

POLICY TITLE: EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

Because of the unique nature of social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and because of the Agency's desire to protect its interest with regard to its electronic records, the following rules have been established to address social media site usage by all employees:

Protect Confidential and Proprietary Information

Employees shall not post confidential or proprietary information about the Agency, its employees, students, agents, or others. The employee shall adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality policies adopted by the Agency or as provided by State or federal law.

Do Not Use the Agency's Name, Logos, or Images

Employees shall not use the Agency logos, images, iconography, etc. on personal social media sites. Nor shall employees use the Agency name to promote a product, cause, political party, or political candidate. Nor shall employees use personal images of students, names, or data relating to students, absent written authority of the parent of a minor or authority of an adult or emancipated student.

Respect Agency Time and Property

Employees will use e-mail and social media for personal purposes only during non-work times, such as during lunch or before or after school. Any use must occur during times and places that the use will not interfere with job duties, negatively impact job performance, or otherwise be disruptive to the school environment or its operation.

On Personal Sites

If you identify yourself as a Agency employee online, it should be clear that the views expressed, posted, or published are personal views, not necessarily those of the Agency, its Board, employees, or agents.

Opinions expressed by staff on a social networking website have the potential to be disseminated far beyond the speaker's desire or intention, and could undermine the public perception of fitness of the individual to educate students, and thus undermine teaching effectiveness. In this way, the effect of the expression and publication of such opinions could potentially lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member, up to and including termination or nonrenewal of the contract of employment

Keep Personal and Professional Accounts Separate

Staff members who decide to engage in professional social media activities will maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. Staff members will not use their Agency email address for personal social media activities. Use of Agency email for this purpose is prohibited and will be considered a violation of Agency policy that may result in disciplinary action.

Contact with Students

Although it is desired that staff members have a sincere interest in students as individuals, partiality and the appearance of impropriety must be avoided. Pursuant to the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators, individuals shall maintain a professional relationship with all students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Excessive informal or social involvement with students is therefore prohibited. This includes:

1. Listing current students as “friends” on networking sites wherein personal information is shared or available for review which results in the certificated professional employee not maintaining the Code of Ethics requiring professional relationships with students both inside and outside the classroom;
2. Contacting students through electronic means other than the Agency’s email and telephone system;
3. Coaches electronically contacting a team member or members without including all team members in the communication;
4. Giving private cell phone or home phone numbers to students without prior approval of the Agency; and
5. Inappropriate contact of any kind including via electronic media.

Nothing in this policy prohibits Agency staff and students from the use of education websites or use of social networking websites created for curricular, co-curricular, or extracurricular purposes where the professional relationship is maintained with the student.

Failure to maintain a professional relationship with students, both inside and outside of a classroom setting, including interaction via social networking websites of any nature, e-mailing, texting, or any other electronic methods will result in the required reporting of such conduct to the Professional Standards Commission by the Agency’s Administration.

Rules Concerning Agency-Sponsored Social Media Activity

If an employee wishes to use Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements etc., for a school-based club or a school-based activity or an official school-based organization, the employee must also comply with the following rules:

1. The employee must set up the club, activity, etc. as a group list which will be “closed and moderated”;
2. The employee must set up mechanisms for delivering information to students that are not members of the group via non-electronic means;
3. Members will not be established as “friends” but as members of the group list;
4. Anyone who has access to the communications conveyed through the site may only gain access by the permission of the employee. Persons desiring to access the page may join only after the employee invites them and allows them to join;
5. Parents shall be permitted to access any site that their child has been invited to join. Parents shall report any communications by students or school personnel they believe to be inappropriate to Agency administration;
6. Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization, or team;
7. The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly;
8. The employee’s supervisor shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose;
9. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all such Agency-sponsored social media activity. This includes maintaining a separation between the school activity pages and employees’ personal social media profiles and pages;
10. Postings made to the site must comply with the Agency’s Policy 5335 Employee Use of Electronic Communications Devices; and
11. The Superintendent reserves the right to shut down or discontinue the group if he or she believes it is in the best overall interest of the students.

