

MEMORANDUM TO PRINCIPALS

97/011 (S.010)

STUDENT ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

The New South Wales Government's Computers in Schools strategy includes the connection of schools to the Internet through the Department of School Education's (DSE) Internet service.

Use of the Internet in schools should be focussed on improving student learning outcomes in purposeful curriculum-specific contexts. The provision of Internet access to schools provides an opportunity for school communities to discuss and clarify the educational issues associated with the use of the Internet and to develop strategies to support teaching and learning initiatives that utilise the Internet.

Internet use provides opportunities to enhance student learning experiences through access to the vast amount of information available on the Internet. Connecting schools to the Internet also greatly enhances the ability of teachers and students to communicate electronically with other Internet users.

While much of the information available on the Internet is suitable for use in schools, some material is inappropriate for use by students. Schools therefore have a responsibility to ensure that students use the Departmental Internet service safely, effectively and responsibly.

Responsibilities of schools

Each school is responsible for the information that students both send and receive while using the Internet connection.

Each school is required to develop, in association with its community, a Student Access to the Internet Policy for the safe management and effective use of the school's Internet connection, by the end of term four 1997.

Each school's Student Access to the Internet Policy will address the following:

- the safety and privacy of students, staff and other Internet users;
- establishment of an Internet code of behaviour for use by students which clearly identifies the consequences of breaches of the code of behaviour;
- strategies for dealing with the transmission or receipt of inappropriate Internet material;
- equity of access to the Internet computer system;
- the relationship with established principles of and existing school policies and strategies regarding student welfare, good discipline and effective learning, child protection, anti-racism and anti-discrimination;
- strategies for the effective and secure management of the school's Internet computer system and associated virus and user access software;
- the legal requirements regarding copyright for students and staff, including the copyright of computer software;
- provision for regular review and revision of the policy.

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A support document, titled *Student access: developing a school Internet policy*, has been distributed with this memorandum¹. The support document provides advice and practical activities to assist schools to undertake the task of developing their Student Access to the Internet Policy. For enquiries regarding this document contact Sally Blackwell in Curriculum Directorate by telephone on (02) 9886 7541.

Further assistance is available from district Technology Advisers.

The Internet support document, *connect.edu: Internet in teaching and learning*, provides support for the educational issues associated with the use of the Internet including the development of effective student information and communication skills. It will be delivered to schools during term three 1997.

Controlling Internet access

The Department's Internet service provides centralised technical barriers to restrict access to certain inappropriate Internet material. The use of school allocated UserIDs allows each school to specify who has access to the Department's Internet service and their level of Internet access.

Additionally, *CyberPatrol* software has been installed on the school's Internet computer system to further limit access to inappropriate Internet content. Use of this school-based software to limit access is the responsibility of each school.

This level of Internet filtering and control is not available as a standard feature from commercial Internet service providers.

Reporting inappropriate content

Schools should report Internet material which they consider to be inappropriate to the School Technology Support Centre on local call number 132348.

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¹ This support document is available from Chief Education Officer, Technological and Applied Studies, phone: (02) 9886 7444.