

SOCIAL MEDIA DO'S AND DON'TS FOR EDUCATORS

Gone are the days of advising educators to simply not use social media. Social media is everywhere. It allows individuals to share personal information, photos and opinions. It allows organizations to connect with members and potential members. It allows students to talk to other students. It allows students, parents, educators and everyone who makes up the education community to communicate with each other.

Using common sense, remembering the "Three P's" of the Internet, and considering the "Do's and Don'ts" of social media will help you navigate some of the common pitfalls and help protect you as an educator.

Generally these "Three P's" of the Internet are true:

- **Permanent.** The Internet is permanent. Internet service providers and social networks may be able to retrieve information long after it has been deleted.
- **Perfect.** The Internet has a perfect memory. Items posted can be retrieved and you can read or see exactly what was posted.
- **Public.** The Internet is public.

When you use social media:

- DO use your common sense.
- DO consider computer use including Internet, email and social media access at school to be a privilege, not a right. Use school-issued/owned/controlled devices for school-related work; you should have no expectation of privacy in those devices.
- DO know your school district's social media and technology use policies before using social media to interact with students. Make it one of your first policies you review each year as part of your back-to-school preparation. Being familiar with and understanding the policies will help you navigate your social media participation.

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- DO maintain a professional boundary between your personal information and your class materials. If you create an electronic forum for student participation, start one that relates *only* to your classroom or create a user profile that contains *only* school-related information. Maintain a clear division between your personal activities on social media and your professional presence as an educator.
- DO monitor membership. Make sure you can limit the participation of individuals in any email list, Internet forum, social media group or other site that you may use for class-related electronic discussion. Ensure that any participant is a member of your class.
- DO establish ground rules for participation. Just as you set expectations for classroom behavior with your students at the beginning of the year, it is important to set those expectations for electronic formats as well. Make sure students are aware of any restrictions on content, tone, or even the nature of their participation.
- DO keep an eye on your "creation." If you do create a website, page or group using a social network that permits students to provide input or comments, consider prescreening those comments rather than letting students have unfettered discretion to post. Check with administration regarding your rights and obligations for monitoring and editing student comments.
- DO use privacy and security settings. Whether you are using social media for classroom purposes or not, keep in mind that your personal information is as available as you allow it to be. The settings of social media platforms may change; review your settings regularly and adjust them according to the boundaries you have established.
- DO monitor what others post about you. "Untag" photos of yourself that you would not want others to see.
- DO consider whether you would want your principal, students or parents to see what you are posting, before you post it. **If in doubt, don't post it.**

And, of course, keep these tips in mind as well:

- DO NOT access inappropriate sites on your school-issued/owned/controlled devices at any time, during or after school. You should have no expectation of privacy in those devices.
- DO NOT accept friend requests from current or potential students or their family members onto your personal social networking page.

- DO NOT accept friend requests from anyone whom you do not know personally as a friend.
- DO NOT post vulgar or obscene language, materials, photos or links that may be considered inappropriate or unprofessional.
- DO NOT post any negative information about your students, co-workers or school administrators.
- DO NOT join groups that may be considered unprofessional or inappropriate, and leave any such group of which you are already a member.
- **DO NOT use social media unless you DO use common sense in your activities.**

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