

# NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203

*To commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of humanity.®*



TO: All Staff  
FROM: Chris Johnson, Director of Technology  
SUBJECT: Social Media Information  
DATE: March 1, 2011

Last spring, a committee of faculty members, administrators and technology staff was formed to discuss how to encourage the pedagogically sound and safe use of social media with students.

The result of our work is a document titled "Recommendations for Communicating Electronically with Students" which has been discussed and reviewed by various school leadership groups including the Administrative Team and Faculty Senate. These suggestions for social media use are meant to be complementary to our existing Acceptable Use Regulations.

The Technology Department has also developed resources for using social media effectively in the classroom, including articles, examples of effective integration, and other resources which can be found on the department's [web site](#).

To support the use of social media with students, we are making several changes to the web sites staff members and students can access at New Trier. Facebook will be available for staff members (although it will still be blocked for students) and YouTube and other video sharing sites will be available for students (they are already available to staff). These filtering changes will occur the week of March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Restrictions on other social media web sites will also be removed on a case-by-case basis if requested by faculty members.

To help familiarize you with the suggestions, we will discuss these changes in several forums. Faculty Senate members will be available to answer questions in your department. We will also discuss this during staff meetings, and adviser in-service meetings. Students will receive an e-mail explaining the web filtering changes the week of March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

It is our shared responsibility to educate students about how to use social media effectively and safely. They will need to know how to use these tools in their lives after New Trier, and from a practical standpoint, it is important to reinforce that while more web sites, such as YouTube will be available to them on campus, our Acceptable Use Regulations are still in effect, and that the purpose of using these sites during school hours is for school-related work. Please help to communicate this message to students in your classrooms, adviser rooms, and in other areas where you supervise students.

If you have any questions about the guidelines or changes, please contact me. If you need assistance with effectively incorporating social media into your teaching, consultant one of the Technology Staff Developers, a Librarian, or Jacqui Pritchard, Instructional Technology Manager.

Attachments: Social Media Suggestions  
Acceptable Use Regulations

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## Recommendations for Communicating Electronically with Students

New Trier High School District 203 recognizes that today's students are deeply engaged in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family and their larger social networks. As educators, we, too, have turned to e-mail, web sites, blogs, text messaging, and social media web sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups.

While New Trier recognizes the educational value of many of these tools and believes the use of innovative technology to communicate with students should be encouraged, it is important for faculty and staff to consider potential risks when using such tools, and to carefully plan their uses to maximize pedagogical benefits and protect students, teachers, and the District from unintended consequences.

*The suggestions outlined in this document are designed for the purposes of:*

1. Protecting yourself, your students, other New Trier staff members, and the District;
2. Raising awareness of acceptable and effective ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students; and
3. Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students.

*All District employees are expected to abide by District policies and procedures governing the acceptable use of technology, and if there is a conflict between these suggestions and District policy or procedure, the policy or procedure prevails.*

## Overall Suggestions for Electronic Communication

Guiding Principle: Is this communication something that you and the District would find acceptable in a face-to-face meeting with a student?

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with students is **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional:

1. **The communication should be transparent:** ALL electronic communication between staff and students should be transparent. As a public school district, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility and accountability with regard to all communications.

2. **The communication should be accessible:** ALL electronic communication between staff and students should be considered a matter of record, part of the District archives, and/or may be accessible by others including parents/guardians and department/school leaders.

2. **The communication should be professional:** ALL electronic communication from staff to student should be as a professional representing the District. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a New Trier staff member. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is very likely that the methods of communicating with students that you are choosing are appropriate, and they may in fact be encouraged.

The following is a set of suggestions for specific types of electronic communications that all members of the New Trier professional community are asked to follow when communicating with students electronically.

### **Suggestions for Specific Types of Electronic Communication**

*We have defined three levels of electronic communication:*

**Level 1** – Fully endorsed and acceptable methods of electronic communication

**Level 2** – Electronic communication that is encouraged, but not District-implemented

**Level 3** – Electronic communication to be used with caution

#### **Level 1: District-Endorsed Electronic Communication**

*District 203 E-mail* - District e-mail is the only approved e-mail method to communicate with students and parents/guardians.

The District provides a robust e-mail system for communicating with staff members, parents/guardians, and students and for other professional uses. In order to maintain a professional appearance in communication and to meet legal requirements in numerous areas, all e-mail communication relating to New Trier business should go through your District e-mail account.

