



# Social Media Guidelines

for employees



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# **Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Social Media Guidelines**

## **Introduction & Social Media Guidelines Purpose**

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) realizes that part of learning involves adapting to changing methods of communication. A learning community must allow opportunities for students, teachers and parents to collaborate, engage and share ideas. Social media technology is a powerful tool that supports community and parental involvement, student engagement, student achievement, and modern day information sharing.

WS/FCS has adopted some suggested guidelines to provide direction for employees when participating in social media activities and communication. Whether an employee chooses to participate in any form of online information sharing, publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. Free speech protects individuals who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including personal online postings, causes a substantial disruption to the instructional day or to a school-sponsored activity.

These guidelines are meant to be a helpful resource for employees and school leaders. We hope everyone understands that information produced by WS/FCS employees is a representation and reflection on the entire district and is should follow the districts policies. Personal postings, even if marked private, may also be subject to relevant WS/FCS policies and procedures, as well as to relevant local, state and federal laws. By accessing, creating or contributing to any form of social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before participating in and communicating through any social media site, format, or application.

## **WS/FCS Definition of Social Media**

WS/FCS defines social media as online content created by a variety of users. The content is designed in a collaborative environment where opinions, knowledge and information by all users is shared. WS/FCS hopes that social media use related to the district, its schools and classrooms offers transparency, builds and improves parental and community engagement, and provides additional external and internal informational outlets. Tools may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social networking (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc.)
- Photo, video and document sharing sites (Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, etc.)
- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, etc.)
- Google Sites (Google Sites, PowerSchool, Wikispaces, etc.)

## **District Digital Media Manager/District Webmaster**

The Superintendent or Chief Marketing and Communications Officer will designate a qualified individual as the District Digital Media Manager to maintain, manage, and monitor all WS/FCS websites and official social media accounts. Those sites will comply with all WS/FCS Board of Education policies and regulations, and all local, state, and federal laws.

The Digital Media Manager will maintain and distribute the WS/FCS [Website Policy AR 6161.1](#) for use with principals, school webmasters and teachers maintaining WS/FCS official websites and social media accounts. All material placed on WS/FCS websites or social media accounts must be consistent with these guidelines and approved by the Digital Media Manager or Chief Marketing and Communications Officer.

The Digital Media Manager/WS/FCS Communications will maintain and distribute to school leaders and other appropriate outlets these written Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Social Media Guidelines. These guidelines will support proper use of social media and help prevent disruption of the school environment and instructional day.

District managed sites are inclusive of, but not limited to, any social media site that serves as the sole official representation of the school. Sites not managed by the district will not be considered official and cannot be authenticated by the district. The district assumes no responsibility for sites that are not registered and managed by the Digital Media Manager.

### **Student Privacy and Social Media**

All content posted or used on social media sites must be in accordance with [Policy 5125](#), Privacy of Student Records, and any other state or federal confidentiality laws. All employees and volunteers have a duty to maintain the confidentiality of a student's personally identifiable education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A student's cumulative file is the official record for each student attending the WS/FCS. Except as noted below, a student's cumulative file shall contain the personally identifiable written records directly related to a student, including but not limited to the following:

**A. Administrative Records**, including but not limited to:

1. Student Enrollment Information;
  - a. Student's full name (including "nickname");
  - b. Student's identification number;
  - c. Student's race, ethnicity and gender;
  - d. Student's date of birth;
  - e. Names, addresses and telephone numbers (home and work) of parent(s) and/or guardian(s); and
  - f. Emergency information
2. Photograph Card; and
3. Copies of court orders regarding child custody, adoption, and emancipation.

