

# SOCIAL MEDIA

It is highly recommended that you not mix your personal life with your professional life in your relationship with students. Giving students access to your personal life, thoughts, feelings, etc. (as well as becoming involved in theirs) creates a blurring of boundaries that can lead to inappropriate (or perceived-to-be inappropriate) relationships. This is a difficult line to walk, at times, in a close-knit community such as ours, because adults demonstrate caring and a type of closeness with students. In general, in-person standards should be applied online, and online relationships with students should be ones that are transparent and professional. A gut-check for online relationships/communications should be: “would I be comfortable sharing this communication with the student’s entire class/my peers/the student’s parents?” If the answer is “no” for any reason, then the interaction should not be had.

1) **So, for FACEBOOK: no “friends” on Facebook with students.** This is because once you are friends on Facebook, students become privy to your private life and you theirs. Students often do not realize the nature of the lack of privacy in these contexts. Additionally, being “friends” with some students and not others creates a perception of closeness/favoritism that can be detrimental to the community. Because Facebook is a semi-public space, the school’s code of conduct outside the workplace should apply to your personal FB account. Similarly, teachers should set their privacy settings as high as they can go to create some amount of barrier between their personal lives and our community.

2) **For TWITTER: same applies,** although typically twitter is a less personal medium, many teens may use it as a place for personal expression. Better not to “follow” your students, although you cannot stop them from “following” you. Thus, if you maintain a twitter account, be aware of the fact that you operating in a very public domain and follow the school’s guidelines for professionalism and good conduct.

3) **For INSTAGRAM, same thing applies.** There is no professional reason to follow a student on Instagram and, should students post indiscrete photos (drug use, sexualized photos, etc.), your presence in their community can be damaging to you, or them, or both.

4) **EMAIL/TEXT:** Emails should be through your school email and confined to school-related activities. Keep all texting of a professional and school-related nature (logistics, etc.). Our recommendation is: If you would not feel comfortable calling your student’s home, asking their parents if you may speak to them, and then communicating the message, it should not be texted to them either. Some schools recommend no one-on-one texting—thus keeping communication public and transparent. I.e., if it’s about a game or practice change, carpooling or transportation, or a class assignment thing, the entire group of students can be texted at the same time. We suggest that personal communications (“how are you feeling?” “Great job today” etc.), be through school email or in person.

5) **Any other social media:** if there is no professional reason to be connected with your students via the media form, don’t do it. Any social media site that gives you access to a student’s personal life (or them yours), is one in which you should not be connected with students.