

## Internet Filtering Policy Parent Options

The Internet is an exciting place for learning, sharing, communicating, researching, etc. Its use in good quality ways is vital to the future of our students. At Allendale Public Schools we see the Internet as an integral part of our world. The Internet is an invaluable tool for teaching and learning. Each of us is unique and we understand students are at all different levels of maturity and ability when it comes to Internet use. To that end we have implemented a filtering policy that we hope will support your efforts at home with the use of technology while balancing educational needs.

The devices provided to students from Allendale Public Schools will have Internet filtering provided by the school both when the laptop is at school and when it is away from school. We are also giving parents options of what additional level of filtering you feel is appropriate for your child. Please remember that internet filtering technologies are not foolproof.

Below is an explanation of the categories.

During school hours, the filtering will remain the same. The filtering choices below apply to student use **outside of school hours; including weekends and school year vacations**. Furthermore, internet access will not be available from 12 midnight to 6:00am.

• **Social Networks** including MySpace, Facebook, etc. In this category parents can choose two levels of access. **If parents do not choose to allow access, their child will have no Social Networking availability on their school-provided laptop.**

- Yes  No Social Networking from 3:00pm-6:00pm.
- Yes  No Social Networking from 6:00pm-10:00pm.
- Yes  No Social Networking from 10:00pm-12:00 midnight.
  
- Yes  No Netflix from 3:00pm-12:00 midnight.

Please indicate below your preferences for the level of filtering you desire for your child.

This is an **opt-in** filtering policy; your child will have NO access to Social Networking or Netflix until or unless this form is completed.

**Please fill out one form for each student you have at Allendale Public and turn it in to the School office or technology department. If you wish, you may fax the signed form to 895-6690.**

Should you wish to change your child's settings at any time, you may turn in a new form.

Student First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

Student Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## **Understanding Internet Filters**

In order to protect our students, Allendale Public Schools utilizes an internet filtering system in cooperation with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District and area schools. The filtering system monitors all internet web traffic and blocks websites deemed inappropriate or other otherwise objectionable.

Internet filters utilize a category system whereby websites are placed in a category that most closely matches the content of the website. By its very nature, filters are a reactive tool. A person can design and post an objectionable internet site tonight that would be uncategorized until someone at the filtering company found it, reviewed it and subsequently categorized it. Until it is categorized, it will likely pass through the internet filter.

### **Categories and Social Media**

While some categorization of sites is clear and straightforward, others require a judgment call. This is particularly true regarding social media. Some sites such as Facebook are clearly social media while others, such as news sites, are classified as news but may have social media components for sharing and commenting. Another example would be YouTube, which is first and foremost a video sharing site with the comment portion being a social component. The blurring of social media can sometimes lead to different opinions about what should be blocked.

### **Pictures and Photos**

Major search engines offer a "Safe Search" feature which significantly reduces but does not eliminate objectionable photos. Internet filtering may be able to further reduce objectionable content if the site as a whole is categorized as objectionable. The internet filter does not have the capability to interpret flesh tone or particular images. As a result, image searches may occasionally show inappropriate thumbnails. The site itself is typically still blocked but there is no reasonable method to eliminate all inappropriate thumbnails.

### **Balancing Act**

Filtering is a balancing act. Sites needed for valid senior level research papers may not be the most appropriate for young children. Educational games sites used for young children may be time wasting sites for older students. Adult supervision remains a key component in monitoring on-line activities both at school and at home.