

Regarding an Internet policy for teachers...

As a technology coordinator, I would discourage trying to enforce a policy for teachers specifically covering Internet use. I would rather apply a more general policy regarding professional and ethical behavior

If you need a policy for Internet use, then you probably need a specific policy for everything else in the school building: for the use of tools, VCRs, TVs, stereos, copying machines, phones, PDAs, laminators, etc. The list would never end, enforcement would be cumbersome, and it could spawn some negative attitudes about staff members not being trusted.

I would apply the same argument to the right to search computer files. Treat it like anything else in the building... the right to search a teacher's desk, classroom closet, file cabinets, etc. Again, apply a more general policy that is enforceable. (And, have your school attorney take a look at such policies.)

Now, if a teacher is using the computer for non-school purposes during the day at a time when they obviously have responsibilities to their students to attend to, then the administrator should treat it the same way you would if they were doing their tax forms or planning that new bathroom remodeling, or whatever else is not appropriate for the moment. Expect professional and ethical behavior, encourage it, and provide correction as needed.

Also, my experience is that the more restrictions you place on the use of a new innovation, the less likely it is to be used. I want my teachers to be excited about using email and the Internet for professional and personal purposes so they increase their proficiency with it and can they can share their knowledge with their students. (and better understand the world our kids are growing up in!). Maybe they're not using the computer appropriately because they don't have the skills, or understandings, or direction to do the right things with it.

Ownership of files (and licensing of software, too, while we're at it) may be a real issue for a school to sort out. At that moment when someone is leaving the staff, it's too late to formulate a policy on this. This has traditionally been more of an issue with faculty at colleges and universities where more is at stake regarding the ownership of ideas, research, programs, responsibility to grant providers, etc. This gets into copyright law, which does specifically address this. Other than writing policies, here's a few other things administrators can do:

- Install an Internet content filter/blocking system. None of the solutions available for this are without gaps, but it's better than nothing.
- Get out and about in the building. Observe what the teachers are doing. Engage teachers in conversations to find out the good things they are doing in their use of computers. Let them know from experience that there is the possibility of you stopping by their room to see what they're doing.
- With proper support and encouragement, train them to become proficient at using the computer for so many positive endeavors that they don't have time or energy to use it inappropriately.
- In general, talk up the idea of professional and ethical behavior and publicly acknowledge it when you see it. Model it! In devotional time, connect the topic of ethical behavior to our faith life. Pray about it with your staff.

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