County Board of Education, August 14, 2001 (Descriptor Code: IFBG)

Employee Account

Last Name, First Name, Middle Name

Employee Signature

Date