# District Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Computing

## Introduction

The *Hopkins County School District* recognizes the increasing demand for applications that facilitate collaboration and interaction. These guidelines are developed to provide direction to staff when participating in Web 2.0 activities.

These guidelines cover:

- **SOCIAL MEDIA** delivers content and allows readers/viewers/listeners the ability to participate. Blogs, forums, wikis, video streaming sites such as YouTube and chat rooms are examples because they include an interactive component.
- **SOCIAL NETWORKING** describes online tools that connect groups of people on the Web. Users create personal profiles, create and join groups, and build applications for others to use. Social networking sites include Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc.
- Both social media and social networking can be lumped into the umbrella of **WEB 2.0**.

## Personal Responsibility & Professionalism

1. Hopkins County School employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online for the life of the content. Having the right to express oneself online does not imply a lack of consequences when good judgment is not exercised.
2. By virtue of identifying yourself as a district employee, you should ensure that online content associated with you is consistent with the behavior expected from an educator per the *Professional Code of Ethics for Kentucky Certified School Personnel.* Educators are expected to exemplify behaviors which maintain the dignity and integrity of the profession.
3. Remember that online media is an extension of your classroom and conduct that is deemed inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
4. Maintain professional boundaries with students.
5. If the activity requires a user profile, it is strongly recommended that staff members set up a professional profile apart from any personal profile that might exist.

## Disclaimer

1. If you publish content to any website outside of the district site and it is relevant to your role as an educator, use a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the district or school's position, strategies, or opinions." The disclaimer in itself does not exempt staff from personal and professional responsibility.
2. Respect copyright, fair use and disclosure laws.

## Appropriateness

1. Consider the age appropriateness of the tool. Some sites are not recommended for children under the age of 13. Others require parental permission for minors over the age of 13.

2. We strongly discourage the use of online activities for students under the age limit recommended on the site.

## Permission

1. Participation in social media activities with students (whether during school hours or outside of school hours) warrants approval of the school principal and signed permission from the parents.
2. Do not cite or reference other educators, parents, students without their approval. This includes in writing, video, photo, audio recordings, etc.

## Confidentiality, Privacy, & Student Safety

1. Do not post confidential student information online.
2. Monitor the networking tools you are providing. Managing social media sites is much like managing behavior in the classroom. The posting of content should be subject to rules and consequences.
3. Do not use pictures of individual students. Group photos that do not identify individuals are acceptable if the students photographed have a signed Media Release on file at the school.
4. It is recommended that employees use the highest level of available privacy tools to appropriately control access on sites used professionally, personally, and instructionally.

## Implications of Using Social Networking with Students

1. When interacting with students online, you may be privy to information that they have used to construct their online identities. Just as you would have the duty to report knowledge of a student at school that is alarming, you also must comply with that duty when interacting with student online. Remember that KRS 620.030 requires us to report abuse, neglect, and dependency. This is relevant both in and outside of the classroom.
2. By virtue of participating in online social activities with students, you take on a greater responsibility to teach good netiquette and how to establish a respectable online identity.

## Process for Participating in Web 2.0 with Students

1. You must have a signed *Acceptable Use Policy* on file for both the staff and students participating in the activity.
2. Inform the school principal on the purpose of the activity. Provide the principal with a copy of a letter to the parents and permission form for participation.
3. Provide access to the activity to the principal and technology designee.
4. Monitor the activity and provide closure when the activity concludes.

## Example of Acceptable Social Media Use

While the tools may vary, the examples below are provided to demonstrate the common sense expectations that follow the guidelines listed above.

### Twitter

- For a school account, make sure the school principal approves the moderator.
- Teachers who wish to set up a teacher twitter account should also seek principal approval.

- If you are <u>not</u> authorized by the school principal to create an account, do not include the name of the school in the twitter account or in any way identify that account with the school.
- Both the school principal and moderator should monitor the posts made to the school account.
- The school twitter account should not follow any other twitter account. This prevents their posts from showing up in the twitter home page.
- @replies –Students should not be allowed to reply. This reduces the possibility that inappropriate content is posted.
- Any inappropriate @replies should be deleted by the moderator by blocking that user.
- No student names will be provided on a tweet release per confidentiality.