Social Media & Acceptable Use Policy

Teachers, students, staff, parents, and other community members use social networking/media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as a way to communicate and connect with

others. Examples of this include sharing educational resources, making announcements, and creating educational material for the classroom. While there are many reasons for using social media and the various tools associated with social networking, there are inherent risks that must be considered for legal and safety reasons. In order to differentiate between public, private, personal, and professional rights and responsibilities, the following guidelines should be followed.

COSSA's Social Media Policy will be used in conjunction with COSSA's Acceptable Use Policies and Computer/Network/Internet agreement.

Users will exercise good judgment in all situations including following the COSSA student handbook and policy manual, employee handbook, Board policies, and the Idaho Code of Ethics for Professional Educators. Users must remember that regardless of their own personal "privacy settings" on their computer, any and all information that is shared over the Internet or on your social network is public information.

When using social networking platforms, please be respectful. Always treat others in a positive and considerate manner.

Do not share confidential and/or private information about yourself or others on social media websites. Do not give out your address, date of birth, social security number, credit card numbers, or home/cell phone numbers over the internet.

Private and personal information

To ensure your safety, be careful about the type and amount of personal information you provide. Avoid talking about personal schedules or situations. NEVER give out or transmit the personal information of students, parents, or co-workers. Don't take information you may receive through social networking (such as e-mail addresses, customer names or telephone numbers) and assume it is most up-to-date or correct.

Always respect the privacy of school and community members. Also remember that online conversations are never private. Be responsible and ethical.

Even though you are approved to represent the school, unless you are specifically authorized to speak on behalf of the school as a spokesperson, you should state that the views expressed in your postings, etc. are your own. Stick with discussing school-related matters that are within your area of responsibility. Be open about your affiliation with the school and the role/position you hold.

Please be cautious with respect to images.

Respect brand, trademark, copyright information and/or images of the school (if applicable).

You may use photos and video (products, etc.) that are available on the school's website.

It is not acceptable to post pictures of students without the expressed written consent of their parents. Also, do not post pictures of others (co-workers, etc.) without their permission.

Other sites

A significant part of the interaction on blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other social networks involves passing on interesting content or linking to helpful resources. However, the school is ultimately responsible for any content that is shared. Don't blindly repost a link without looking at the content first.

Pay attention to the security warnings that pop up on your computer before clicking on unfamiliar links. They actually serve a purpose and protect you and the school.

When using Twitter, Facebook and other tools, be sure to follow their printed terms and conditions.

And if you don't get it right...Be sure to correct any mistake you make immediately, and make it clear what you've done to fix it. Apologize for the mistake if the situation warrants it.

If it's a MAJOR mistake (e.g., exposing private information or reporting confidential information), please let someone know immediately so the school can take the proper steps to help minimize the impact it may have

COSSA recognizes that access to technology in school gives students and teacher's greater opportunities to learn, engage, communicate, and develop skills that will prepare them for work, life, and citizenship. We are committed to helping students develop 21st-century technology and communication skills.

To that end, we provide access to technologies for student and staff use. The Computer and Internet Use Policy (found in the Student Handbook) outlines the guidelines and behaviors that users are expected to follow when using school technologies or when using personally-owned devices on the school campus.

The network is intended for educational purposes. All activity over the network or using agency technologies may be monitored and retained. Access to online content via the network may be restricted in accordance with our policies and federal regulations, such as the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

Students are expected to follow the same rules for good behavior and respectful conduct online as offline. Misuse of school resources can result in disciplinary action.

COSSA makes a reasonable effort to ensure students' safety and security online, but will not be held accountable for any harm or damages that result from misuse of school technologies.

Users of the network or other technologies are expected to alert IT staff immediately of any concerns for safety or security.

Social/Web 2.0/Collaborative Content

Recognizing that collaboration is essential to education, COSSA may provide users with access to web sites or tools that allow communication, collaboration, sharing, and messaging among users.

Users are expected to communicate with the same appropriate, safe, mindful, courteous conduct online as offline. Posts, chats, sharing, and messaging may be monitored.

Users should be careful not to share personally-identifying information online.