Using a personal e-mail account or other personal electronic messaging service (e.g., Facebook messages) to communicate with students creates a number of risks for you, the student, and the District. Such use may unintentionally reveal information to students or parents/guardians, and have unintended consequences, such as revealing your personal Facebook pages or postings you submit to mailing lists and web sites. Such use may also give the student or their parent the impression that the communication is more personal in nature than it really is. Finally, such use diminishes your expectation of privacy in those accounts as to the District. The District may be required to search and review e-mails in your private account in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests or requests during litigation if you use those accounts to communicate with students. For these reasons, you should not communicate with students using personal e-mail accounts or other personal electronic messaging services.

*School Web Sites and Blackboard* - The use of these District-provided tools is strongly encouraged. Their accessibility is ubiquitous and their content is highly transparent. With Blackboard, staff members can provide some of the same types of communication that commercial social media web sites offer while also providing access to curriculum beyond the classroom walls. Blackboard allows for effective online learning by supporting online discussions, secure chat rooms, online delivery of assessments, and the sharing of documents, images and other media, all in a secure, password-protected environment housed entirely on District equipment. All of the content is backed up and directly accessible.

### Level 2: Non-District Implemented Electronic Communication

The use of the following types of electronic communication is encouraged, even though the technology is not implemented by the District:

*Twitter (Allowing Students to Follow You)*- Twitter allows for one-way communication between a teacher, coach, or activity sponsor and students of District 203. Twitter is an effective way to “push” information to students that can be directly linked with text messaging, student Facebook pages, e-mail, and other tools. Twitter provides a clear history of communications and is limited to one-way, staff to student communications.

It is suggested that you allow students to follow you, but you should NOT follow them. You should make sure your settings require you to approve someone before they can follow your Twitter account.

*Facebook Fan Page* - Use of Facebook with students has come under much debate across the country. Setting up a “Fan Page” for your class is an alternative that allows your students to access class information through the popular web site without giving them access to your personal information, or vice versa. With a Fan Page the communication becomes “one-way.” Students become a “fan” of your class, and can receive information from the page when you update it, but you cannot see any of their personal information. This is different from Facebook “friending” of students, which allows them access to your personal Facebook account.

*Wikis* - Wikis allow for student collaboration, and student driven content. Students can add content, edit content and comment on other posts. Care should be taken to ensure that student personal information is not shared on these web pages.

*Blogger, Posterous, Ning* - These web sites allow for class discussions, collaboration, and posting of material in a fashion very similar to Blackboard. Consideration should be given to the use of School Web Sites and Blackboard where possible in lieu of using these web sites.

### Level 3: Electronic Communication To Use With Caution

*Facebook “Friending”* - Facebook “friending” of students (and similar relationships on other “social networking” web sites) creates a number of serious risks for you, the student, and the District, and is not encouraged. Such relationships:

- Allows students access to personal information about staff members – Students can view a wide variety of information about staff members, including pictures, activities they participate in, causes they support, and information about their families. Even if staff members feel they have adequately defined their privacy settings to protect against such access, their “friends” may not. For example, a staff member may have a restricted Facebook page, but if that staff member’s son or daughter does not have adequate security defined, the students can see personal information about the staff member’s child, because they are mutual friends.
- Allows staff to access personal information about students – Staff members have the ability to view more than is typically necessary in an educational relationship.
- Creates an appearance of a personal relationship – The term “friend” inherently implies a personal relationship, which a student or parent could misinterpret.
- Opens the District to legal liability – In our role as mandatory reporters and in the context of other laws and potential liability, having access to student posts could put the staff member or the District at risk. If the student posts a picture showing alcohol or drug use, is it the staff member’s duty to report it? What if the staff member has access to the picture, but doesn’t see information about alcohol and drug use and the student is injured? Could the staff member and/or the District be liable?
- Allows for private, unmonitored communication – Communication via Facebook is not archived via District servers, and may not be available to management if it is needed to defend or protect a teacher, or investigate a claim of impropriety.
- “Friending” is not technically necessary – Facebook provides for an alternative, Fan/Like Pages. Fan Pages allow a person, group, or other body to establish a page that allows for sharing of information. This can mitigate many of the issues described above: it is separate from a personal Facebook account, communication is transparent, and the staff member cannot view information on students’ pages. This provides the same benefits while greatly (though not completely) eliminating risk to the staff member and District.

*Twitter (Following Students)* – Following a student on Twitter can lead to the same issues and risks described above with respect to “friending” a student on Facebook or another social networking web site. For instance, it can give the staff member access to personal information about the student and lead to potential legal liability. It is not encouraged.

