





Social Networking—Guidelines for Staff




The popularity of social networking tools continues to grow. While these platforms can be an effective vehicle for engaging and communicating with students, unintended consequences of their use can get in the way of your goals as an educator. The guidelines below have been developed to steer you through this maze of new opportunities and provide best practices to preserve your status as a professional. The points are written with Facebook in mind, but the concepts are applicable to other vehicles such as My Space and Twitter.

Separate your personal life from your classroom role. Create separate sites for personal and professional use. You might use a Facebook page for personal use, never friending students, and create another page for classroom, athletic team or extracurricular club use. Consider using sites such as Moodle or Kajour for professional use.

School Page

-  Do not post any material that identifies students. Do not associate an image with a student's name.
-  Maintain a professional relationship with your students. Weigh whether a particular posting compromises your effectiveness as an educator. Avoid relationships that could cause bias when you give students a grade.
-  When you construct a school page, you are the “teacher” of that page. Your role is the same as that in your classroom. If you discover content information that compromises the well-being of your students in any setting, you need to notify your administrator.
-  As you develop your school page, recognize that it is an extension of your classroom. Maintain the same expectations of mutual respect, behavior and appropriate language that you hold for your “in school” classroom.

Personal Page

-  Protect yourself—Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your employer, visiting your site. Even when using a *Friends Only* setting, you cannot completely limit who sees your posts. For example, John posts on Mike's page. John and Steve are not friends, but Steve and Mike are. Steve reads John's post on Mike's page and passes it on to others. As a public school educator, while you see yourself as a private person on your personal page, others see you as a public school employee. Your thoughts represent your school, your district and your profession.
-  Educators should consider choosing *Friends Only* as their privacy setting. *Friends of Friends* and *Networks of Friends* open your page to large groups of people you may not know.
-  Laws that you adhere to everyday regarding confidentiality apply to social networking sites as well. Do not post photos of students or any image that might inadvertently identify student information.

For instructional purposes, sites such as Moodle and Kajour allow for teacher moderation and control. These sites are also free of advertising. The West Irondequoit Teaching Learning Center (336-3144) would be happy to assist you in exploring these options.