Netiquette

Users should always use the Internet, network resources, and online sites in a courteous and respectful manner.

Users should also recognize that among the valuable content online is unverified, incorrect, or inappropriate content. Users should use trusted sources when conducting research via the Internet.

Users should also remember not to post anything online that they wouldn't want parents, teachers, or future colleges or employers to see. Once something is online, it's out there—and can sometimes be shared and spread in ways you never intended.

Plagiarism

Users should not plagiarize (or use as their own, without citing the original creator) content, including words or images, from the Internet.

Users should not take credit for things they didn't create themselves, or misrepresent themselves as an author or creator of something found online. Research conducted via the Internet should be appropriately cited, giving credit to the original author.

Personal Safety

If you see a message, comment, image, or anything else online that makes you concerned for your personal safety, bring it to the attention of an adult (teacher or staff if you're at school; parent if you're using the device at home) immediately.

Users should never share personal information, including phone number, address, social security number, birthday, or financial information, over the Internet without adult permission.

Users should recognize that communicating over the Internet brings anonymity and associated risks, and should carefully safeguard the personal information of themselves and others.

Users should never agree to meet someone they meet online in real life without parental permission.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying will not be tolerated. Harassing, impersonating others, and cyberstalking are all examples of cyberbullying. Don't be mean. Don't send emails or post comments with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating someone else.

Engaging in these behaviors, or any online activities intended to harm (physically or emotionally) another person, will result in disciplinary action and loss of privileges. In some cases, cyberbullying can be a crime. Remember that your activities are monitored and retained.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Users should use their own good judgment when using school technologies.

Examples of Unacceptable Use

Users will not:

- Use school technologies in a way that could be personally or physically harmful to themselves or others.
- Search inappropriate images or content.
- Engage in cyber bullying, harassment, or disrespectful conduct toward others—staff or students.
- Try to find ways to circumvent the school's safety measures and filtering tools.
- Use school technologies to send spam or chain mail.

- Plagiarize content found online.
- Post personally-identifying information, about themselves or others.
- Agree to meet someone met online in real life.
- Use language online that would be unacceptable in the classroom.
- Use school technologies for illegal activities or to pursue information on such activities.
- Attempt to hack or access sites, servers, accounts, or content that isn't intended for personal use.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Users should use their own good judgment when using school technologies

21st Century Learning

COSSA recognizes that 21st century learning can consist of adapting to the changing methods of communication and technology uses in education. The importance of teachers, students and parents that use technology tools when engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning. To this aim, COSSA has developed these guidelines to provide direction for employees, students and the school agency community when participating in online social media activities.

Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. The COSSA social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social activities; however, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability. Please keep in mind that information produced by COSSA teachers and students is a reflection on the entire agency and is subject to the agency's Acceptable Use Policy.

By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or agency use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog, wiki and/or podcast.

- COSSA employees are personally responsible for all comments and information they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time. Take steps to protect your privacy.

- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face, and be in accordance with the highest professional Standards.

- When posting to your blog be sure you say that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of COSSA. Remember that blogs, wikis and podcasts are an extension of your classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.

- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying yourself as a COSSA employee online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at COSSA.

- When contributing online do not post confidential student information.

- By posting your comments to online conversations, etc, on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world. Be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what you 'say' online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.

- Comments related to the school should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even on the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.

- Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject where possible. This is especially the case where photographs of professional colleagues are concerned.

- Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect on your professionalism.

- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use may be deemed inappropriate.

Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality, and by that token an extension of your professional life and your classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall - is it really correct to put it online? Micro-blogging (Twitter, etc.) comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings as witnessed by the high profile cases in the UK with sports stars being disciplined for tweets expressing personal views. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and again refrain from any comment that could be deemed unprofessional.

Disclaimers

COSSA employees must include disclaimers within their personal blogs that the views are their own and do not reflect the views of their employer. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent COSSA's positions, strategies, opinions, or policies."

This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt COSSA employees from a special responsibility when blogging. Classroom blogs do not require a disclaimer, but teachers are encouraged to moderate content contributed by students.

