**Interview of a School Administrator or Board Member: Interview a superintendent, principal, district or site-based technology leader, or school board member regarding your district’s A.U.P. plan, policy on the use of social media in the classroom, and other associated issues. Summarize in 2 page reflective writing paper.**

My district is very small. We have less than 100 students in K-8 and only three members of administration: the principal/superintendent, the secretary, and our technology support admin. I asked him to complete the AUP survey as he is most likely going to be the lead person when we create an AUP. Currently, we only have an internet use policy.

These are the interview questions and talking points I gave him. They came from web search I did in what key points should be covered when creating an AUP policy from <http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/letsnet/noframes/teachers/art/b9u1l4.html> . My two-page summary follows the interview transcript.

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**Please speak to the following issues to be considered as we plan to create our Acceptable Use Policy:**

**Parent involvement:**

*Any program built on the premise that parents will be involved in their kids’ education is going to fail a large subset of the students. It's a great thought, but I've seen the pendulum swing both ways with regard to this issue. Right now, we enjoy a population that has a high degree of parental involvement. That hasn't always been the case, and we'll return to that downswing at some point. We need a realistic plan for educating the kids in our school. Don't get me wrong! Parental involvement should be highly encouraged. It just shouldn't be necessary for success.*

*Second is the idea of BYOD. Since the ACLU lawsuit against California and the passage of AB 1575 resolving that suit, California is required to provide a public education free of fees and charges to the students. This has had an incredible impact on a lot of things that we used to do. If we move to a digital curriculum and a 1-to-1 model, and then we don't provide enough computers and require students to purchase chrome books, how does this fit with the new law? Then you have the issue of financial disparity, where the wealthy families provide a $2,500 MacBook and the free and reduced kids have a $250 chrome book. We would, in effect, be creating a social dynamic. Also, as Dr. Brown spoke to, what do we do when the computer breaks and the child cannot participate? Do we make them sit and watch? Do we work to fix the computer? Now, instead of the existing similar systems requiring basic fixes, you have 30 different systems that you need to support. In our systems, we can lock out YouTube, games from home, etc. On the kids systems we can't. Then there is the specter of what happens if a kid brings his computer to me to look at and someone in his family has downloaded illegal pornography or something similar!*

*Too many variables. Especially for a small school with very limited resources. You'll hear a lot of people push BYOD (NapaLearns being one), but overall the jury is still out with no signs of reaching a consensus. If we did allow it, we would need additional support and hardware. Not likely, and probably cheaper to just provide the machines ourselves.*

**Censorship: Characterize possible risks as you develop your AUP.**

**Students sending or receiving explicit sexual messages:**

*Cyberbullying is a huge issue both in schools and out. In October of 2013, the governor signed AB256 which allows schools to punish cyberbullying it has uncovered whether it is on campus during school or off campus during private time. Now, of course, this doesn’t mean that every sexual message is bullying. Chances are, it could be LOVE! Either way, there is a fine line with kids between knowing the rules and understanding the rules. I’ve always thought a more realistic policy is one that cites examples or does more than state the rules in a legalistic manner. That’s what our Internet Use Agreement does. HERE’S THE RULES NOW OBEY!*

*In addition, schools are beginning to move away from the idea of suspensions being the reaction to student action. The first thing we need to do is understand (not just say we understand, but really understand) why it happened in the first place. Do the kids need mentoring? Do they need a conference with parents? Do they need counseling? With our small school’s resources being stretched so thin, how can we provide what they need? Too many schools simply stop their Internet access and suspend them. That’s what we’ve done in the past and frankly, it doesn’t do any good. All it does is push the problem down the road.*

**Students accessing explicit content in an unsupervised situation:**

*Although our Internet is filtered, there are always ways around this. Much like the response above, there is a need for staff to understand the reasons why this happened, and to ensure it won’t happen again. One way to mitigate this is to have responsible students in the class that act as mentors to the other students. Not necessarily in defining the meaning of life, but in simple things, such as behavioral expectations and netiquette. After the initial contact with an offending student, and the teacher/staff is comfortable with the answers they have received, they would assign them to a responsible person/mentor in the class, and IT changes their password for logging into the system. For a pre-determined time (set during the conversation with the teachers), this mentor student would have the offending student’s password and would have to log him/her in whenever they needed to use the computer. All other passwords would remain the same. The student would work alongside the mentoring student who would be in charge of monitoring the actions of his charge. Not a super solution by any means, but it’s akin to what we do with conflict managers.*

**Restricting access to objectionable materials by means of software used by teachers, students, and staff:**

*By law, we need to filter student access to the Internet. The question is, how much do we filter? (We don’t use software by the way, we use an appliance filter called Barracuda.)*

*The goal of our program is to teach kids to not need the filter, as will be the case when they get to college and the workplace. Any school should filter the minimum amount that they can. We need to decide what that is as a group.*

**Student contact with questionable people:**

*Google allows a lot of control with school Gmail accounts, and we can restrict the sending and receiving to certain domains. We’ve already done that, but like they say, nothing is foolproof because fools are so darned ingenious. What I believe the policy should contain is a requirement for students to notify a staff member if someone unknown and unexpected attempts contact with them. As I said, we can only do so much to protect. We need to have a system in place for when something actually happens.*

**Objectionable student behavior.**

*Again, we need to set standards of behavior and an expectation for them to be followed. As with every other problem, we need to understand student violations and address them individually rather than one-size-fits-all.*

**Destructive student behavior.**

*Destructive behavior should not only discourages, but the school, civil, and criminal ramifications should be explained. Destructive behavior is a strong escalation of everything listed above, and although can signal personal issues that need to be addressed, students need a pretty strong “in-your-face” reason to stop destructive behavior when the feelings well-up. This is the only section that should really speak to the legal repercussions of student actions.*

