

## Appendix T Guidelines for Internet and Electronic Communications



### Diocese of Trenton GUIDELINES FOR INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Internet has become a global and ubiquitous reality. It offers access to a wealth of knowledge which can be extremely beneficial to students, teachers, adults, minors and anyone who seeks information. The Internet can also be dangerous. Because the Internet offers the opportunity for anonymity, there is the possibility for cyber bullying and other harmful acts for sexual predators to have access to minors.

It is important for teachers, catechists, administrators and other adults working in parishes/schools to maintain appropriate boundaries with respect to students. This is for the protection of students and adults. The Internet and other electronic communications pose unique challenges in this regard.

Computer use, including use of non-parish/school equipment as well as outside use, can have harmful effects on students, teachers, catechists and the parish/school community. Any person who makes inappropriate use of the Internet, cell phones or other means of electronic communications that is deemed harmful to the good order and discipline of the parish/school, its religious mission or its educational objectives, is subject to disciplinary action.

This Document establishes guidelines for the appropriate and professional use of the Internet, electronic mail and telephone for adults working with minors.

#### **Acceptable protocol includes the following:**

- ✓ Adults should direct e-mail and telephone communications to parent or guardians. In the event that this is not possible, they should consult the Catechetical Leader, Principal or his/her designee.
- ✓ E-mail communications should be sent through parish/school e-mail account, if possible. If not the Catechetical Leader/Principal should be CC'd on each correspondence. Adults should remember to write as if others are certain to read what is written. E-mail communications can easily be shared with others for whom the communication was not intended.
- ✓ Only parish/school matters or matters appropriate to be discussed in parish/school settings should be communicated.
- ✓ In responding to student initiated communication, boundaries must be maintained. Adults can be friendly with students but they are never friends.

#### **Unacceptable activities include but are not limited to the following:**

- ✓ Bullying or harassing a student, parent, teacher, administrator, school/parish employee or other member of the parish community.
- ✓ Posting statements, pictures or other materials that are false, derogatory, defamatory, degrading, malicious, disrespectful, or threatening to a student, parent, teacher, administrator, parish/school employee or other member of the parish community.
- ✓ Using the parish/school logo or motto without written permission of the pastor/principal.
- ✓ Creating a website or webpage designed to look like an official parish/school posting without the written permission of the pastor/principal.
- ✓ Adults may not create a website or personal blog with the photos of students or links or gateways to students' webpages or blogs. Students should not be on adults "buddy lists".
- ✓ Adults will not instant or text message with students.

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_