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Social Media Guidelines

FOR EMPLOYEES

Office of Communications

MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT: GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES

Dear Colleagues,

As educators, we are proud of our work and the impact we have on the lives of our students. With this privilege comes much responsibility. In addition to the professional standards practiced each day as we interact with students in a face-to-face environment, there are also professional standards and expectations that must be upheld online. As employees of the Athens City School System, we have a responsibility to the school system, our colleagues, and our students to depict a level of professionalism in all communications. We are role models for students and are viewed as leaders within the communities in which we live. Our standards of behavior are high.

The school system supports online student/teacher interaction. The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an extension of our workplace responsibilities. This collaboration, resource sharing, and student-teacher dialog can be facilitated by the judicious use of educational networking tools. Such interactivity is a critical component in engaging today's students and can greatly enhance learning. However, it must be used with caution and the utmost professionalism. Social media can easily blur the lines between our professional and personal identities. Therefore, it is imperative to remember that our online identity can cause serious repercussions in the workplace if managed inappropriately or carelessly.

These guidelines offer professional recommendations and best practices for communicating via social media channels. They are intended to assist employees in using digital tools in a professional, safe, and responsible manner.

The best practice to always follow is that if you would not say it or display it in your classroom, do not say it or display it on social media.

Thank you,

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Personal Social Media Use by Employees

To Do or Not to Do

To maintain a professional relationship with students, it is recommended that employees not communicate using personal social media accounts with students currently enrolled in schools.

One of the hallmarks of online networks, both social and educational, is the ability to friend others - creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. Employees are discouraged from accepting invitations to *friend* students on *personal* social networking sites. When students gain access into our network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos and communications, the student-employee dynamic is altered. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in our schools.

Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with the rules of all social media sites used. Employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. Be aware, however, that privacy settings have limitations, and private communication on the internet can easily become public. Also, social media sites can change default privacy settings and other functions at any time.

The posting or disclosure of students' or employees' personally identifiable information or confidential information on social media sites is prohibited. It is also recommended that employees use caution when tagging photos of other employees, volunteers, contractors, or vendors.

Employees should never use the Athens City Schools logo on personal sites or imply that their personal social media sites speak in an official capacity for the Athens City School System.

Employees should refrain from engaging in personal social media involvement during the school day. For example, it is acceptable to post classroom photos during the school day but unacceptable to post about your weekend plans. Good judgement is critical.

Bread Crumbs Are Everywhere

We all know the fairytale of the siblings who scattered breadcrumbs in their path to help them find their way back home. Never forget that every time you choose to post/like/friend/favorite or otherwise click on a social media website, you're not just leaving digital breadcrumbs on your path: You're signaling your priorities and judgment. You are creating a footprint and are capturing your values and priorities for the world to see.

Personal Social Media Use by Employees

Would You Frame it in Your Classroom?

Being able to instantaneously snap a picture and post it permanently (remember — nothing can be truly removed from the Internet) to a site is extremely tempting. While this is an excellent way to offer real-time updates about world events, it can be disastrous for your career.

Make certain that you set the privacy settings on the websites where you post so that only you can control when a picture is attributed to you. Privacy controls are no excuse to lower your guard and take part in potentially embarrassing photos; always make sure you exercise control over your image.

Would You Say It To Their Face?

It is easy to like a negative comment made about public education or a decision we may not support. When we agree with negative comments or like them when they are posted by people outside the school system, we are essentially saying the same thing. We are criticizing our own profession. We must ask ourselves if we would say that in a forum at work in front of all of our colleagues. We must ask what that behavior does to improve the image of and trust in public education. It is also important to remember that personal social media sites that address workplace business may be subject to Open Records Laws.

There is a professional way to voice your concerns about an issue at work; however, social media is not the place. When we behave in this manner, it lowers others views of us and our commitment to education.

Legal Does Not Make it Right

Even though you may be doing something that is perfectly legal, it can still lead to problems. Avoid social situations where you can be seen doing things you would not do in front of students, parents, or your school administrator.

You Are Always Representing Athens City Schools

Even if social media accounts are personal, we cannot split our personalities online. As educators, we are held to a higher standard. Always remember this. Even if your behavior is recorded on a personal social media site, it still reflects your judgement and values as an educator.

Why Even Post?

While we always need to be wise about our online postings and to remember that as educators will always be held to higher standards, there's no need to think social media is a career-ending mistake waiting to happen. Rather, social media should be

viewed as a golden opportunity to use today's amazing technology to connect with students, parents, and the community. It is a worthwhile venue that allows us to highlight the good work happening in our classrooms.

