

Staff Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

These guidelines complement the Acceptable Use Policy and suggest best practices with regard to participating in social media sites by school employees. For the purposes of these guidelines, social media refers to any environment online where one might publish, comment or share information about items, events, oneself or another whether it be an individual or group, including, and without limitation, blogs, wikis, group messaging (text or images), chat rooms, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest and YouTube). These guidelines are in addition to, and complement any existing or future policies from Oak Park Unified School District regarding code of conduct, communication and acceptable use of the use of network, school issued devices, e-mail and the internet.

Employees are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with these guidelines. Faculty/staff are subject to school policy to the extent they identify themselves as a school employee (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal blog on topics unrelated to school). Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary. All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards that Oak Park Unified School District employees must otherwise follow.

It is recommended that employees keep in mind that anything posted on social media is a reflection upon them, both personally and professionally. It is best practice to keep personal and professional uses of social media differentiated and separate entities.

Q: What do I need to know about setting up a social media account?

- Staff who wish to use Social Media in their classroom and for community informational purposes are strongly encouraged to create dedicated work/classroom social media accounts that are clearly identified for this purpose and only used by staff members and not to use a personal account. The district strongly recommends that staff keep personal and professional social media interactions clearly separate in order to minimize confusion and limit the chances for any appearance of impropriety.
- Student on-line accounts (such as those used to access social media websites) must be created and maintained in accordance with the Children's Online Privacy Protect Act (COPPA) as well as the Student Online Privacy and Protection Act (SOPIPA.) but not all on-line companies/vendors are compliant with these Federal and State laws protecting student privacy. The district may only conduct business with companies that are in compliance.
- Teachers who wish to use Social Media services other than those enabled through the district's Google Apps For Education (GAFE) environment with their students must first confirm that those services are in compliance with federal and state laws such as COPPA, SOPIPA, and FERPA. Because of the nuances in ascertaining whether a third party company is compliant with such rules protecting student privacy, teachers should first contact the district's director of technology to discuss their desire to utilize such services and obtain the technology department's endorsement before creating any on-line accounts for their students.

- Teachers should verify that all students using school created/managed on-line accounts (including social media, if allowed) have signed the Student AUP and have not submitted an On-Line Account creation Opt-Out form to the school office.

Q: What can and can't I share on Social Media?

- It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to use social media to convey confidential and non-public information including things such as student information, grades, or any other confidential information that would identify individuals.
- You have the right to post images and video however be mindful that these images are not under your control once they have been posted online. Others may repost, screen capture, modify, forward, save and redistribute without your knowledge or permission. Therefore, you must remember that even when privacy settings are in place, there can be no true expectation of privacy when it come to online content. There must be an underlying assumption that students, parents, and administrators may see your comments, images, and videos.
- Employees should not post pictures of students or student work on personal social media accounts, regardless of keeping the student's name anonymous.
- We must protect and respect the privacy of our students, staff, parents, and school community.

Q: Do privacy settings protect everything?

- Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the bio page on the school's website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access.
- Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see. Keep in mind that if privacy settings are not set to the most restrictive, information and posts may be available and seen by others.

Q: What should I keep in mind before communicating via social media?

- Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty - or dishonesty. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy.
- What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully, how it reflects on you both personally and professionally and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.
- Use a spell-checker.
- If you're not design-oriented, ask someone who is, whether your blog looks decent, and take his or her advice on how to improve it. The speed of being able to publish your thoughts is both a great feature and a great downfall of social media. The time to edit or reflect must be self-imposed.

- If in doubt over a post, or if something does not feel right, either let it sit and look at it again before publishing it, or ask someone else to look at it first.

Q: Don't I have freedom of speech?

- Yes, you have the right to speak your mind however be mindful of consequences that may ensue. When online actions cause a severe disruption on campus, the school has the right to take action against any and all individuals involved. You should never use this platform to defame, disparage, harass, threaten, manipulate, or cause a severe disruption amongst faculty or the student body on campus.

Q: Can I post anonymously?

- Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work for Oak Park Unified School District.

Q: Can I “friend” or “follow” parents and/or alumni?

- “Friending” Parents: Employees should use extreme caution when having online relationships or “friend” relationships with parents of current students.
 - Oak Park Unified School District students may be friends with (or following) parents, and therefore the current students may see employee posts to the alumni accounts.
 - If current Oak Park Unified School District students are friends or followers of parents online, those students may also have indirect access to the employee's social network account, depending on the privacy settings of the employee.
- “Friending” Alumni: Although Oak Park Unified School District encourages employees to keep in touch with alumni, employees should be aware that such contact via the Internet presents unique challenges and risks. Employees should be aware that the following conditions are all possible in online communications, especially in social networks:
 - Current Oak Park Unified School District students may be friends with or followers of alumni online, and therefore the current students may see employee posts to the alumni accounts.
 - If current Oak Park Unified School District students are friends or followers of alumni online, those students may also have indirect access to the employee's social network account, depending on the privacy settings of the employee.
- Photos and videos of employees that are tagged by others may be available to anyone searching social networks.

Q: What should I do if I realize I made a mistake?

- If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of

posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly.

Q: Are there potential consequences I should worry about?

- Once again, it's all about judgment: using your blog or other social media outlets to disparage or embarrass Oak Park Unified School District, its partners or community, or your co-workers, is dangerous and ill-advised.
- Employees should uphold Oak Park Unified School District Standards and avoid making defamatory statements about the school, its employees, its students or their families. These statements can often have unforeseen consequences as information posted online has very little expectation of remaining private.
- Make sure that blogging or other social media outlets does not interfere with your job or use of other commitments to Oak Park Unified School District.

Q: Can I include a disclaimer about working for OPUSD?

- Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they're not speaking officially. This is good practice and is encouraged, but don't count on it to avoid trouble.

Q: Is all of this mandatory?

- No, but following these guidelines will contribute to successful use of social media. The best way to be interesting, stay out of trouble, and have fun is to write about what you know. There is a good chance of being embarrassed by a real expert, or of being boring if you write about topics you are not knowledgeable about.

Q: Is this enforceable?

- Acceptable Use Policy violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause in accordance with Oak Park Unified School District policies.