*Text Messaging* - Nearly every student has a cell phone today, and use of text messaging is rising sharply. This form of communication is typically between individuals and highly personal. Since texting is such a quick and convenient way of communication, a simple message may lead to an extended texting conversation that has the potential to become “off topic.” Text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can also easily be misinterpreted by a parent, or by a student, who may view the relationship as more personal. Finally, text messaging with students creates all of the same risks described with respect to non-district e-mail above.

### **Suggestions for Using Social Media Effectively**

#### *Facebook Fan/Like Pages*

A Facebook Fan Page can be appropriate as a supplemental method of communicating electronically with student groups if it is set up correctly.

- Unlike Facebook groups, Fan pages are visible to unregistered students and parents/guardians and thus indexed and easier to find.
- Be sure to follow the same District guidelines for publishing content to any web site, in that photos of students are not posted in conjunction with their names or other personally identifiable information.
- Make sure that your settings do not allow fans to be able to post comments, photos, videos or links to your wall, and that only you have control over the content.
- Use your New Trier e-mail address to register as contact for the page so that any feedback or comments on the page are sent to the District, not to any personal e-mail addresses.
- Notify the parents/guardians of your students that you'll be using this site to communicate information for your group in addition to your other methods (web sites, e-mail, formal letters, etc.) and that these pages may contain commercial advertising that is not endorsed by the District.
- Since not every student has a Facebook page or even access to Facebook, you must consider this when posting to your page. District 203 cannot require students to have Facebook accounts, as this should be a family decision. Therefore, you must make any information posted on Facebook accessible to non-Facebook users by alternate means and communicate that alternative message to all applicable students and parents/guardians.

*Important Reminders for Employees who use Facebook, Twitter, or other Social Media Sites for Personal Purposes*

Staff members who are presently using Facebook to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks, should ensure that their privacy settings are set to "Only Friends." If the "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including potentially students and parents/guardians.

Any content staff members publish, pictures they post, or dialogue they maintain, whether in Facebook, Twitter, a blog, a discussion thread or other website, should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in their role as a New Trier staff member. E-mail and social networking sites are very public places, and you should assume that all communication may eventually be viewed publically.

Thanks to District 128 for providing the framework and document that resulted in these guidelines.

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## TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE REGULATIONS

### Authorization for Technology Access

Each staff member must sign this Authorization as a condition for using District technology connections. School Board members are treated like staff members for purposes of this Authorization. Please read this document carefully before signing.

### Rights and Responsibilities

All use of technology shall be consistent with the District's goal of promoting educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. These *Acceptable Use Regulations* do not attempt to state all required or proscribed behavior by users. However, some specific examples are provided. **The failure of any user to follow the terms of the *Acceptable Use Regulations* may result in the loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.** The signature(s) at the end of this document indicates the party who signed has read the terms and conditions carefully and understands their significance.

### Usage Guidelines

1. Acceptable Use - Access to District technology must be for the purpose of education or research, and be consistent with the educational objectives of the District.
2. Privileges - The use of District technology is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges and/or disciplinary action up to suspension or dismissal, **in accordance with the employee's collective bargaining agreement if applicable.** The Director of Technology in consultation with the Superintendent will make all decisions regarding whether or not a user has violated these regulations and may deny, revoke, or suspend access at any time.
3. Unacceptable Use - The user is responsible for his or her actions and activities involving the network. Some examples of unacceptable uses are:
  - a. Knowingly using the network for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other contracts, or transmitting any material in violation of any U.S. or State regulation;
  - b. Unauthorized downloading of software, regardless of whether it is copyrighted or de-virused;
  - c. Using the network for private financial or commercial gain;
  - d. Wastefully using resources, such as file space;
  - e. Hacking or gaining unauthorized access to files, resources or entities;
  - f. Intentionally invading the privacy of individuals, by the unauthorized disclosure, dissemination, or use of information about anyone that is of a personal nature;
  - g. Using another user's account or password;
  - h. Posting material authored or created by another without his/her consent;
  - i. Posting anonymous messages;
  - j. Using the network for commercial or private advertising;
  - k. Intentionally accessing, submitting, posting, publishing, or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, harassing, or illegal material;

