



Web Regulation – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Your Guide to MCPS Regulation KBA-RB: Educational Purposes and Administration of the MCPS Web

On September 11, 2006 the superintendent approved new Regulation KBA-RB, Educational Purposes and Administration of the MCPS Web. This new web regulation provides a framework for the structure and content of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Web. This FAQ provides a basic background to the new web regulation. If your question is not addressed here, please contact Web Services via email at webmaster@mcpsmd.org

A. Background

1. **Why does MCPS need a web regulation?**

School and office webmasters and administrators have over the years asked many questions about web content and staff roles and responsibilities. They have asked for a web regulation to provide guidance and clarity on these and other issues. Most school systems have official regulations guiding their public web sites.

2. **How was the regulation developed and by whom?**

The regulation was drafted by a workgroup composed of students, parents, teachers, office staff, principals, administrators, community members, and webmasters. Later drafts were written based on feedback from legal counsel, principals, and administrators.

3. **What is covered by the regulation?**

It applies to all public MCPS web sites created by staff and students in schools and offices in the course of instruction or school system operations.

4. **Who is responsible for implementing the regulation?**

The Web Services Team implements the regulation under the supervision of the Director of Communications.

5. **When does the regulation go into effect?**

The regulation was signed by the superintendent of schools and became effective in September 2006.

B. Requirements for All Sites

1. **Who may have a web site?**

Every school and office should have at least one web page with its contact information. Staff may create a web site upon the approval of their administrator. Students may create web sites under the direction of an MCPS staffer.

2. **Who is responsible for the web site?**

The school principal or office/department/division/unit administrator is the "site manager" who is ultimately responsible for all content on the school or office web site. The school or office "webmaster" is usually responsible for the actual creation and maintenance of the web site. It is also helpful to enlist a school or office colleague with strong understanding of the content, message, and audience to act as the "content manager," reviewing content for accuracy and appropriateness for the webmaster.

3. Where should web content and sites be published?

All content on the MCPS Web should be hosted on MCPS-managed systems. Web content of these types can reside on these systems:

- Text files (HTML), image files (.gif or .jpg): web server
- Audio or video files (.rm or .ram): multimedia server
- Databases and/or applications: Filemaker or Primetime
- Surveys and assessments: TestPilot

4. What do I do if my site or content is not on an MCPS server?

Contact Web Services so we can help transition your site to the appropriate server.

5. What do I do if I want to redesign my web site?

If you plan to do the work yourself, please contact Web Services about the project so we can answer your questions and guide you to follow best practices and this regulation before you begin. If a volunteer or contractor will do the work for you, please have them contact us so they understand our server and other requirements. We would be glad to meet with you and the designer to frame the project before you begin. Finally, Web Services would be happy to redesign your site for you, given enough notice. Your new site could also be placed into our new web publishing system, which makes site updating easier and faster.

6. How often should my web site be updated?

All MCPS web sites should be reviewed and updated at least annually to ensure that content is accurate and up to date.

7. What domain name should I use for my web site?

All MCPS web addresses referenced in print and elsewhere should use this root domain: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org.

Example: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/web/>

8. Can I buy a domain name for my school or office web site?

Yes, under these guidelines:

- Contact Web Services for assistance
- Use only an .org or .net domain. Only commercial entities use the .com domain.
- Use a forwarding service to point the domain name to your school or office montgomeryschoolsmd.org domain. Your new domain is for marketing purposes and does not replace the MCPS domain.

9. What if I already have a .com domain?

Contact Web Services for assistance migrating to an .org or .net.

C. Requirements for Schools Only

1. What design should I use for my school web site?

Schools are free to use their own site design, as long as it conforms to this regulation, follows web standards and best practices, and includes required elements for school web sites.

2. What are the required elements for my school web site?

All school web sites should include the following:

- Header (or banner): school name and reference to Montgomery County Public
- Schools, address, phone, link back to MCPS home page.
- Global footer: includes text links to the major MCPS pages, contact, privacy policy, plug-in and the copyright notice. (See a sample of the global footer at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/copyright.txt>)

- School hours
- Webmaster contact info: name and email address
- Modification date: date site was last updated
- Staff Directory: updated list for your school
- Links: MCPS Emergency Information, QuickNotes, and Translation Mini-sites

3. How often should I update my school web site?

All school web sites should be updated at least twice a year, more often if possible. Sites should be updated with back-to-school information (supply list, back-to-school night date, PTA meeting dates and information, updated staff list) before school opens for students. They should also be updated at the beginning of the second semester in January.