**B. Discipline Records**, which may be placed in a file separate from the cumulative file, including but not limited to:

1. Bus Conduct Notices;
2. Discipline Notice (D-1) Forms;
3. Short-term and in-school suspension records; and
4. Long-term suspension and expulsion records

**C. Educational Records**, including not limited to:

1. Standardized test scores;
2. End-of-Grade and End of Course test scores;
3. Attendance record;

4. Report cards and transcripts;
5. Driver training record;
6. Withdrawal and re-entry record;
7. Honors and activities;
8. Graduation data;
9. Significant correspondence with parents concerning a student's education;
10. Educational and vocational plans; and
11. AG/HAG Summary of Evaluation Results

D. **Health Records**, which may be placed in a file separate from the cumulative file, including but not limited to:

1. Permanent Health Record Card;
2. Injury Report forms;
3. Kindergarten Health Assessments;
4. Physician's Authorization Forms for administration of medications;
5. Medication Log; and
6. Immunization Records

E. **Exceptional Children's Records**,

1. Focus of Concern/Screening form;
2. Parental Notification of Screening Process;
3. Exceptional Children Referral form;
4. Prior Notice and Consent for Evaluation;
5. Summary of Evaluation Results;
6. Individual Education Program (IEP);
7. Recommendation/approval for placement;
8. Consent for initial placement;
9. Prior notice of re-evaluation;
10. Invitation to conference;
11. Behavior Intervention or Management Plans;
12. Section 504 Plans; and
13. Any other forms related to the provision or potential provision of special education and related services to students with a disability or to students with a Section 504 Plan.

### **Appropriate Content**

WS/FCS will establish and manage social media sites, for example Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Appropriate content for these sites includes:

- WS/FCS district information
- WS/FCS Board of Education information
- Information about and from individual schools
- Teacher and classroom information

- Student, school and teacher projects
- Information from our education and community partners
- Information from school sponsored extracurricular organizations
- Information meant to inform or educate parents and the community
- School celebrations, recognitions, or academic and athletic achievements

Posts on official district sites and school-related sites can only contain images of students who have chosen not to opt-out of WS/FCS photographs and recordings.

### **Personal Social Media Sites and Personal Responsibility**

WS/FCS strongly encourages district employees with a personal online presence to be mindful of and responsible with the information they post. Online behavior should be indicative of and reflect a professional manner, the district core values, and one's personal standards of honesty, respect and consideration. Posts should be similar to communication used in face-to-face and within work-related settings.

Please note that even if you delete personal information, it still may be stored on the website's server for a longer period of time. Information that is marked "private" rarely is private on the Internet. It is very easy for "friends" to copy and paste information about you and send it or forward it to others, for example. There is no realistic expectation of privacy on the Internet.

The lines between public and private, personal and professional, are blurred in today's digital and online world. When you identify yourself as a WS/FCS employee online, you connect to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your role as a public school/state employee.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself and understand any appropriate security settings for any social media (personal or professional) that you may use. Be sure that the settings are such that any personal content may only be viewed by your intended audience. Be aware that it is easy for others to "tag" or identify you in photos that they publish with or without your knowledge and permission. 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.

We do not recommend that our employees 'tag' photos of other WS/FCS employees, volunteers, contractors, students, or vendors without prior written permission from these people or their parent.

Personal social media use, including use after-hours, always has the potential to cause disruptions at school or the workplace, in violation of WS/FCS policies and the law.

We prohibit the posting of student images or likeness and the disclosure of students' personally identifiable information or confidential information on personal social media sites, if it violates WS/FCS [Policy 5125](#), Privacy of Student Records, or any state or federal confidentiality laws.

Our employees should never use the WS/FCS or a school logo or imply that their personal social media sites speak in an official capacity for WS/FCS. We do permit use of the WS/FCS logo when it automatically posts on personal social media sites such as LinkedIn. When in doubt, check with the Digital Media Manager.

We strongly recommend that our WS/FCS employees maintain transparency and be honest about their identities when they post on social media. When employees identify themselves as WS/FCS employees, they must be clear that they express individual and personal views, not necessarily the official views of the WS/FCS.

### **Student/Teacher Social Media Interaction**

It is 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. [WS/FCS AR 1111](#) outlines the district's stance on communications via computer and email. Appropriate discussions would include:

- a student's assignment or class activity
- school sport, 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 (e.g., a message about a student's grades). In all e-mail and social media communication, the student's district-provided email account must be used.