- l. Using the network while access privileges are suspended or revoked; and,
  - m. Vandalism as defined in item #12 below.
4. Software Use
- a. New Trier High School licenses the use of copies of computer software from a variety of publishers and distributors. The district does not own the copyright to this software or its related documentation, and unless authorized by the software publisher, does not have the right to reproduce it for use on more than one computer.
  - b. According to US copyright law, illegal reproduction of software is subject to civil damages of as much as US \$100,000 per title infringed, and criminal penalties, including fines of as much as US \$250,000 per title infringed and imprisonment of up to five years.
  - c. New Trier High School users will use the software only in accordance with the license agreement.
  - d. New Trier High School users who learn of any misuse of software or related documentation within the district will notify the District Director of Technology.
5. Hardware and Software Purchases– All computer hardware, peripherals and software used in the District for either administrative or instructional use must be purchased through the Department of Technology.
6. Network Etiquette - You are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a. Be polite. Do not become abusive in your messages to others.
  - b. Use appropriate language. Do not swear, or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
  - c. Do not reveal the personal information, including the addresses or telephone numbers of students or colleagues.
  - d. Recognize that electronic mail (E-mail) is not private. People who operate the system have access to all mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the authorities.
  - e. Do not use the network in any way that would disrupt its use by other users.
7. No Warranties - The Board makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. The Board will not be responsible for any damages the user suffers. This includes loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, missed-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by its negligence or the user's errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at the user's own risk. The Board denies any responsibility for any information, including its accuracy or quality, obtained or transmitted through use of the Internet. Further, the Board denies responsibility for any information that may be lost, damaged, altered, or unavailable when using the Internet.
8. Indemnification – The user agrees to indemnify the School District for any losses, costs, or damages, including reasonable attorney fees, incurred by the District relating to, or arising out of, any **intentional or reckless** breach of this *Policy* including such incurred through copyright violation.
9. Security - Network security is a high priority. If you can identify a security problem on the network, please notify the Director of Technology. Keep your account and password confidential. Any user identified as a security risk may be denied access to the network.
10. Use of Electronic Mail

- a. The District's electronic mail system, and its software, hardware, and data files, are owned and controlled by the School District. The School District provides e-mail to aid students and staff members in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, and as an education tool.
  - b. The District reserves the right to access and disclose the contents of any account on its system, without prior notice or permission from the account's user. Unauthorized access by any staff member to an electronic mail account is strictly prohibited.
  - c. Each person should use the same degree of care in drafting an electronic mail message as would be put into a written memorandum or document. Nothing should be transmitted in an e-mail that would be inappropriate in a letter or memorandum.
  - d. Downloading any file attached to any Internet-based message is prohibited unless the user is certain of that message's authenticity and the nature of the file so transmitted.
11. Internet Safety
- a. Staff members shall **provide reasonable** supervision and monitoring of students while they are using District technology access.
  - b. Each District computer with Internet access has a filtering device that blocks entry to visual depictions that are (1) obscene, (2) pornographic, or (3) harmful or inappropriate for students, as defined by the Children's Internet Protection Act and as determined by the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall enforce the use of such filtering devices.
  - c. The Director of Technology and staff shall monitor all Internet access.
12. Vandalism - Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges and other disciplinary action including suspension or dismissal in the case of staff. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy technology or data of another user, the Internet, or any other network. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses.
13. Charges - The District assumes no responsibility for any unauthorized charges or fees, including telephone charges, long-distance charges, per-minute surcharges, and/or equipment or line costs. Any and all such unauthorized charges or fees shall be the responsibility of the user.
14. Confidentiality - Employees shall maintain confidentiality of student records in their use of District computers.
15. Monitoring of Personal Use - As a condition of using the Internet, including electronic mail communication, through District computers or Internet access, employees consent to monitoring and inspection by school administration of personal use of District computers. Such monitoring and inspection shall include any and all electronic mail communications made or attempted to be made or received by users and all materials downloaded by users.
16. Copyright Web Publishing Rules - Copyright law and District policy prohibit the republishing of text or graphics found on the Web or on District Web sites or file servers without explicit written permission.
- a. For each re-publication (on a Web site or file server) of a graphic or a text file that was produced externally, there must be a notice at the bottom of the page crediting the original producer and noting how and when permission was granted. If possible, the notice should also include the Web address of the original source.
  - b. The absence of a copyright notice may not be interpreted as permission to copy the materials. Only the copyright owner may provide the permission. The manager of the Web site displaying the material may not be considered a source of permission. Permission must be in written (not electronic or verbal) form.

- c. Web authors must attend a copyright session and sign the Staff Web Publishing Guidelines and Standards before being granted permission to publish.

Acceptable Use Regulations Form

I understand and will abide by the above *Acceptable Use Regulations*. I further understand that should I commit any violation, my access privileges may be revoked, and disciplinary action up to and including suspension or dismissal and appropriate legal action may be taken. In consideration for using the District's Internet connection and having access to public networks, I hereby release the School District and its Board members, employees, and agents from any claims and damages arising from my use, or inability to use the Internet.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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Name

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User Signature