



COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT POLICY AND SANCTIONS

(INCLUDING COMPUTER USE AND FILE SHARING)

2026-2027

Higher Education Act Consumer Information
34 CFR 668.43(a)(10) | Title IV Consumer Information

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1. Purpose and Federal Disclosure

George Stone Technical College (GSTC) respects intellectual-property rights and requires students and other users of institutional information-technology resources to comply with federal copyright law, Escambia County Public Schools (ECPS) requirements, and this policy.

GSTC explicitly informs students that the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material—including unauthorized peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing—may subject a student to civil and criminal liabilities. It may also result in institutional disciplinary action and restriction or loss of access to GSTC or ECPS technology resources.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all enrolled students and to any person who uses GSTC- or ECPS-provided accounts, devices, networks, internet access, wireless access, storage, software, learning platforms, communication systems, or other information-technology resources. It applies whether access occurs on campus or remotely and whether the user employs an institution-owned or personally owned device.

3. Key Terms

Copyright infringement. Exercising, without permission or legal authority, one or more exclusive rights granted to a copyright owner under federal law. These rights include reproduction and distribution. Downloading, uploading, sharing, streaming, posting, or otherwise transmitting protected material without authorization may constitute infringement.

Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. A method by which connected users exchange files directly through software, applications, websites, or services. P2P technology is not inherently unlawful; using it to acquire or distribute copyrighted material without authorization is prohibited.

Institutional technology system. GSTC or ECPS networks, accounts, devices, internet or wireless access, storage, software, platforms, and related technology resources.

4. Prohibited Conduct

Students may not use an institutional technology system to:

- Download, upload, reproduce, distribute, transmit, stream, display, publish, or store copyrighted material without permission, a valid license, or another lawful basis;
- Use P2P, torrent, cyberlocker, messaging, cloud-storage, streaming, or similar services to engage in illegal downloading or unauthorized distribution;
- Install, operate, or configure software or services primarily to facilitate unauthorized distribution or to evade network-security or copyright-protection controls;
- Share account credentials or permit another person to use an account or device to engage in prohibited activity; or

- Ignore or circumvent a direction to stop suspected infringing activity or to remove or disable access to unauthorized material.

Lawful educational use, licensed use, public-domain material, open-licensed material, and use permitted by an applicable limitation or exception in copyright law are not prohibited. A claim of “educational use” does not, by itself, make a use lawful.

5. ECPS Responsible Use Requirements

GSTC operates within Escambia County Public Schools. Accordingly, use of district technology is also governed by applicable ECPS School Board policies, handbooks, standard operating procedures, and Responsible Use Guidelines for Technology. The 2026-2027 ECPS Federal Compliance Packet states that district assets and systems may not be used for illegal or unlawful purposes, including copyright infringement. Students are expected to use technology responsibly, ethically, for authorized purposes, and in a manner that does not burden or compromise district systems.

6. Institutional Response and Sanctions

GSTC may investigate suspected violations and may preserve relevant records, consistent with law and district policy. When necessary to protect systems, comply with a lawful request, or prevent continued activity, GSTC or ECPS may temporarily restrict access, block traffic, quarantine a device, disable an account, remove or disable access to material, or require removal of unauthorized software or files while the matter is reviewed.

After notice and an opportunity to respond consistent with applicable student-conduct procedures, sanctions may include one or more of the following:

- Written warning and required copyright or responsible-use education;
- Removal of prohibited material or software and corrective action on the affected device;
- Temporary restriction or suspension of network, account, device, platform, or other computing privileges;
- Restitution or responsibility for costs attributable to misuse, when authorized by applicable policy or law;
- Referral for discipline under the applicable GSTC/ECPS student handbook or code of conduct, up to and including dismissal or termination of enrollment when warranted;
- Referral to ECPS Information Technology, law enforcement, or other appropriate authorities; and
- Other action authorized by law or applicable GSTC/ECPS policy.

The response will consider the nature and severity of the conduct, evidence of knowledge or intent, prior violations, harm to rights holders or institutional systems, cooperation, and other relevant circumstances. GSTC may impose stronger sanctions for repeated, willful, large-scale, evasive, or commercially motivated activity. Institutional action is separate from any civil or criminal proceeding.

