

Pickerington Local School District Social Media Guidelines for Teachers and Staff

The Pickerington Local School District has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for PLSD employees when personally or professionally participating in online social media activities. Although social media can be useful for many purposes, care must be taken to maintain an atmosphere of professionalism consistent with the behavior expected of school employees as outlined in Federal and/or state law, Board policy and school rules. In addition to reading and adhering to these guidelines, employees should become familiar with Board policies EDE-Staff (Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy for Staff), EDF (Website Development and Maintenance), and JM (Staff-Student Relations). These policies can be found on the Board website at <http://www.pickerington.k12.oh.us/districtBoardEd.aspx>.

What is social media?

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website. Examples of social media include Facebook, MySpace, Ning, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, wikis, photo or video sharing, and email.

Accountability

Employees of the Pickerington Local School District are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Because digital content lives in perpetuity, anything you publish will be public for a long time. Use common sense and adhere to the following rules when posting content online.

- Don't post, do, say, or write anything on a social network that you would not want to see on the front page of the local newspaper.
- Don't misrepresent your identity online. If you are not willing to own your online comments, don't post them.

Professionalism

Recognize that as public employees, you always represent the Pickerington Local School District. Your profile and all content on your social networks should project a professional image and should not have a negative impact on your ability to maintain the respect of colleagues, parents, and students. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you would exercise face-to-face. What is inappropriate in your classroom or other educational setting should be deemed inappropriate online.

- Monitor the content of your social networking "pages" and remove anything inappropriate or questionable immediately.
- Avoid posting links to, or affiliating yourself with sites that are unprofessional or inappropriate.
- Do not "friend" or connect personally online with students or parents for purposes unrelated to the child's education.

Privacy

Online postings and conversations are not private. Anything you post can be forwarded or shared with many others in just a few clicks. There are, however, steps you can take to safeguard your own privacy and that of others.

- Exercise care with your privacy settings and profile content.
- Do not post confidential information or specific information about students or other staff online.

Academic Use of Social Networking

All of the guidelines above apply to the use of social networking in the classroom as well. **Staff members are responsible for the content and activity of any social networking applications being used as part**

of their curriculum and instruction. Staff members should monitor these applications regularly and discuss appropriate use with their students. Inappropriate content should be removed immediately. The same rules and policies that govern student conduct at school apply to their social networking activity when social networking is used as part of the curriculum. Staff members are equally responsible for enforcing these rules and policies in the social networking arena as in the classroom.

- Students should be identified only by their first name and the first letter of their last name on any social networking website accessible by the general public.
- Teachers and students should not post or otherwise disclose any information, including videos, photos or schedules, that could help someone from the general public locate or contact the student in person.
- Neither student photographs nor student work may be published without a consent form signed by the student's parent or guardian. See Policy EDF (Website Development and Maintenance) for complete web publishing guidelines related to students.
- The Pickerington Local School District does not supply email accounts to students. Parents should be notified by a staff member before students are asked to use a social networking website that requires a personal email address to join. Only parents may elect to obtain email accounts for their children. Staff members should not supply email accounts to students, nor encourage students to sign up for personal email accounts without parental consent. Staff members should prepare alternative assignments or methods of participation for students whose parents do not consent to their use of a personal email account.