D. Requirements for Offices Only

1. What design should I use for my office web site?

All non-school MCPS web sites should be in the MCPS Web Template. The template includes most of the required elements for office web sites.

2. What do I do if my site is not in the template?

Contact Web Services so we can help you transition your site to the template.

3. What are the required elements for my office web site?

All office web sites should include the following:

- Office/department/division name, address, phone number.
- Webmaster contact info: name and email address
- Modification date: date site was last updated
- Staff Directory: updated list for your office or location

4. How often should I update my office web site?

Offices should review and update the content and staff directories on their sites at least once year. If an office reorganization occurs in June/July, the office should update its site and staff list before the beginning of the new school year.

E. About Webmasters

1. Who may become a Webmaster?

Any MCPS staffer may become a webmaster if approved by her/his principal or Administrator.

2. How does a Webmaster receive access to servers?

Your principal or administrator can authorize your access by completing and signing MCPS Form 271-7, Webmaster Account Request Form. This grants you access to the web and multimedia servers. To access the Primetime server for databases and applications, complete and sign the Primetime Account Request form. Both forms are on the Web Services web site. You'll find a link to Web Services at the bottom of the MCPS home page.

3. May a parent or student volunteer become a Webmaster?

Yes, but only under these conditions:

- The principal or administrator approves.
- They work under the direction of an MCPS staffer who acts as the location's primary webmaster.
- They notify the webmaster of their departure when they complete their service so Web Services can disable their account.

4. What happens if a webmaster does not follow this regulation or related regulations?

The webmaster could lose publishing privileges and other disciplinary actions could be taken.

5. What do I do if I'm leaving my position as webmaster?

- Tell your site manager (principal or supervisor), of course.
- Assist your site manager with recruiting a new webmaster.
- Ask your site manager to submit a Webmaster Account Request form notifying us that your account should be closed, and a new one created for the new webmaster.
- Teach the new webmaster the ropes.

F. About Content

1. Is there a release form for using student pictures and student work on the school web site?

Yes. As part of the new Regulation, the **Request to Withhold Directory Information** form acts as the official consent and release for publishing appropriate student information on the MCPS public web site. This form is sent home to parents in the summer packet. If parents do NOT wish their student's photo to be published on the web site, they must complete the form. If they do not return the form, they have opted in and given permission for use. Such permission means that your webmaster may publish a photo of a student, but should NOT publish the student's name, contact information, or any personal details on the web site.

See the **Student Privacy Policy** for more information related to the use of this form and access to the form in other languages.

2. What content is appropriate for my school or office web site?

All web content should have a clear educational purpose. It should directly promote the educational, instructional, administrative, business, and support services mission of MCPS.

3. What content is not appropriate for my school or office web site?

Content is inappropriate if it:

- Violates law or MCPS policies or regulations.
- Poses a potential threat to student health or safety.
- Might be reasonably perceived to advocate student drug, alcohol and tobacco use, violence, sex, illegal discrimination, or other illegal activities.
- Contains language or images that are obscene, libelous, slanderous, profane, or derogatory to individuals.
- Causes or might reasonably be predicted to cause substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities.

4. What else is considered inappropriate?

Content that is:

- Inaccurate or out of date.
- Misspelled or grammatically incorrect.
- Unfinished or incomplete.
- Not intended for public view, especially material marked private and confidential.

5. Can I publish my personal web site or personal web pages on the MCPS server?

No. You should obtain your own personal, non-MCPS web hosting account for personal web pages. Content for MCPS instruction and operations should not be published on your personal web site.

6. How do I know whether I may publish a photo of a student on my school web site?

Consult your school's Directory Information Withhold List, which is kept in the school's main office, to see if the student's name is on the list. The list is the primary resource for consent to use personally identifying student information on the web site. The list names students for whom schools must restrict disclosure of personally identifying information. Parents who do not wish their children's information released notify the school system at the beginning of the school year via a Request to Withhold Directory Information, and the student's name is added to the Withhold List.