Profiles and Identity

Remember your association and responsibility with COSSA in online social environments. If you identify yourself as a COSSA employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues, parents, and students. How you represent yourself online should be comparable to how you represent yourself in person.

No last names, school names, addresses or phone numbers should appear on blogs or wikis. Be cautious how you set up your profile, bio, avatar, etc.

When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent yourself make sure you select a school appropriate image. Adhere to Employee Handbook guidelines. Also remember not to use protected images. Images should be available under Creative Commons or your own.

Social Bookmarking

Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark. Be aware of words used to *tag* or describe the bookmark. Be aware of URL shortening services. Verify the website to which they point before submitting a link as a bookmark. It would be best to utilize the original URL if not constrained by the number of characters as in microblogs - i.e., Twitter.

Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as you do not control what appears on landing pages in the future.

Examples for Acceptable Classroom Use:

Blogs and **Class Website** may include: *a calendar of class events (including field trips, student birthdays, special events)*, a copy of acceptable use policy; a summary of what the students are learning *and what is going on in the classroom*; *the week's* spelling or vocabulary list; *pictures of the students at work in the classroom*; hotlist of websites *for students and their parents to visit*; place for parents to post questions and/or comments; a list of upcoming deadlines; assignment expectations and rubrics; a summary of day' activities for absence students.

Class Projects may include: Blogs about a place students are studying, classroom discussions about literature or used to post class notes.

Wikis could be used for: adapting a document for a new audience, brainstorming, chronicle an ongoing event, class practice tests, class-produced exam study guide, classroom learning beyond the classroom, classroom websites, club activities, collaboration of notes, collective note-taking, computer program coding, concept introduction, content presentation, discussion questions, experiments, exploratory projects, favorite booklists, frequently asked questions, group collaboration on writing sentences, group presentation, group problem-solving, help-desk training, individual assessment projects, instructional design plan, interactive library research, lab report, lessons summaries, newsletter, open storytelling, organizing audience sessions for speech class, peer counseling, peer editing, peer tutor training, poem construction, posting web quests, presentation/paper/course development, problem-solving, procedural manuals, proofreading, role playing, scenarios - potential indicators, student papers, teacher collaborative on best practices, teacher editing marks or corrections, teacher posts, website design, what if?

Due to the wealth of new social media tools available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences far beyond the classroom. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone.

Social Media Guidelines for Students

Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues including wikis, blogs, photo and video sharing sites are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.

Follow the school's Computer and Internet Use Agreement when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.

Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your teachers and parents.

Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate for a school setting.

Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. **It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts.** When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources. Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.

Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.

If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your teacher right away.

Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in the project and/or access to future use of online tools.

Parent Social Media Guidelines

Classroom blogs and other social media are powerful tools that open up communication between students, parents, and teachers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a huge impact on learning. COSSA encourages parents to view and participate by adding comments to classroom projects when appropriate. Parents should expect communication from teachers prior to their child's involvement in any project using online social media applications, i.e., blogs, wikis, podcast, etc.

Parents will need to sign a release form for students when teachers set up social media activities for classroom use.

Parents should not attempt to destroy or harm any information online. If parents find material that is objectionable, contact the teacher responsible for the project.

Parents will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws.

Parents are highly encouraged to read and/or participate in social media projects.

Parents should not distribute any information that might be deemed personal about other students participating in the social media project.

Parents should not upload or include any information that does not also meet the Student Guidelines from above.

Limitation of Liability

COSSA will not be responsible for damage or harm to persons, files, data, or hardware. While COSSA employs filtering and other safety and security mechanisms, and attempts to ensure their proper function, it makes no guarantees as to their effectiveness. COSSA will not be responsible, financially or otherwise, for unauthorized transactions conducted over the school network.

Violations of this Acceptable Use Policy

Violations of this policy may have disciplinary repercussions, including:

- Suspension of network, technology, or computer privileges in extreme cases
- Notification to parents in most cases
- Detention or suspension from school and school-related activities
- Legal action and/or prosecution

LEGAL REFERENCE:

Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators

POLICY HISTORY:

Original Policy 319 adopted: 2/19/2013
Revised and reissued as Policy 5325 on 10-18-21