

ST. THERESA PRE-K PROGRAM ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

The CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) a federal law requires that all educational programs for children under the age of 18 be protected from Internet Content that is not age appropriate in the educational setting. In addition this law requires that all educational programs create a policy that governs the use of all technology used by the school as part of the instructional program. This policy must be reviewed and signed by the parent or legal guardian of any child participating in the educational program.

While Acceptable Use Policies can often be extensive and include a significant amount of legal terminology, we have adapted our policy to make it as understandable as possible to school staff and parents. The policy below must be read and signed off on by all staff and parents before any staff member, volunteer, parent, or child uses any technology or technology based service in the educational program or on the property of that program. Several Pieces of Federal Legislation govern the construction of and the implementation of an Acceptable Use Policy for all digital technology used in the educational programs in the United States.

The Primary Federal Statutes are the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), the Children's Only Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Section 504 of the American's with Disabilities Act.

In Summary, the CIPA statue requires all educational programs to take steps to insure that the digital content being viewed and used by students is age appropriate and does not contain any potentially content as specified in the statue. The COPPA statue is primarily targeted at Digital Content Creators and Companies providing Internet Services and Digital Content, but it also applies to educational programs that create their own WEBSITE and/or Social Media Content. COPPA was meant to protect the children from having data collected and targeted advertising dispersed to young children prohibited without the parents specific approval and knowledge. This was to be true for all content created for children under the age of 15, especially by commercial content creators, but also insures that schools creating their own WEBSITES and Social Media ay also not practice inappropriate data collection or advertising. In the Allentown Diocese All WEBSITE and Social Media Content is managed and monitored by the Diocese. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act simply extends what was the privacy provisions regarding the creation and retention of physical paper student records, and requires all educational programs using digital record keeping systems to insure that students records are properly secured and may not be distributed without parent permission. The Americans with Disabilities-Section 504 simply requires all WEBSITE and content creators to make sure those sites are using creation tools, that are readily available, to insure that all persons will be able to access the digital content being created.

Previously the FCC (Federal Communications Commissions) had several other provisions in its regulations that required all Acceptable Use Policies to specifically detail how digital equipment would be physically secured and protected from hacking, and how all digital equipment would be used in the educational program, and how the equipment would be properly handled, maintained, and managed in the educational environment. Due to the onset of COVID and educational programs having to transfer school owned technology to students working from home the FCC dropped these requirements even though the vast majority of students have returned to in person learning. Whether these provisions will ever be implemented again is uncertain at this time.

We have tried to simplify our Acceptable Use Policy to the six statements about how we expect digital technology to be used in our educational Program. Please see the six statements below:

1. All technology equipment used by staff , volunteers, parents, and participating students in the school during any educational program activity is the property of the school and shall be used in a responsible way so as not to violate any provisions of the CIPA Act. Parents or volunteers bringing their own technology into or onto the school property are subject to the CIPA restrictions and may not utilize any content intended only for Adults while on school property. The Pre-K program will enforce CIPA required content filtering and blocking if needed as a regular part of their network services within the school and in any area on school property to which those network services reach.
2. All staff, students, volunteers, using school owned technology must do so in a way that protects the device from damage or misuse. Misuse means attempting to use the technology for something other than educational purposes or the deliberate attempt to illegally copy, delete, or destroy any digital content on the device. Protecting the device means to follow all procedures to ensure that the device is not damaged. Any damage to a device whether accidental or deliberate will be charged to the person responsible and any costs incurred for the repair or replacement of that device will be the responsibility of that person.
3. All network services in the school building are intended solely for operational administrative services and/or educational services and are not intended for personal use with the exception of a school declared emergency.
4. All staff and volunteers will comply with the COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) provisions. This act requires educators to notify parents and get parent permission before using an online application that requires individual personal information registration data on a child for them to be able to access the application and/or that collects the child's site usage data following registration. This includes applications where the teacher can create a classroom and add students without individual student registration. Parents shall be notified of the nature of the application and its educational goals and shall provide written approval for the use of that application with the students. All sites that are publicly known to collect student application use data without the parent's authorization if under 13 years of age are not permitted to be used in this educational environment. Parents should be aware of this as well and carefully monitor this in their home environment.
5. Due to the Introduction of Artificial Intelligence into many educational tools for teachers and students, including those provided by Google and used on the Google Tablets in our PreK Program, will be monitored for any "hallucinations" – (False information or responses created by the Artificial Intelligence software). If the frequency and amount of these hallucinations is deemed inappropriate for PreK age students these apps will not be used in our PreK Educational Program and we will try to substitute a similar application that does not contain Artificial Intelligence tools.
6. Any changes to this policy must be approved by the Pre-K program administration. All staff, volunteers, and parents must be notified in writing or by email of any changes within 10 days of the changes being added or made to this document.

A separate sign off document will be provided either electronically or by email or in writing for all staff, volunteers, and parents to sign. Please see that all sign off documents are returned within five business days of receiving this document. Any parent not signing on behalf of their child, their child will be restricted from using technology within the program setting.