Engaging in personal social-networking friendships on social networking or social media sites is strongly discouraged with students, parents or guardians of students. WS/FCS recognizes that 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 personal social-networking friendships with these individuals. [WS/FCS Policy 4116.10 \(G\)](#) addresses this specifically.

A recommendation for staff to respond to "friend" requests on their personal pages could read as follows:

- If you are a student or parent requesting to be my "friend," please do not be offended or surprised if I ignore your request. As an employee of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, district procedures and practices discourage me from "friending" students on my personal pages. I would encourage you to like our school's (and/or classroom's, department's, district, etc.) page. Thank you for your understanding.

### **Professional Responsibility**

While social media can be a powerful educational and valuable communication tool for the district, students and parents, employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time. Always, protect your privacy. Remember

that social media in the classroom is an extension of your physical classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should always be considered inappropriate online.

Teachers who use social networking to interact with students and/or parents in an educational manner or as a communication tool must find ways to interact without giving students and parents access to their personal information and posts. When contributing online, do not post confidential student information. This practice would include abiding by a student's request to opt-out of being photographed or videotaped via the WS/FCS Photo Release handed out at the beginning of the year or [found on the WS/FCS Marketing & Communications webpage](#).

All WS/FCS employees who work with students and choose to professionally engage them on social media sites should:

- Create social media sites that address reasonable instructional, educational, or extracurricular activities.
- Notify WS/FCS parents EACH school year of the professional social media activities set up for the children's participation.

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. Group messaging sites like Remind or GroupMe should be used. Use a WS/FCS provided e-mail as your e-mail contact for official or school-related professional pages. Do not use your WS/FCS provided e-mail as a username or e-mail contact for any personal pages.

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.

Please remember that all WS/FCS policies and procedures, as well as relevant local, state and federal laws (copyright, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, personnel statutes, criminal statutes, etc.) apply to social media communications.

### **Guidance for Using/Creating School-Related Social Media Sites**

- All WS/FCS employees should treat the school related social media space like a classroom or professional workplace. The standards for conduct in WS/FCS professional settings also apply to school related social media sites. [WS/FCS Policy 4116.10](#) addresses this further.
- All WS/FCS employees should exercise responsibility, caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using social media sites.
- Teachers, students, and extracurricular organizations may create social media accounts. They should first obtain a principal's approval and should register the account with the principal or their school designee. They should remember these are not official district sites.

- When setting up school-related social media sites, principals or their designee and our employees should responsibly consider their intended audience and the appropriate level of privacy
- Principals and their designee should maintain a list of all school-related social media accounts used within their school, classrooms, and extracurricular activities.
- Official School or Department social media accounts on Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook should cross-collaborate with WS/FCS social media accounts. While each school owns its brand, each also belongs to the larger organization. We encourage principals and their designee to engage with and support WS/FCS social media sites by, for example, sharing or retweeting District news releases or events on the school or department sites.
- To differentiate school-related social media sites from personal sites, accounts should include language that clearly identifies them as school related.
- Content shared on social media should have a reasonable and positive relationship with the mission and function of WS/FCS. An example: Sharing public library events supports the partnership in education with WS/FCS and Forsyth County Government.
- Our WS/FCS employees should use privacy settings for their intended audiences. Limitations to privacy settings exist; however, and WS/FCS employees should be aware that social media sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions at any time.
- Professional social media communication must comply with WS/FCS policies and any state and federal laws on the disclosure of confidential information, student privacy, threatening language, and other school place issues.
- No student's personally identifiable information may be posted by WS/FCS employees on school-related or personal social media sites available outside the classroom. Posting any image of a student on any site other than the district managed sites or a school-related site managed by a WS/FCS email address requires written, signed, parental consent form for the featured child. [The WS/FCS Opt-Out form](#) only covers official, district managed sites and school-related sites managed by a WS/FCS email address.

### **Professional Media Inquiries**

All media inquiries received on or through district social media sites should always be referred to WS/FCS Marketing & Communications. <https://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Domain/37>

### **The Rules of Engagement**

These rules should be available on any page/account managed by the district or a school in the district. This outlines for users, followers, etc. what WS/FCS considers acceptable for our sites.

