

Considerations for Educators When Using Social Media

New apps and social media platforms are constantly being introduced. Please know district rules about these shared platforms. Some apps are designed for school use – for example, Schoology. Some classrooms used closed Facebook pages to communicate. Rather than anticipate every situation, we offer these guidelines to help members use their best judgment on how to use social media.

The guidelines below are just that. You should also be aware of specific policies or guidelines your district may have regarding social media and maintaining professional boundaries.

If you have specific questions, please contact your UniServ Council.

Be Aware of Your On-Line Presence

- Conduct a Google and Facebook search for your name (search both a general search and for photos).
- Even if you don't use social media, it is wise to "stake your claim" by opening an account in your name. There are plenty of recent examples of others opening fake Facebook accounts in the name of teachers and educators. Once this happens, it is extremely difficult to undo what gets published in "your name."
- Maintain your privacy as much as possible, but remember that social media privacy settings are not absolute. Much of what is posted or posted about you still can be accessed by others.
- Frequently check, and if necessary, change your privacy settings on Facebook. There are several layers of privacy that you have to set in order to limit access. For example, even if you choose settings for "friends only," Facebook may default your posts to be public and thus your posts can be viewed by anyone who goes to your page.
- Facebook makes regular changes to the privacy settings and rules, so stay up to date on these changes.
- Understand that "send" cannot be taken back.
- Understand that there is no such thing as an anonymous post, text, tweet or blog.

Be Aware of Your Obligations as an Educator

- Be familiar with and follow all school and district guidelines and policies related to social media, web use and maintaining professional boundaries.
- Remember that you are a mandatory reporter if you become aware of suspected child abuse.
- Understand that off duty conduct could subject you to discipline.
- Remember that any activity you engage in using school district computers, phones, or other electronic devices will result in the creation of public records that could be subject to release under the Public Records Act.

Be Aware That the Following Activities Could Be Risky:

- Using social media during work hours.
- Adding students or their parents as “friends” to non-work related pages. Also be careful about “friending” recent graduates who may still have siblings in the school.
- “Surfing” student profiles, pages, etc.
- Joining non-school groups with student members.
- Using social media for topics outside of school or classroom issues to communicate with students or their parents.
- Posting photos of students on public social media sites unless you have parental permission.
- Posting, texting, tweeting or blogging information, criticism or an angry response to or about your supervisor, principal, superintendent, school board, job duties, colleagues, school activities, a student or parent.
- Allowing information that you post, text, tweet or blog about “matters of public concern” to disrupt your workplace or the school’s effectiveness or efficiency.
- Posting, pinning, texting, tweeting or blogging offensive, sexual, profane or even questionable, comments, photographs or other material.
- Posting, texting, tweeting or blogging personal or intimate information or pictures.
- Allowing questionable, offensive, sexual or profane visitor information to be posted or stay on your pages, etc.
- Posting, pinning, texting, tweeting or blogging anything that you would be embarrassed to see on the front page of the local paper.
- “Check-in” posting your location from questionable locations (ex: bars or certain stores) using location based social media apps.