

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STAFF

The school district shall remind all staff of the need for proper decorum in the digital world. All employees are expected to conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. The Plainville Public Schools recognizes the proliferation and, in some instances, usefulness, of online conversation between staff and students and/or their parent/guardian. However, due to the nature of social media sites, there exists a risk, without care and planning, that the lines between one's professional life and personal life will be blurred. Staff should always be mindful of how they present themselves to the world, online and otherwise.

Professional Responsibility

All communications of any nature should be crafted with the expectation that the communication could become public. Staff must also know that any information shared privately with a recipient could be re-distributed by such recipient, without the knowledge or consent of the staff member. The same principles which apply in face-face communication should also be applied to online conversation. In essence, nothing posted online is ever truly "private". The distributor of all content is responsible for the content and the appropriateness of all materials.

When staff members communicate through social networking sites, such information is not retained. The responsibility falls on the staff member to comply with public records laws when using personal email or social media accounts to communicate with students and/or parents and guardians.

Personal Responsibility

Before endeavoring to establish any social networking account, staff members should familiarize themselves with the features of any account they choose to use. For example, social networking sites may require account holders to take specific steps to "privatize" the information they place online. Staff must educate themselves to the features of any social networking site selected. Staff are responsible should any information intended to be "private" becomes "public" due to their ignorance of the features of the social network chosen or failure to properly use such features.

Staff members shall also establish a social network identity and email identify that is separate from his/her "personal" social network identity or personal email account. Also, staff shall only use an educational social network account or educational email account to communicate with students and/or parents/guardians on matters directly related to education. The "friends" associated with such educational social network account should only be members of the educational community, such as administrators, staff, students and parents of such students. It is strongly recommended that staff members reject friend request from individuals who do not fit into any of these categories.

Privacy and Confidentiality

At all times and in the use of any form of communication, staff members shall always adhere to student privacy rights and the rights of employees to have their personal and medical information kept confidential. Information that is protected by law from disclosure to third parties should not be communicated online in a way the unreasonably exposes such information to retrieval by third parties. For example, through an educational social networking account, a staff member may not post or discuss confidential student information on the “wall”, the “information” section, or through any part of the social network account that would be accessible to other staff member’s social network “friends” associated with that account. One must always keep in mind that all online postings and conversations are treated as public records.

Posting Photos and/or Videos without Permission

Staff members are not to post or tag photos, videos and/or audio files of students, staff members or school activities without the express permission of the adult individual(s) or permission of the parent of students who are shown in the pictures. Additionally, do not post photos, videos or audio files of students without parent consent.

Staff members should follow the guidelines below and exercise good judgment when presenting themselves on social networking sites including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other digital tools.

- Staff members shall not list current Plainville School students as “friends” on networking sites.
- All e-contacts with current Plainville School students should be through the Plainville School District’s computer and telephone system, except for emergency situations.
- Staff members shall not give out their personal contact information to current Plainville school students without prior approval of the Plainville School District.
- Staff members shall not engage in prejudicial or discriminatory attacks, sexual harassment or other forms of cyberbullying.
- Staff members shall not post false, defamatory, threatening, racist or disrespectful language about a person or organization. This includes, but is not limited to, the posting of inappropriate and obscene content, photographs or other such information that might result in disruption of the Plainville School District.
- Staff members should no comment on other institutions or legal matters.

- Staff members shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of the system without the expressed written consent of the Plainville School District.
- Staff members shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family without permission from the student's parent/guardian.
- Staff members should notify an administrator before creating a school-related social media account.
- Staff members shall respect the privacy of the Plainville School district community and must not divulge or post online any identifying information of any member of the school district community, particularly on personal web pages or social networking sites, without permission (including, but not limited to, names, addresses, photos, videos, email addresses, and phone numbers).
- The professional conduct of all staff is expected to extend into the personal online world of social networking, blogs, and other communication tools, especially regarding mention of the Plainville School District, or members of the school district community.
- There should be no exception of privacy with respect to the use of Plainville computers or websites. Violations of this policy are grounds for disciplinary action.