For families that have given permission to publish information about the student, do not publish the student's name with the photo. Exceptions may be made -- especially at the secondary level -- with principal permission for students who have won major awards or achieved some type of recognition.

7. Can I link to non-MCPS web sites?

Of course. That's why it's called "the web." But you must fulfill these requirements before adding the link:

- Review the site to ensure it is educationally appropriate.
- Add this disclaimer language to any of your web pages with links off the MCPS web:

"This web page may contain links to one or more pages outside the MCPS Web. MCPS does not control the content or relevancy of these pages."

8. Is student work permitted on my web site?

Yes. But sites or content created and maintained by students should be labeled as student work.

9. May I use a bulletin board, forum, or chat room on my site?

No. The MCPS web should not create a public forum. Therefore, chat rooms, forums, bulletin boards, discussion groups and other forms of interactive discussion are not permitted on any public MCPS web site. You should not use other sites for this purpose if the content relates to MCPS instruction or operations.

10. What about blogs?

Blogs are not permitted at this time. However, a workgroup is developing a rationale, acceptable use guidelines, and technical requirements in preparation for a proposed logging pilot.

11. May I copy an image or text from another source and publish it on my web site?

No, unless the material is:

- Clearly stated to be in the public domain or the owner gives permission or license for re-use.
- Obtained after you have received written permission from the webmaster, creator, owner or publisher.

12. May I publish a company logo on my web site?

You may publish a trademark, servicemark or logo only after obtaining the owner's written permission and only if the business is an educational partner. You may not link

to the business web site unless the site has content with an educational purpose, e.g. discovery.com.

13. What if we are using free content, such as Weather Bug, on our site?

Your principal or administrator must approve such third-party content for educational appropriateness before it is published to your site. If the content has a technical component (such as scripting or coding), Web Services should be consulted before the content is added to the site. If the content is approved, publish it with the following disclaimer: "This material is provided free of charge and does not indicate MCPS endorsement or sponsorship."

14. Is paid advertising or sponsorship permitted?

No. The MCPS web does not accept paid advertising or sponsorship from commercial entities and does not promote commercial entities.

15. What do I do if someone asks to link to my site or to use content from my site?

Anyone may link to your site and need not ask for permission. Requests to re-use content from an MCPS site should be forwarded to the principal or administrator who is the site manager.

16. What do I do if I find problem content on my web site?

Contact your site manager (principal or administrator) immediately for guidance. She/he may advise you to remove the material as soon as possible.

17. What happens if someone complains to Web Services about a link or other content on my web site?

Web Services will take several steps if it receives a complaint about content on your site.

- We will review the material for compliance with relevant regulations
- If the material is not in compliance, we will attempt to contact the site manager and webmaster to advise them of the problem and ask them to remove the content as soon as possible.
- If neither is available, we will remove the content and advise the site manager and webmaster of the actions taken.

18. What other MCPS regulations guide appropriate content and use of the MCPS web?

Two other regulations are relevant: Regulation IGT-RA: User Responsibilities for Computer Systems and Network Security and Regulation JFA-RA: Students Rights and Responsibilities.

19. Who owns the content on the MCPS web?

MCPS, except for student work and material by others published with permission.

20. May our school's PTA publish its content on our school web site?

If your school principal approves, yes. Some schools publish just a page about the PTA. Others provide more information on their sites. Still others provide basic PTA information and a link to the PTA's site on a non-MCPS server. Your principal has the ultimate authority.

G. About Technology and Site Development

1. Can I use frames on my site?

No. Frames are outdated and create obstacles to accessibility for sight impaired and other users.

2. Can I use Flash on my site?

Sure. But sparingly. Don't build your entire site in Flash because it will create accessibility problems. Don't put critical content such as your contact information in Flash. But certainly go ahead and create Flash movies of non-critical content, such as photo slideshows.

3. I found a very cool new technology I'd like to add to my site. Is that a problem?

Depends. You should not add any new technology to your site without first contacting Web Services. We want to check to ensure that the script or code doesn't create issues for users of different browsers, delay the download time of your pages, or create other problems that hamper performance or accessibility.