

Howland Local School District Social Media Guidelines for Faculty and Staff

What is the purpose for Social Media Guidelines?

The Howland Local School District realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning and sharing in these digital environments is a part of our evolving social world. As a district, we have created the following guidelines to provide direction community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to personally participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion, it is his or her own decision. Individual rights are protected under the first amendment and protect those who would like to participate in these forms of communication, however under by law school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations or compromise professional ethics. This outline will showcase the importance of these guidelines, while explaining them so that those participating in social media practices can fully comprehend their meanings and be aware of its permanency.

- The Howland Local School District social media guidelines allow employees to participate in online social activities both personally and professionally.
- These guidelines have been created as a resource for you. It is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability; keeping in mind that information produced by Howland Local School District employees and students is a reflection on the entire District and is subject to the District's Acceptable Use Policy.
- By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, podcasts or other social media for class room or district use, we are asking that you agree to abide by these guidelines.

Please read all of the guidelines carefully before participating in any social media application.

What is the Definition of Social Media?

Social Media is user created content online designed in a collaborative environment where users share opinions, knowledge, and information with each other.

Tools include:

- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, etc.)
- Wikis (Wikispaces, Google Sites, etc.)
- Social Networking sites (Facebook, Ning, MySpace, Twitter, etc.)
- Photo and Video Sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Diigo, Delicious)
- Podcasting and Vodcasting

Personal Responsibility

- The Howland Local School District (HLSD) requires teachers with a personal online presence to be mindful of the information they post. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face. Even if you delete that information, it still may be stored on the Web site's server for a longer period of time.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying yourself as a HLSD 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 and professional ethics at the HLSD.

- It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the appropriate security settings for any social media (personal or professional) that you use. Be sure that the settings are such that any personal content may only be viewed by your intended audience. Be aware that, even if your privacy settings are set properly, it is still possible for anyone who you've allowed to see your profile to copy and paste text and send it to someone else. Similarly, if you enable settings such as Facebook's ability to allow "friends of friends" to view your content, it is extremely likely that unintended viewers will have access to pictures and other personal content.
- It is unprofessional and inappropriate to use e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging or social networking sites to discuss with a student a matter that does not pertain to school-related activities. Appropriate discussions would include the student's homework, class activity, school sport or club, or other school-sponsored activity. Electronic communications with students are to be sent simultaneously to multiple recipients, not to just one student, except where the communication is clearly school related and inappropriate for persons other than the individual student to receive (for example, emailing a message about a student's grades).
- Engaging in social-networking friendships on MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking sites is prohibited with students, and strongly discouraged with parents or guardians of students. The District recognizes that because of the tight-knit community of HLSD, many staff members may have students or parents of students, who are family members or close personal friends. However, the District cautions staff members against engaging in such social-networking friendships with these individuals.
- Material that employees post on social networks that is publicly available to those in the school community must reflect the professional image applicable to the employee's position and not impair the District's or employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents/guardians or impair the employee's ability to serve as a role model for children.

Professional Responsibility

- Social media can be a powerful communication tool and educational tool for students and parents. HLSD employees are encouraged to use social media for these purposes.
- Howland Local School District (HLSD) employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
- Remember that social media in the classroom is an extension of your physical classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- Teachers who use social networking to interact with students in an educational manner must find a way to interact without giving students access to their personal information and posts. Many social network sites allow you to create "groups" or "pages" where you can interact with students without giving them access to your personal account. Please see detailed Facebook guidelines for more information.
- Teachers who use social networking to interact with students or parent as a communication tool must find a way to interact without giving students or parents access to their personal information and posts. Many social network sites allow you to create "groups" or "pages" where you can interact with students without giving them access to your personal account. Please see detailed Facebook guidelines for more information.
- When contributing online do not post confidential student information. Do not post pictures of any students on your personal sites.

Guidelines for Using Social Media

The following are some general guidelines for using social media whether personally or professionally.

Be Transparent

How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work and what you do.

Always Remember; you are a School Employee

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. you will always be considered to be a District employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as an employee of the School District in what you do and say online. If you don't want it on the 10:00 news - don't share it online.

School Values

Represent the District values. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. All communications should be done in good taste. Build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Do not denigrate or insult others including students, staff, administrators, parents, or other districts. Any online contributions must be in accordance with the appropriate handbook. Consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. A violation of these guidelines could be regarded as a form of professional misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Positively Represent your School

Represent the District and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor the District in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyberbullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offence. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Do not comment on nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumors. You are responsible for what you and others post, even if on a personal page, be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. It is a good idea to monitor your profile page to ensure that all material posted by others doesn't violate these guidelines. Once posted you can't take it back.

Share your Expertise

Write what you know to be accurate. Add value to the discussion. Post something useful. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. A district's most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school. Speak in the first person with your own voice and perspective.

