



Eudora Schools USD 491

Social Media Guidelines for District Employees

*Updated and approved by the Eudora Board of Education
Feb. 8, 2018*

At Eudora Schools, we recognize that many of our staff, students, parents and community members are active social media users. As a school district, we are also incorporating social media as a strategic tool for communication, teaching and learning.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you to participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects your reputation, and the reputation of Eudora School District, and that respects the relationship between teachers and students.

For the purposes of this document, social media includes, but is not necessarily limited to, social networking and media sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, Tumblr, and YouTube. It also includes blogs, comments on web sites, discussion forums, and any other activity online involving connecting or communicating with other users.

These guidelines complement, but do not replace, any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet that are in place at Eudora School District.

Your Personal Responsibility:

We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to those concerning non-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. We ask that you carefully consider the very public forum you are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and the Eudora School District. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Seek to build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Avoid insulting others, including students, staff, parents, our extended school community, or other school districts. Do not use racial slurs, innuendos, obscenity or other inappropriate content. Avoid posting, sharing, commenting, or otherwise engaging in rumors or unsupported information. Represent the District and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. You are responsible for what you post; communications that would be deemed inappropriate or actionable if they occurred inside, or outside of the classroom do not become acceptable merely because they are made online. Always bear in mind that once posted, you cannot take it back. Some specific guidelines we ask you to consider:

- Use common sense when posting online. While these guidelines are in no way intended to limit or infringe upon your rights to comment upon the workplace, it remains good practice to never post anything that would embarrass you or Eudora School District, or would call your professional reputation into question.
- You are personally responsible for the content you publish online or send in a private message. "Content" includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that you choose to share, send, or re-post.
- Be mindful that any content you publish will be public for a long time. Not only can your content show up in Google and other search engines, but the FTC allows private corporations to store publicly accessible Facebook posts for a period of some seven years to be used in employee background checks made by current or potential employers. Moreover, even posts and messages that are "private" or designed to disappear after a short time may be subject to discovery in legal actions.
- You should also be mindful that once something is posted, you cannot take it back. In most instances deleting content will not make it disappear. Deleted content can still show up in online searches. Or, with the click of a button, other users can take a screen shot, re-post, or share your

content with others. Even if you share your content with a very limited number of people, nothing prohibits your contacts from sharing the information you post.

- Before you post or share content, ask yourself if you would want to see that content in the newspaper or on the evening news. Would you feel comfortable if your content was read by colleagues, your students, parents, or the Board of Education? If the answer is “no,” then the content is best not shared.
- Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality and professional reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.
- As an employee of this district, content you post should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, content showing or promoting the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, or any activity students are legally prohibited from doing. Remember, even with privacy settings in place, your content could be seen by students or parents or find its way into the public realm.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. When you are online, you may be connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. Sometimes those connections may be direct and obvious. Other times the connections may be indirect or via mutual connections. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at Eudora School District.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration you apply offline.
- Protect your privacy. You are responsible for understanding and controlling privacy settings on each social network you use. Always assume default settings will make your profile and any content you share publicly accessible. You should also understand that even with maximum privacy settings in place, or in social media apps designed to make content disappear, content can still find its way into the public domain.
- Use your personal email addresses on social networking sites and while engaging in other off-duty social media activities. At no time, except with prior consent from the appropriate supervisor, should you claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of Eudora School District. In instances where there could be confusion, you must add a disclaimer stating that views and content are exclusively your own and not representative of Eudora School District.
- While the Eudora School District respects the rights of its employees to exercise their rights, employees should not make any derogatory statements about colleagues or students or other comments that would reflect badly on your professional reputation or the reputation of Eudora School District. You are ultimately responsible for your comments and Eudora School District recommends that you thoughtfully consider your rights and responsibilities prior to posting.
- Respect the privacy and rights of both colleagues and students. Confidential student or personnel information should not be posted online; photos and videos of students should be posted only with parental consent, which is obtained each school year as part of enrollment and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It is an opt-out procedure. This is coordinated at the district level and shared with employees each year, to ensure the proper information is withheld from social media release.

- Respect all laws that govern educational information and communication, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- Do not use any school logo or image without permission.
- Do not create any social media account, blog or website intended to represent the Eudora School District without express prior consent from the superintendent. It is important for us to protect the district's brand, ensure certain brand standards and content guidelines are maintained, and ensure any new accounts fit overall communications and education standards established by the district.

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 the protection of employees and students alike.

- Employees are never under any 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 depending on your account's privacy settings, everything you post may be publicly accessible to your students, whether you are connected to them or not.
- Employees must exercise great care in connecting with students on any social media channels. Do not send permission-based friend or follower requests to students, for example Facebook friend requests. 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 Eudora School District's recommendation that if an employee decides to accept friend or follower requests received from students that they should accept all such requests, and not selectively limit their interactions to what could be perceived as a few preferred individuals.
- Private messages, as well as direct messages with one or more participants, are commonplace in social media. However, employees should avoid using social media messaging tools to communicate with students and/or parents and should instead use official tools (such as district e-mail or Blackboard Mass Notifications) for such purposes. If a conversation with a student or family member does occur in a private message system, the employee is encouraged to document that conversation, such as with a screen capture image, to create a more permanent record of the exchange.
- Any employee-student communications or relationships via social media, including in private messages, should be of an appropriate professional nature, have 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 Board of Education. Always 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 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. Any content or communication generated either by you, or by a student, which would be inappropriate in the classroom should also be considered inappropriate when shared via social media or in private message.
- Employees should refer to the document, *Our Guide for Responding Online*, for help when responding to content or comments online. If you become aware of social media content that raises questions or objections about you or any other Eudora Schools employee, it should be reported to your supervisor, without delay.
- 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 non-district activities such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious organizations or other similar relationships.