#### ***Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Rules of Engagement for Social Media***

*The goal of using social media networking is to share important information with the public and engage in respectful, open dialogue. To help us accomplish this, we ask that you abide by the following rules of engagement:*

- ***Engage in open conversation.*** District-sponsored social networking is not intended to take the place of regular communication channels for sharing personal issues and concerns.



*Comments regarding a personal issue with the district, school or staff member should be addressed privately. Those comments will be removed from the site.*

- **Be respectful.** Personal attacks or comments that are deemed offensive to any member of our community will not be tolerated. Inappropriate remarks and profanity will be removed.
- **Refrain from Outside or Self-promotion.** Advertisements for products or services will be removed.
- **Stay on topic.** Please be certain that your comments are appropriate for an educational environment and fans of all ages. Comments should directly relate to the district, schools and activities.
- **Keep private concerns private.** If you have a question for a specific employee, contact him/her privately. You should not expect responses to every question or comment posted on district-sponsored social networking pages.
- **Be factual and speak your truth.** Blatantly inaccurate information will not be allowed. False information will be removed and factual information will be posted. However, respectful dialogue of differing opinions is welcome.
  
- **Don't take it personally.** Employees of WS/FCS may have personal social networking pages. Don't be surprised or offended if your request to "friend" them is ignored. District policy encourages staff to keep their personal lives personal.

*Know that abuse of the above guidelines can lead to removal of a specific posting or the blocking/removal of an individual from our page.*

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### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) General**

1. Why does the WS/FCS issue guidance for using social media?

- Social media technology offers many educational benefits. We issue these guidelines to encourage professionalism, responsibility, safety, and awareness by our employees who use social media. Our guidelines also recommend best practices for employees who use social media for professional or personal communication.

2. How may WS/FCS parents, students, and employees give feedback on these guidelines?

- We welcome feedback on our guidelines and FAQs. Because technology and best practices change rapidly, we plan to systematically review and update guidance. If you have any feedback or a suggestion, please send an e-mail to our District email address: [info@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:info@wsfcs.k12.nc.us)

3. Do the guidelines apply to all WS/FCS employees or just those who work in schools?

- Our guidelines apply to all WS/FCS employees – our valued school staffs and our valued administrative, operations, child nutrition, & transportation staffs, too.

4. What are common types of social media?

- Blogs. Blogs function as ongoing journals, where users make routine entries. Typically, bloggers ‘tag’ entries for easy online searches. Most blogs allow readers to comment. Examples: Blogger, WordPress.
- Microblogs. These blogs, as the name implies, have shorter posts, typically limiting the number of typed characters allowed. Microblogs are good for status updates and quickly communicating information to ‘friends’ or ‘followers.’ Examples: Twitter, Tumblr.
- Networking sites. These allow people to connect with each other to explore common interests and pursuits. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Twitter, Instagram.
- Photo/Video sites. These allow people to share videos, images, slideshows, and other visual media. These sites often allow viewers to comment and post their own content. Examples: YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram, Snapchat.

5. The guidelines state that they supplement, not supersede, WS/FCS policies and any federal or state laws. What does this mean?

- Social media use should always comply with our WS/FCS policies and all laws. Before our WS/FCS employees use a student’s name or other personally identifiable information on social media, for example, they should be aware of policies and laws that might apply to the situations of individual students.

**Personal Social Media Site FAQs**

6. Why do you recommend that WS/FCS employees have separate professional and personal social media sites and e-mail addresses?

- All WS/FCS employees must keep their personal and professional online communications separate. Professional social media is work-related; it may involve employee-to-student group communication. Personal social media is not work-related; it does not involve employee-to-student communication.

7. May WS/FCS employees use their personal social media accounts to communicate with their WS/FCS colleagues?

- Our guidelines don’t limit communication between our employees on personal social media sites. Even so, we encourage our WS/FCS employees on personal social media to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their sites and only use personal sites on their own time.

**Employee Related FAQs**

8. What if WS/FCS employees already use social media for professional or personal purposes?

- For professional social media use: WS/FCS employees should make sure their use aligns with the Social Media Guidelines and these FAQs. Any use not consistent with these guidelines should be altered or amended in a reasonable period of time to conform to our WS/FCS policies and the law.