Respectful and Responsible

Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful for others' opinions in your posts or comments. You are responsible for the content you post. Do your tags, descriptions, and your image portray you and the District in a professional manner?

Own and Correct Mistakes

If you make a mistake, admit the mistake and correct it quickly. Share your error with your principal, Human Resources, and the Communications Department so they can help address the issue effectively. Clearly state if you've corrected a previous post, even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it. Apologize if appropriate.

Confidential Information

Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and will be online for a long time. It can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks. Do not write about colleagues or students without their expressed permission.

School Logos

Obtain permission from the Superintendent's office before using any school or district logo or image. School logos may only be used in a professional capacity. When using social media in a professional manner all images and colors should match the organization's logo or mascot when possible.

Posting Photos or Movies without Permission error on the side of caution.

Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism

Do not post or tag photos or movies of others without their permission. If you use photos or movies taken at school you must follow the guidelines provided by the Superintendent's office. Photos of foster children are prohibited unless there is written permission on file. If you have questions, please contact the Superintendent's office for further direction. It is important to always

How you respond to a negative comment or criticism will say more about you and your character than what you post. When in doubt, it's best not to give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response publicly; perhaps a private response would be more appropriate.

Post Regularly

To encourage readership, post regularly. Don't post to your blog and then not post for three weeks. Readers won't have a reason to follow you if they cannot expect new content regularly. Respond to other's posts. Answer questions; thank people even if it's just a few words. Make it a two way conversation.

Spell Check

Any online contribution should be well written. What you post will be online for the world to read. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Be cautious about using common abbreviations. While your circle of friends may understand what you are saying, you may have readers from across the world who won't understand. When in doubt, define the abbreviation at least once in a post or include a definitions page on your site.

Copyright and Fair Use

Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Share what others have said by linking to the source and using embedded content. Be sure to cite your source when quoting. When using a hyperlink confirm that link goes where it should and that the content is appropriate. It is recommended that all online content be licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike 3.0 United States License.

Personal Information

Be careful about sharing too much personal information. People seem to share personal information such as their pet names, their parents and children's names, where they grew up, and more. This information may help a hacker guess your passwords. If you share that you will be out of town, a criminal may use this to target your home for a burglary. Do not share with a student your personal problems that would normally be discussed with adults. Be smart and don't share too much information.

Video

The Internet is becoming an increasingly popular educational tool and place to share personally created movies. You are responsible for all you do, say, and post online including video. Anything you post online should represent you in a professional manner as others will see you as connected to the School District.

Anything you show in your classroom should be previewed by you in its entirety, prior to any student seeing it. Consult a supervisor if you feel the content may be questionable.

Staff-Student Relations

Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Examples of unprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers such as writing personal letters or e-mails; personally texting or calling students, or allowing students to make personal calls to them unrelated to homework, class work, or other school-related business; sending inappropriate pictures to students; discussing or revealing to students personal matters about their private lives or inviting students to do the same (other than professional counseling by a school counselor); and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet, or in writing. Employees who post information on Facebook, MySpace or similar Web sites that include inappropriate personal information such as, but not limited to: provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, abuse of alcohol, drugs or anything students are prohibited from doing must understand that if students, parents or other employees obtain access to such information, their case will be investigated by school and district officials.

Social Media Guidelines for HLSD Students

1. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint forever, usually even after it is deleted. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see. Make sure what you post promote a positive image to the world.
2. Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful, constructive way. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
3. Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, any phone numbers, addresses, birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your parents, and teachers if necessary.
4. Linking to other Web sites 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.
5. Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property, including pictures, without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts without proper attribution. When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the specific web address. Verify you have permission to use the material or it is under Creative Commons attribution.
6. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
7. Blog, wiki, and other online posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you have permission to edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.
8. If you run across inappropriate material, that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell the supervising adult right away.
9. Cyberbullying is not tolerated. What constitutes cyberbullying, the actions you should take to document cyberbullying if you feel you are a victim, and the actions that may be taken against participating individuals are clearly outlined in the student handbook.
10. 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.

Adapted From:

Social Media Guidelines Wiki

Referenced Sites and Resources

• Barrow County Schools www.barrow.k12.ga.us/ & Papillion Community Schools / www.plcschools.org

- **Social Media Guidelines for Educators (Facebook group):**
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=80354045978>
- **Social Media Guidelines for Schools - Andy Mann, Calhoun ISD**
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/28430149/Social-Media-Guidelines-for-Schools>
- **Social Media Guidelines for Schools Wiki** <http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com/>
- **Social Media Suggestions:** <http://blogs.stvrain.k12.co.us/helpdesk/2010/03/29/social-media-suggestions/>
- **Think Social Media Guidelines:** <http://thinkingmachine.pbworks.com/Think-Social-Media-Guidelines>