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**For Successful Acceptable Use Policies, Communication is Key**](https://www.imperosoftware.com/for-successful-acceptable-use-policies-communication-is-key/)

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With each new school year comes a barrage of emails and letters sent out to teachers, students, and parents. Newsletters, permission slips, and teacher notes form piles around the house. One of the many forms of communications sent out that must be returned with a signature of understanding and approval is the acceptable use policy (AUP), or technology use policy. Because of the enormous amount of compliance paperwork shuffled across the population of a school district, it’s likely that this all-important piece of information is merely skimmed over.

And when the technological landscape of your school is constantly changing, the acceptable use of technology is paramount for parents, teachers, and pupils to understand. It’s up to the school’s IT department to make sure that acceptable use of technology is communicated, understood, and accepted. The key to achieving these goals is to keep communicating to all parties involved, even after the note has been sent home. It’s the equivalent of hanging up your kid’s report card on the fridge to keep his good grade goals in mind.

Making the message of AUP clear doesn’t have to be homework, though. Here are some helpful tips to communicate the policy to the many types of school stakeholders:

**Communication with faculty**

We know — the beginning of the school year is crazy for teachers. Another mandatory teacher meeting or training about technology would be met with a collective eye roll. Still, it is of great importance to give teachers the information they need about any changes to the technology AUP so they are prepared to educate students and answer parent questions.

Ultimately, group training on AUP changes and updates would be ideal. And it could be just as effective and efficient to hold an online internal webinar. Better yet, you could even create a video for teachers to watch on their own time. There would be no shortage of information or examples to fit into this video! What to cover? Include anything in the AUP that is different from previous years. Use examples of policy guidelines on actual computers. Take screenshots, or record live use of websites and other resources that convey the information covered in the AUP.

Arm teachers with the language they need to explain the AUP to parents and students. You know the parents will have questions, so you should prep your staff with the accurate answers. Create an FAQ just for teacher-parent conversations. But don’t just spoon-feed information to teachers. As an IT department leader, you should show them how to find resources to back their answers. To cover all of your bases, though, discuss who is next in command after educators for in depth explanations about the AUP.

**Communication with parents**

As previously mentioned, it’s no secret that the beginning of the school year evokes a bombardment of paperwork for parents. There are health care forms, field trip permission slips, syllabi reviews, and conference schedules to read over and sign off on. For parents with busy schedules and multiple children, it’s common for even the most engaged parent to simply skim over permission slips and sign the dotted line.

Communicating AUP changes or updates to parents involves more than sending a note home. Parents need to be alerted in a more significant way. The AUP is crucial for both child and parent to understand, but another flyer home isn’t the best way to inform them.

Create an interactive booth at the school’s open house where students can see Internet use and technology in action. Illustrate violations so parents can experience what their children see. This will (hopefully) prevent school faculty and IT teams from angry parent phone calls.

It is likely that these parents are on social media as often as their kids. So this should be a no-brainer: take to social media. Utilize the school’s Facebook and Twitter accounts to project links to an updated policy on the school’s website.

You can go old school, too, with a mass voice message via the school’s phone tree service. Give parents a phone number to call with any questions, and give them a ring when the policy changes.

**Communication with students**

Who is the most important person involved in the AUP? The student is, of course. Students are the reason the policy is created. AUP’s protect the student from doing harm or being harmed. If you have to educate just one person on the AUP, it should be the student. If students have accurate information about the policy, then they can be key conveyors of its importance to their parents.

Ideas for communicating AUP guidelines with students are similar to those for parents and teachers. It’s all about showing and telling. Students understand best when they are given examples. If you give them hands-on experience and allow them time to understand the concepts behind the school’s AUP, then they will walk away feeling confident about the AUP guidelines. When teachers simply read through policies, students tend to tune out. Don’t give them that option in the first place.

Again, demonstrations and hands-on experience is where it’s at. To drive home the importance of AUP, teachers can schedule activities students and messages that can be incorporated into lessons. One great way to help pupils understand this is to provide tours of the school through the IT department’s eyes. Show students the network, the monitoring system, and the tools used to keep track of what they are doing online. Don’t keep it a secret.

Part of being transparent with students about AUP is also showing them what happens when they violate the AUP. How do teachers and IT administrators know if students have been on inappropriate websites? Show them.

Additionally, it’s helpful to instruct student on communicating to adults when someone else is violating technology rules. Teach them about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms. Touch on cyber bullying awareness and response, as well, as it is required by[CIPA](https://www.fcc.gov/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act) for E-Rate program compliance. If you give students the tools and info they need to understand the AUP, then they will work within it instead of fearing it.

**Communication with community**

The community at large may not seem like an immediate priority for conveying the contents of a school’s technology AUP. But if the community isn’t informed, then headaches are sure to follow due to miscommunication. It is best to prevent confusion rather than fight fires caused by it.

Consider different ways to be transparent about expectations to the stakeholders in your school district. In some cases, a public forum that allows community members to ask questions and voice concerns will do the trick. Invite the local newspaper to write an article on the school technology policies. Get the school principal involved, too, by asking him to post about new policies on a school blog. Provide ways for community members to get involved, such as volunteering time to help students learn technology.

**Conclusion**

For acceptable use policies to be successful, all school stakeholders must understand and have access to transparent information. To have transparency, communication must be made a priority. To get buy-in, all parties must open up lines of communication — from IT staff to teachers, students, parents, and community members. Illustrate changes instead of just sending written information and hoping people will read it. Provide means of two-way communication and avenues for answering questions. And finally, focus on how current and future technologies will enhance learning, as that is the mission of a good AUP.