

Chilton County Schools Social Networking Guidelines

Failure to adhere to the CCS Social Networking Guidelines may result in personal liability based on negligence.

1. Friending any currently enrolled CCS students is strongly discouraged by the school district. It is wise to protect your professional role as a teacher.
2. Friending a parent of a student currently assigned to your class is strongly discouraged by the school district. Use discretion when posting comments and pictures.
3. Post only what you want the world to see, even if your personal web site is restricted. Imagine your current students, parents, and your supervisor visiting your site—viewing your personal pictures, reading your posts, and examining your profile and friend list. Do your pictures reflect how you want your students to see you during school hours?
4. Avoid posting comments that discuss or criticize coworkers, students, or school policies.
5. Visit your profile's security and privacy settings. We suggest that educators should have all privacy settings set to "only friends." By selecting "friends of friends" and "networks and friends," you open your content to a large group of unknown people. Remember that people classified as "friends" have the ability to download and share your information with others.
6. Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your "wall," providing a link for you to click and leading to a fake login page for your social networking site.
7. If you are tagged in a photo by a student or parent, we suggest you remove your tag. Protect your students and yourself. Refer to our AUP for additional information regarding posting of images.
8. Weigh whether a particular posting/status updates puts at risk your professional role and effectiveness as a teacher.

Why Guidelines for Teachers?

Educators' online identities are very public and of great interest to our community. As educators, we have a professional image to uphold, and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.

When students gain access into a teacher's network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos and communications, the student-teacher dynamic is altered. By friending students and/or parents, teachers may provide more information than one should share in an educational setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in the classroom.

Profiles + Friends + Comments

The primary structure of all social networks includes 3 components: profiles, friends, and comments. The **public commenting feature** on social network sites goes by different names: "testimonials," "comments," "the wall," etc. The comments feature allows you to "hang out", express your mood, make news "official" by posting it and having witnesses acknowledge it, or just whine about the moment.

These discussions are archived forever. Twitter and most social networking sites own the messages you post on their SNS (social network site). They are not private or your own property.

The collection of friends on your social network site, aka SNS, is not simply a list of close ties. After all, you never know which friends will read your posts on a particular day. Many SNSes allow visitors to wander from Friend to Friend and communicate with anyone who has a visible profile, the main way Facebook users find other people to “friend.”

Profiles—word pictures of how people see themselves. Some resemble resumes, some resemble half-finished snapshots of a person, and some are total fiction. People need to be cautious about posting information that allows others to easily locate you offline. If you have a public profile, it can be seen by anyone searching the social networking site and might be available to people searching for profiles using a search engine, like Google or Bing.

Keep your passwords protected. Recent research indicates 40% of Internet users disclose their passwords to friends and family.

How to Respond to Friend Requests

We suggest you inform your students and parents at the beginning of each school year that our district encourages staff to keep their online identities (such as Facebook, Google+, Bebo, personal Twitter feed, etc.) private.

Then, friend requests from students and parents can be easily declined. If questioned as to why, feel free to use the following statement: “Thank you for requesting to be my online friend. However, the school district discourages teachers from online friending of students and parents. The school district tries to protect student and parent identities online.”

References:

Boyd, D. (2007). Social network sites: public, private, or what? <http://creativecommons.org>

Boyd D. (2009). Social media is here to stay...Now what? Microsoft Research Tech Fest. Redmond, WA, 26 February 2009.

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APPROVED
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