Employees with links from a school-related social media site to a personal e-mail address should transition the site to a professional e-mail address.

- For personal social media use: Our guidelines recommend that WS/FCS employees who use social media for personal purposes should not allow any current WS/FCS students access to those sites.
- Our employees should periodically review the Social Media Guidelines and FAQ (updated as needed) to make sure they remain up-to-date on WS/FCS recommended practices.

11. On social media, when and where should the WS/FCS or individual school logo be used?

- Only use the logo for official WS/FCS business. Websites that officially represent a school may use the official school or district logo. Note that when a social media site like LinkedIn and Facebook automatically generates the WS/FCS logo, it's not a problem.

12. What other technology-related guidance can support WS/FCS employees on social media?

- Please see the [Policy AR6161](#): Responsible Use of Technology and [Policy AR111](#), Use of School Mail, Cell Phones, Fax and E-Mail. These links have information that governs all electronic activity for users of WS/FCS's network.

13. If WS/FCS employees want to develop school-related social media sites for their classrooms, then what should they do?

- First, our employees should review the Social Media Guidelines and FAQs periodically to be familiar with the content and any updates. Then they should research and familiarize themselves with the social media site they intend to use.
- If students will be using the proposed school-related social media, our employees must review the site's regulations and determine the age children are allowed to use it. An example: Let's say a female teacher plans to create a Facebook page for her third-grade class. She will learn that Facebook requires users to be age 13 or older. She will need to find some other tool. Employees should also review the requirements of the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.
- Our employees should know the privacy and viewing settings for a social media site. We recommend, where possible, that our WS/FCS employees establish groups or pages, rather than individual profiles, for educational purposes.

### **School Leader FAQs**

14. How should principals address parents who have concerns about their children's use of social media?

- WS/FCS recognizes social media's powerful benefits for students, teachers, and school

communities. Most schools now use these tools. Our own schools should inform parents of the opportunities social media provides for college and career readiness. In some cases, schools may need to 'market' these tools to parents unfamiliar with their benefits. Schools should let families know that technology and technology-based tools are an important part of being work-ready in today's society.

15. Do I need to be an administrator on every site?

- Principals do not need to be an administrator on every site, however, it is recommended that principals be aware of all sites related to their school and maintain a list.

**Teachers and Other School-Based Staff FAQs**

16. Should parents be notified if a child needs to use social media for school-related activities?

- Yes. WS/FC schools should notify parents every school year if a child will participate in school-related social media activities. Parents with questions or concerns should contact the school for more information.

17. The guidelines recommend that principals (or their representatives) have administrator rights. Does this mean that teachers or school-based staff must hand over their school related social media user names and passwords?

- It does not. Teachers and staff may choose to give the principal or designee access to a site. The guidelines simply suggest that principals have at least limited access, using their own log-in user names and passwords. Why? If a teacher is out recovering from an extended illness, the administrator can monitor the professional social media site.

18. Are employees required by federal and state laws to report certain activity they see or are made aware of online?

- Yes. As required by WS/FCS policy and within these guidelines, all employees must report threats, weapons, inappropriate relationships, and any other mandatory reportable offenses as found in local, state and federal laws.

19. What confidential information or personally identifiable student information should not be posted or disclosed? What about graded work?

- Always err on the side of caution. Posting certain graded student work online may be in violation of FERPA. Any WS/FCS employee who has questions about confidential or personally identifiable student information should contact a principal. The principal can contact their Instructional Superintendent. Also reference [Policy 5125](#), Privacy of Student Records

20. Are teachers or other school staff personally liable for student posts on school related social media sites?

- No. If a teacher views an inappropriate post, he/she is, however, required to follow WS/FCS regulations for reporting it. We also recommend that teachers act as moderators for school-related social media sites.

25. Can the guidelines be used for disciplinary purposes?

- Possibly, if it violates state or federal law or WS/FCS Board Policy. We strongly suggest our valued employees follow these guidelines.

[www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us](http://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us)