Reflective Paper on Interview of Administrator Regarding

Appropriate Use of Technology

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by

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I interviewed the principal at my school site (Canyon Oaks Elementary) about our district’s appropriate use policy as well as our Board Policy on social media use. Here is text from the APU board policy:

Before using the district's on-line resources, each student and his/her parent/guardian shall sign and return an Acceptable Use Agreement specifying user obligations and responsibilities. In that agreement, the student and his/her parent/guardian shall agree to not hold the district responsible and shall agree to indemnify and hold harmless the district and all district personnel for the failure of any technology protection measures, violations of copyright restrictions, users' mistakes or negligence, or any costs incurred by users. The principal or designee shall oversee the maintenance of each school's technological resources and may establish guidelines and limits on their use. He/she shall ensure that all students using these resources receive training in their proper use as well as copies of related district policies and regulations.

INTERNET USE AGREEMENT - (Grade K-6)

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

All NapaNet/Internet activities, tools, etc., will conform to Napa Valley Unified School District and school site rules. Any activities which do not conform are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, including termination of your NapaNet access. In order to use the Internet at school you must agree to be a responsible user (as described below) of the computer resources available. If any user engages in illegal or questionable activities, his/her account on NapaNet will be terminated. Future access may be denied and disciplinary action may be taken.

Privileges: The use of NapaNet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in cancellation of those privileges.

Acceptable Use: The use of NapaNet must be for learning purposes only and be consistent with the educational objectives of Napa Valley Unified School District.

Netiquette (Network Etiquette):

1. Be polite
2. Use appropriate language
3. Do not reveal your or anyone else's phone number or address.

Security: Do not use anyone else's account or allow them to use yours. If you become aware of misuse of NapaNet, you must notify a teacher or system administrator.

Renewal: This agreement must be renewed annually.

When I interviewed Principal Knox about the Appropriate Use of Technology agreement, he indicated that it is contained within a series of documents that parents must sign when first enrolling their child in the school and then subsequently at the beginning of each year as part of a set of documents sent home with students. His take on the agreement is that it is merely a formality, particularly at the elementary level where students are far less likely to violate any of the provisions therein. He said most parents and students probably don’t even read the document before signing it, and that teachers certainly don’t review the policy and/or agreement with their classes at the start of the year. If anything, he mentioned that teachers would review behaviors around the computers or with the hardware itself as opposed to what is appropriate or not when using the technology. He also mentioned that our network filters are fairly lenient when it comes to allowing through YouTube, Facebook, Netflix and other popular sites students tend to gravitate towards. Despite this, he has never received any referrals or complaints from teachers that students were misusing the technology and/or internet to visit sites that would violate the AUP.

I also spoke with Principal Knox about the district’s new this year Social Media board policy. Mr. Knox indicated that, while he recognizes the value of technology such as social media platforms in promoting community involvement, he was wary of the use of such platforms at the elementary level and described his approach to social media as “old school”. He also felt that such sites, if open to parents and other outside entities could lead to public forum-type rants and give too much leeway to disgruntled users. He referenced the comments sections in online newspapers and how they contribute to negativity and diversion from the actual content at hand. Further, he had a difficult time envisioning teachers being able to maintain control and ownership of the social media sites, given the lack of time they have currently to do the work of their classroom and the teaching and learning occurring therein. He saw it as a potential burden to teachers and one that could become contentious with parents (as he’s seen class websites become).

Despite the policy’s provisions, he was also concerned about the privacy issues surrounding social media and wary of confidential information potentially being transmitted across the sites. I asked him what he considered “social media” to be. He defined social media as social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Edmodo, or blogs. He mentioned that our Parent Club has a Facebook site and that he encourages teachers to connect via Edmodo with each other. He did not see a near future where K-5 students were communicating with teachers and/or with each other via social media.

Our district’s policy regarding official district social media accounts are as follows:

1. The purpose of the site along with a statement that users are expected to use the site only for those intended purposes.

2. Information on how to use the security settings of the social media platform.

3. A statement that the site is regularly monitored and that any inappropriate post will be promptly removed. Inappropriate posts include those that:

a. Are obscene, libelous, or so incite students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school's orderly operation

b. Are not related to the stated purpose of the site, including, but not limited to, comments of a commercial nature, political activity, and comments that constitute discrimination or harassment

4. Protocols for users, including expectations that users will communicate in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner.

5. A statement that users are personally responsible for the content of their posts and that the district is not responsible for the content of external online platforms.

6. A disclaimer that the views and comments expressed on the site are those of the users and do not necessarily reflect the views of the district.

7. A disclaimer that any user's reference to a specific commercial product or service does not imply endorsement or recommendation of that product or service by the district.

8. The individual(s) to contact regarding violation of district guidelines on the use of official district social media platforms.

District employees who participate in official district social media platforms shall adhere to all applicable district policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, professional standards related to interactions with students.

When appropriate, employees using official district social media platforms shall identify themselves by name and district title and include a disclaimer stating that the views and opinions expressed in their post are theirs alone and do not necessarily represent those of the district or school.