

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 435
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Adopted: November __, 2014

Unified School District No. 435 (the “Abilene School District”) understands that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends and co-workers around the world. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, both on the District’s system as well as privately owned systems, we have established these guidelines for the appropriate use of social media. These guidelines apply to all administrators, faculty and staff of U.S.D. No. 435.

GUIDELINES

In the rapidly expanding and constantly changing world of electronic communication, *social media* can mean many things. For purposes of these Social Media Guidelines, the definition of *social media* includes any means of communicating, posting, sharing information, content or resources of any type on the Internet, including but not limited to, a Web page, log, blog, journal or diary, Website, social networking or affinity Website, Web bulletin board or a chat room, as well as any other form of electronic communication. Social media can include text, audio, video images, pod casts and many other types of other multi-media communications. The following is intended to serve as a non-exhaustive list of some well-known social media outlets:

1. Facebook;
2. Twitter;
3. Snap-Chat;
4. Linked In;
5. Instagram;
6. YouTube;
7. Tumblr;
8. Flickr; and
9. Linked In.

The same principles and guidelines found in the Abilene School District's policies and procedures apply to your activities online. As a general rule, your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect and consideration you apply offline. Ultimately, you are responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that, by their nature, social medial outlets are not private, and others may have access to information you post for long periods of time after it is posted. This could allow others to view, forward, copy, or archive information you have posted on-line. Any online conduct on your part that adversely and materially affects your job performance, the performance of fellow faculty and staff or otherwise disrupts school activities or a staff members ability to perform his or her job duties or which adversely affects faculty, staff, students, or others who work for or volunteer on behalf of the Abilene School District or the Abilene School District's legitimate business and educational interests may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Be mindful that any content you publish remains accessible through various search engines, in many cases even after the content is deleted. Moreover, even so-called "private messaging" may be subject to discovery in legal actions.

KNOW AND FOLLOW THE RULES

Carefully read these guidelines, the Abilene School District's policies and procedures, and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies. Among other things, postings that include obscenity, slander or libel, references to the use of illegal drugs or the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol, profanity, vulgarity, sexually explicit messages, discriminatory remarks, confidential student or staff information or documents, harassment, and/or threats of violence or other inappropriate or unlawful conduct cannot be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

BE FAIR AND COURTEOUS

Be fair and courteous to fellow faculty and staff, students and all who work or volunteer on behalf of the Abilene School District. Keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related issues, when they arise, by talking directly with your co-workers or by utilizing District policies and procedures than by posting concerns to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post

complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video, audio or other material that could reasonably be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage faculty and staff, students or people who work or volunteer on behalf of the Abilene School District, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to, posts meant to harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or the Abilene School District's policies. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive.

BE HONEST AND ACCURATE

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about previous posts you have made or, if applicable, altered. Remember that even deleted postings can be searched. Never post information or rumors that you know to be false about the Abilene School District, its administrators, faculty, staff, students or any of the people who work or volunteer on behalf of the Abilene School District.

POST ONLY RESPECTFUL CONTENT AND PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS

Seek to build trust in your use of social media. Refrain from disrespectful or malicious posts. Respect the privacy of students, faculty and staff. Confidential student and staff information should not be posted on-line or otherwise publically disseminated, as mandated by state and federal law, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ["FERPA"] and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ["HIPAA"]. FERPA protects the privacy of student educational records by prohibiting their release except under certain specified conditions. HIPAA protects private health information such as an individual's health status, the provision of health care or payment for health care that can be linked to an individual. If you have questions about your responsibility under the law, take time to review the statutes or contact the building Principal or the Superintendent. Do not create a link from your blog, website or other social networking site to an Abilene School District website without identifying yourself as an employee and obtaining the written authorization of the building Principal or the Superintendent.

Express only your personal opinions. Do not represent yourself as a spokesperson for the Abilene School District. If the Abilene School District is a subject of the content you are creating, be transparent and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views

do not represent those of the Abilene School District, fellow faculty and staff, students or people working or volunteering on behalf of the Abilene School District. If you publish a blog or post online about the work you do or other subjects associated with the Abilene School District, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the Abilene School District. It may be best and make things most clear to include a disclaimer such as: “The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abilene School District” or “This site contains user-created content which is not formally reviewed, monitored or endorsed by U.S.D. No. 435.”

EMPLOYEE-STUDENT RELATIONS

The district recognizes the role that communication and collaboration between employees and students plays in the educational process and experience. The district further recognizes that the advancement of electronic communication and social media technologies creates greater opportunity for interactions between employees and students, and provides these additional guidelines for our own and our students’ protection.

- Employees are never under an obligation to accept friend or follower requests from any student, or to use personal social media accounts to engage with students or participate in district projects. In addition, you should bear in mind that unless your account has privacy settings correctly configured, everything you post may be publicly accessible to your students whether you are connected to them or not.
- Employees should exercise care in connecting with students on any social media channels. Permission-based friend or follower requests to students should not be sent. Use discretion and carefully consider the guidelines provided by the district before accepting any permission-based friend or follower requests received from students. It is the District’s recommendation that, if an employee decides to accept friend or follower requests received from students, they should accept all such requests and not selectively limit their interactions to what could be perceived as a few preferred individuals.
- Any employee-student communications or relationships via social media should be of an appropriate professional nature, include content that is appropriate for both the communications medium and the audience addressed, and must not violate any provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. With each communication, ask yourself if it’s something you would feel comfortable being printed in the newspaper, read by parents,

colleagues, or the School Board. As with all online content, assume any communication can easily end up in the public realm.

- Employees who are connected to or communicate with students via social media must understand that they may be granting those students access to all content in their personal social media profiles and should consider the guidelines the district has provided to ensure students are protected from exposure to inappropriate content or content that might compromise the employee's professional reputation.
- Employees are also responsible for ensuring any relationship and all dialogue with the student is kept professional in its nature and for immediately reporting to the District any inappropriate communication received from a student. This is as much for your protection as the student's protection. Any content or communication generated either by you or by a student which would be inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate when shared via social media.

The District recognizes there may be certain limited exceptions to these guidelines, such as a student being a family member or relative, or in those instances where an employee's interaction with a student is as a result of certain extracurricular activities, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious organizations or other similar relationships.

STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHS AND COPYRIGHT OR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWS

Before posting photographs of students, care must be taken to ensure that the student's parents have consented in writing to the publication of their child's photograph. The social media content you post should not violate copyright or intellectual property laws. This requires that care be taken to secure the written consent of all involved parties before distributing or publishing recordings, photos, images, video, text, slide show presentations, or other materials.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK AND USE OF DISTRICT EQUIPMENT

Refrain from using social media while on work time or on equipment provide by the District, unless it is work-related and authorized by your Principal. Do not use Abilene School District email addresses to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use. Persons using District electronic and computer equipment should understand that there is no expectation of privacy with regard to this usage regardless of where it occurs.

AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FOR DISTRICT PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIAL SITE

The Abilene School District's presence on any social media site, including school-related accounts, such as clubs, teams, field trips, course, and other sites associated with the Abilene School District or a school within the Abilene School District, must be authorized by a building principal or the Superintendent prior to establishing the presence.

DISTRICT LOGO

The use of U.S.D. No. 435 logos on a social media site must be approved by the building Principal or the Superintendent.

RETALIATION IS PROHIBITED

The Abilene School District prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from these guidelines or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from these guidelines or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Faculty and staff should not speak to the media on behalf of the Abilene School District without obtaining permission from the building Principal or Superintendent. All media inquiries should be directed to the building Principal or Superintendent.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact the Building Principal or the Superintendent.

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 435