

Social Media Use

Wilmington School District 209-U

Risks & Rewards

- “TMI” (too much information) can be embarrassing to reputations and jeopardizing to careers.
- With social networking, the volume of content has grown and become much more visible, personal, and permanent.
- ***Individual staff members are potentially liable for content and commentary on personal sites.***
- The rewards can include timely communication to students and colleagues in a format that is increasingly common and comfortable.

Essence of the Policy

- If employees need to communicate with currently enrolled students, they should only do so about school-related matters.
- Use district-approved or district hosted electronic accounts and applications, such as:
 - ✓ District email addresses
 - ✓ The official District website
 - ✓ District-approved social media sites

Prior Consent

A district employee who wants to utilize any technology (e.g., cell phones, including texting) for electronic communication, other than the traditionally provided avenues of telephone and email, to communicate with current students should ***first notify his/her building principal in writing and obtain written or electronic consent from the student’s parent(s) beforehand (additional consent language to be added to the annual student handbook receipt signature form).***

Administrative Approval – without documentation of informed consent by the building principal, an employee may not use a social networking venue for the purpose of communicating to students or providing instructional or co-curricular content related to students or student activities.

When something questionable is communicated or viewed electronically, an employee must immediately report any inappropriate or questionable electronic communication whether initiated by a student or someone else.

Maintaining an external website

An employee who maintains or desires to create an external website that provides instructional or co-curricular content related to students or student activities must inform the building principal. Extension of the District Website - An external website maintained and/or created by or for an employee to which students may be referred for instructional, co-curricular, or relevant content is considered an extension of the employee's District website.

Professionalism and Student Confidentiality

The employee must maintain the external website in a professional manner that preserves student safety and confidentiality

Quick Links

If an employee maintains an external website to provide appropriate instructional or co-curricular content related to students or student activities, the employee's district website and the external website must include corresponding Quick Links to each other.

One-Way Communication

An employee's use of social networking for one-way communication to (not with) students regarding instructional matters should be limited to District hosted/ approved venues. The only exception to this would be during the facilitation of an electronic classroom discussion or blog session via one of the district-approved social media sites. However, it is important to remember that the use of social media sites outside of this context is required to be one-way in nature, fostering the timely and accurate dissemination of vital information to students, parents, and the community at large. Two-way communication or dialogue with students and/or their parents should take place in person or via the traditionally district-provided avenues of telephone and email.

Fans, Not Friends (Facebook)

One-way social networking communication to students must be in the form of organizational "fan" pages created by the school District for the employee, with security access maintained by both the employee and the District. This is a distinction from a personal "friend" page created by the employee, which would be considered a violation of the policy if it includes communication with students. This is primarily applicable to Facebook.

Staff members are now authorized to create Organizational facebook pages for their classrooms, clubs, teams, activities, etc. The utilization regular, personal

facebook pages in order to communicate with students and/or parents is not acceptable.

Other Considerations

- Social networking venues used for student instruction must be linked from the employee's district website and must maintain Transparency, Accessibility, and Professionalism (TAP).
- The site must graphically display a "seal of approval," applied to the social networking site at the time of development, so parents and students are assured of appropriate instructional and co-curricular content.
- An employee's District-related social networking site must comply with the same standard of responsible use as applied to a district website.
- **Social media sites are not intended to be used by staff during the regular school day while they are responsible for supervising students. Staff members are not to access any approved sites while students are in attendance – other than during planning periods (without supervision of kids) and lunch breaks.**

District-Approved Social Media Sites

- Edmodo
- Twitter
- Google +
- Word Press
- Facebook ****

**** Facebook is only approved for use by individual staff members when creating district-approved Organizational (Fan) pages

**** Information obtained & adapted from a presentation by Dr. Jeff Arnett (Barrington), Matt J. Fuller (Winnetka), and Jennifer Korb Waldorf (Downers Grove) at the 2011 annual joint conference.