**Reflect on the impact of the AUP on the school system and student learning:**

**What restrictions might be infringements on individual free speech?**

*To be safe, given the recent court rulings on the subject, I would say that we should treat libel, hate speech, criminal threats, bullying, obscene writings, etc. as prohibited and allow the rest. I think in this arena, it is far easier to list what is not allowable than to list what is. Issues of religion, politics, etc. should be encouraged, but require in-depth research rather than simple platitudes or parroting of sound bites from the Six O’clock News.*

**Is monitoring school e-mail messages a violation of personal privacy?**

*No. Although the sheer manpower involved in regular monitoring is prohibitive, students should be informed that the email accounts they are using are the property of the district and that there is NO expectation of privacy. This is a legal and liability issue. If a student is accused of using a school email account to send a threat to another student and we haven’t made this clear, we could be in trouble if we entered the account and checked on the information without suitable due process for the student.*

**Who is ultimately responsible for student behavior in the school?**

*The student. There are certain circumstances where the parent is also liable for behavior, such as truancies and damage to equipment or the facility. Our job is to set reasonable limits and work to ensure the students respect those limits.*

**What legal obligations do school systems have for the behavior of their students?**

*Schools as a rule are legally liable for negligent behavior that negatively affects students. As long as staff practices their due diligence by reasonably identifying and dealing with issues (in accordance with policy and the law) as they arise, their legal obligations have been met. Ethically, they may want to go above and beyond the minimum required.*

**Any acceptable use policy should include the following "basic" items:**

**A definition of the school districts' stance on what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate materials or resources.**

*Agreed. This should be a philosophical statement that spells out the idea of what is appropriate and inappropriate. Most kids understand (either fully or basically) what is allowable and what isn’t. The statement of purpose should be accompanied by a few generic examples that do not limit the narrative of the section.*

**An outline of how student access will be monitored and who will ultimately be responsible for student behavior?**

*Agreed. This can be more specific and frankly needs to be. It should be black and white that, yes, students are monitored, and note that the student, and in some instances, the parent is responsible for the actions of the students at the school.*

**A description of what restrictions and responsibilities are placed on staff?**

*Disagree and agree. By listing the restrictions of staff members, you open the door to misbehavior in the areas where staff has little room to act. However, it is important to address the responsibilities of the staff members (ALL of them – a united front is almost a requirement) and let the students know that they will be held accountable for their actions.*

**An outline of what responsibilities are placed on students and parents?**

*Absolutely. As addressed above, if students don’t know the rules, they can’t be expected to follow them. Some of the rules are easily addressed by statement of “Don’t do it.” Others require a more philosophical policy that spells out ideas of behavior rather than specifics.*

*One approach that may school systems use is to develop a student contract that is sent home to parents. This contract spells out the details of the responsibilities of students, parents, and the school system, and is signed by both student and parent. Included with this contract should be the AUP as well as a list of consequences associated with actions deemed inappropriate.*

*The AUP should be addressed in its entirety in class at the beginning of the year. History has shown that parents often sign the contracts without reading them, as they tend to be rather long, and students adopt their parents practice. Schools cannot rely on the parents to explain the rules to the students. If a parent wants to sign it without reading it, that’s up to them. Theirs isn’t the behavior that has to be mitigated by the school. A better solution is to explain it to the students, and for homework, have them explain it to their parents and obtain the signature.*

**SUMMARY**

I didn’t know anything about school Acceptable Use Policies, but it is clear from doing this project that they are not something that it is *required* at this point. If it were, I’m sure my school would have one. Now that I know what they are, I think that it should be required that each school have one in place because these are issues that will come up if they have not already. Even if schools do not have much technology use in place, students will be bringing their own devices and cell phones onto the school grounds, so it just makes sense to have these policies in place.

I never really understood how/why schools could be responsible for students who walk home from school before they reach their home, and I similarly don’t understand how schools can be responsible for what takes place when they are at home.

*In October of 2013, the governor signed AB256 which allows schools to punish cyberbullying it has uncovered whether it is on campus during school or off campus* ***during private time.***

Where is the parental responsibility? Where are parents these days? Anyone who relies on the bureaucracy of public education to keep their child safe has a false sense of security. No one will take better care of your child than you. No one will care as much. No one ***should***care as much.

A famous actor from the 70’s, Carroll O’Connor, lost his son to drugs. Younger people won’t recognize him, but he was beloved to my generation. It was so hard to see him suffer with the loss of his son. He did a public service announcement that I will never forget. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg_G-NeSmW0>) You could feel the pain he was in. He spoke out in his grief about the importance of knowing exactly what your children are up to and into. His words had a great impact on me, and I vowed to always know what was going on in my children’s lives.

Similar to our schools “no expectation of privacy,” I had a “no expectation of privacy” rule in my own home. The internet was a privilege and as long as they were minors under my roof, I had every right to read every email and cell phone transmission. I was paying for the internet and the phone, and I was legally responsible for the actions of my minor children. I installed an instant message tracking feature to my computer, and I spot checked their communications. This was my responsibility as well as my right as a parent. I was **MY** job to keep them safe, not the school’s job. If parents relinquish this to the schools, they will risk being failed. You won’t care one bit that you have a legal right to sue the school if your child is dead. I have never regretted being a protective parent, and my parents were highly protective of me. They were my parents, not my “friends”.

I want to do all that I can to help my current school administration design and implement a good AUP, but I also think that parent education needs to be made a priority. Parents need to be explicitly taught how to protect their children in this new age. It takes a village, and we need to be that village. Completing this project has made me realize that I need to add a new section to my parent newsletters to provide ongoing education in this area. It is so important.