

Social Networking Best Practices for Willard R-II Educators

Definition

For the purposes of this document, social networks are web-based, external, commercial, noneducational, social networking sites such Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Hi5, Tagged, Xanga, Live Journal etc, as opposed to a closed/private community provided internally by the District, such as Moodle, or a professional online community such as the Classroom2.0 Ning.

General

- Don't use a social networking site for instructional purposes.
- If you are already using a web-based, external, commercial, noneducational, social networking site to connect with your students for professional reasons, keep your administrators informed, as well as the parents of the students. (Or require teachers to discontinue such use.)
- Maintain a professional relationship with their students. Avoid relationships that could cause bias when the instructor gives his or her students a grade.

Content

- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Online Reputation Management: Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your administrator, visiting your site. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, basically once you post something it is there for eternity.
- Don't discuss students or coworkers.
- Don't post images that include students.

Privacy

- Set Privacy settings to limit who has access to what. However, keeping everything private doesn't insure that a "friend" won't copy and paste your private stuff elsewhere.
- Check out all the settings to be sure your profile isn't reporting what you are purchasing on other websites.
- Limit what types of information your friends can see about you through external applications that work with the social networking site that they are using.
- Create 2 profiles, a work profile and a teacher profile.

Friends

- Friending students on social networking sites is discouraged.
- Don't initiate friendships with students.
- If contacted by a student in the form a friend request, inform the parents.
- Don't allow friends to post to your wall.
- Monitor your wall regularly.
- Create friends lists and set different permissions for different lists.

Security

- Due to security risks, be cautious when installing the external applications that work with the social networking site.
- Run updated malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware.
- Use strong passwords and different passwords than you use for personal banking and online ordering.
- Do not use the standard remember your password security question, ie: Your mother's maiden name.
- Do not fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your wall, providing a link for you to click, leading to a fake login page.