7. Civil and Criminal Penalties Under Federal Law

Copyright infringement may expose an individual to significant consequences. This summary is provided for consumer-information purposes and is not legal advice.

Consequence	Summary
Civil damages	A copyright owner may recover actual damages and attributable profits, or statutory damages generally ranging from \$750 to \$30,000 per infringed work.
Willful infringement	For willful infringement, statutory damages may be increased to as much as \$150,000 per infringed work.
Other civil remedies	A court may issue injunctions, order impoundment or disposition of infringing materials, and award costs and reasonable attorneys' fees as permitted by law.
Criminal penalties	Willful copyright infringement meeting statutory criteria may result in criminal fines and imprisonment. Depending on the offense, imprisonment may extend to five years for a first offense and longer for certain subsequent offenses; fines may reach \$250,000 for an individual under applicable federal law.

Primary statutory references: 17 U.S.C. §§ 501-506 and 18 U.S.C. § 2319. Penalties depend on the facts and the law applicable at the time of the offense.

8. Prevention, Deterrence, and Education

GSTC, in coordination with ECPS technology personnel, maintains a written approach to combat unauthorized distribution over institutional networks without unduly interfering with lawful educational use. Measures may include:

- Annual student disclosure and education regarding copyright, acceptable use, and lawful alternatives;
- Network controls, filtering, access controls, traffic or bandwidth management, logging, security tools, and other technology-based deterrents selected by ECPS;
- Prompt review of credible notices, reports, alerts, or observed misuse;
- Corrective and disciplinary procedures described in this policy; and
- Periodic assessment of effectiveness using relevant indicators, such as reported incidents, notices received, repeat violations, network impacts, educational completion, and the continued suitability of deterrent measures.

No provision of this policy requires generalized content monitoring. GSTC and ECPS retain discretion to select measures appropriate to their networks, legal obligations, educational mission, and available resources.

9. Legal Alternatives

Students should obtain digital content only from sources they reasonably believe are authorized by the copyright owner or otherwise lawful. Legitimate options may include licensed subscription services, authorized purchase or rental services, publisher or creator websites, public-domain repositories, open educational resources, Creative Commons-licensed works, and library resources used within their license terms.

Because services and licensing terms change, GSTC will provide or link to a periodically reviewed list of legal alternatives. The EDUCAUSE “Legal Sources of Online Content” resource is a useful current reference. Inclusion of a service does not constitute GSTC or ECPS endorsement, and a fee does not by itself establish that a source is lawful.

10. Reporting and Questions

Students should promptly report suspected unauthorized use of GSTC/ECPS technology resources, compromised accounts, or copyright-related notices to GSTC Administration or the appropriate campus technology contact. Questions about whether a planned use is authorized should be raised before copying, uploading, sharing, distributing, or publicly displaying the material.

Copyright owners or authorized agents seeking to report alleged infringement should submit sufficient information to identify the copyrighted work, the allegedly infringing material and its location, and reliable contact information. Notices will be routed to the appropriate ECPS office or designated agent for review and response.

11. Notice, Availability, and Review

GSTC will make this policy available to enrolled and prospective students through its consumer-information materials, website, catalog, handbook, or other appropriate means. In addition, GSTC will provide each enrolled student an annual, direct individual notice that briefly describes the availability of this information and explains how to obtain it. Posting the policy online alone does not replace the required direct annual notice.

GSTC Administration, the Financial Aid Office, and appropriate ECPS technology personnel will review this policy and the related prevention plan at least annually and revise them as needed. The review will include the effectiveness of deterrents and education, handling of reported incidents, disciplinary procedures, and the continuing availability of legal alternatives.

12. Administration and Relationship to Other Rules

This policy supplements, and does not replace, applicable federal and state law; ECPS School Board policies and procedures; the ECPS Responsible Use Guidelines for Technology; and the applicable GSTC/ECPS student handbook or code of conduct. If another rule imposes a stricter lawful requirement, the stricter requirement controls. GSTC reserves the right to revise this policy to maintain compliance or respond to changes in law, technology, or district practice.