

NEWHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Guidelines for Using Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites provide opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family. We have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online helps determine this image. As school employees, we are held to a higher standard. We are expected to behave honorably in online activities. Activities which are improper, unethical, and illegal or which may cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents, or other members of the school community should be avoided in both physical space and cyberspace. To that end, the following guidelines for school employees who use online social networking applications are below to ensure your online messaging upholds your professional standing.

1. Visit your profile's security and privacy settings. Maximize the privacy settings. For example, privacy settings should be set to "only friends" or follower settings should be set to "protect my updates".
2. Remember that people classified as "friends or followers" have the ability to download and share your information with others. Post ONLY what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your administrators, superintendent, and board members are visiting your site.
3. The district strongly discourages employees from accepting invitations from students as "friends or followers."
4. Be cautious when accepting a student's parent as a "friend or follower" within social networking sites.
5. Do not use language deemed to be defamatory, obscene, or libelous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, copyrighted materials, and/or derogatory remarks or characterizations.
6. Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher or employee at risk.
7. Keep in mind that on a social networking site, once you post something, it may be available even after it is removed from your site.
8. Consider the negative impact of criticizing school policies or personnel online.
9. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) obligates us to maintain confidentiality about students. Do not post any images that include students. Furthermore, do not discuss students, parents, or colleagues directly or indirectly. Specific postings either by name or identifiable characteristics could be subject to employee discipline.