Professional Social Media Use

Each of our schools has an official, verified Twitter and Facebook account. This is important because the school system then has full control over the sites should they be hacked. More importantly, parents and students know that these sites contain trusted and accurate information. Each school also has a team of employees assigned to maintain the accounts, keeping them active and accurate. Official pages are also important in today's world because it is often hard for our parents and the community to find the school-managed pages when searching on social media. An official page allows the use of the school's logo and other identifiable information to confirm authenticity.

All pages using the logo of the school or school system, must be approved by the school principal and registered with the Office of Communications. To get a page approved, simply complete this form <https://www.acs-k12.org/Page/1997> and send it to your school principal. Careful consideration should be given to the purpose of the site, the intended audience, and the appropriate level of privacy.

When managing an official school account on social media the same practices apply as when managing a personal account; however, the purpose is different. The sites should all have an educational or extracurricular focus and should be maintained on a regular basis.

Employees managing these sites should utilize the following practices:

Creating the Account

Once the site is approved by the school principal and the Office of Communications, the sponsor/coach must use his/her school email account when establishing the account.

The password must be shared with the Office of Communications. If the password has to be changed, notify the Office of Communications and other employees with posting privileges immediately.

While each school owns its brand, each also belongs to the larger organization. Our brand is a tool used to tell our story. It includes a combination of colors, logos, emblems, images and banners that promote our district. There are carefully chosen fonts, pantone colors, designs and logos that have been selected to visually represent

Athens City Schools to our community, students, teachers and potential families. It's the "look" of the schools and the system; therefore, it is our policy that implementation and use of the brand adhere to rigorous standards of consistency. Guidelines for use can be found at <https://www.acs-k12.org/Page/1807>. Any site representing the Athens City School System must include language and logos that clearly identify the site as property of the school system.

Notify parents each school year of the social media pages where they can obtain official club/athletic-related information.

Posting to the Site

Exercise responsibility, caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using official social media sites. Treat the professional social media space like a classroom or professional workplace. The standards for conduct in professional settings also apply to professional social media sites.

Content shared on social media should be of importance to our students and families. For example, sharing public library events supports the partnership in education with the Athens Public Library and is of value to our parents and students.

Employees should use privacy settings for their intended audiences. Limitations to privacy settings exist and sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions at any time.

Sites that are not regularly maintained or that are being used inappropriately can be closed by the Office of Communications.

Professional social media communication must comply with policies and laws on the disclosure of confidential information, cyberbullying, student privacy, threatening language, and other school place issues ([Athens City Schools Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy](#), [Children's Internet Protection Act](#), [Alabama Educator Code of Conduct](#), [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), [Political Activity](#)). Care should be given to post only student [directory information](#) as outlined on the Athens City Schools website. Before posting images of students online, confirm if the student is allowed to be photographed. Each school office maintains a file of students that are NOT allowed to be photographed.

Monitoring the Site

The employee requesting permission to establish the site is responsible for monitoring the site. Monitoring responsibilities include regular reviews of site content and reports of any questionable communications.

The Office of Communications and the school principal may remove postings that are

inappropriate.

The Office of Communications and the school principal may disable pages that are not current or that do not adhere to laws or policies.

Additional Inquiries

This document provides general guidance, but does not cover every potential social media situation. Please consult the school principal or the Office of Communications with any inquiries. If you are unsure, please ask first!

#CONNECTRESPONSIBLY



This is a list of the “official” Facebook Pages for Athens City Schools.

Athens City Schools	https://www.facebook.com/AthensALSchools/
Athens High School	https://www.facebook.com/AHSAlabama/
Athens Middle School	https://www.facebook.com/AthensMiddleSchool/
Athens Renaissance School	https://www.facebook.com/AthensRenaissance/
Athens Intermediate School	https://www.facebook.com/athensintermediateschool/
FAME Academy at Brookhill	https://www.facebook.com/brookhillacs/
HEART Academy at Julian Newman	https://www.facebook.com/juliannewmane elementary/
iAcademy at Athens Elementary	https://www.facebook.com/athenselementary/
SPARK Academy at Cowart	https://www.facebook.com/SPARKAcademyCowart/
Athens City Schools Foundation	https://www.facebook.com/AthensFoundation/



This is a list of the “official” Twitter Pages for Athens City Schools.

Athens City School System	@AthensALSchools
Athens High	@AHS_Alabamal
Athens Middle	@amseagles
Athens Renaissance	@ACS_Renaissance
Athens Intermediate	@AthensAIS
FAME Academy at Brookhill	@brookhillelem
HEART Academy at Julian Newman	@jneelem
iAcademy at Athens Elementary	@AthensElem
SPARK Academy at Cowart	@SPARK_STEM



Athens City Schools



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