



#SoMeGuidelinesNYC

Student Social Media Guidelines

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Introduction

- The New York City Department of Education (DOE) works to provide all students with access to an education that prepares them to succeed in college and careers. Part of being a successful citizen is understanding that social media and digital communication are essential parts of our world today. It is important to recognize that access to information can result in tremendous advantages, but it can also create new responsibilities of which students should be aware.
- This document, the Student Social Media Guidelines (“Guidelines”),¹ along with the Social Media InfoGraphics (which will be released in 2014), provides information about how to use social media responsibly, both within and outside the school community by:
 - ▶ *Outlining recommendations for healthy social media communications;*
 - ▶ *Providing ideas about how to create a smart digital footprint; and*
 - ▶ *Informing you about what to do if you become aware of dangerous postings or other hurtful information.*
- This document² should be read together with the DOE’s [Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies>](http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies), which sets forth the key responsibilities all users of DOE’s technology must follow.³
- If you have feedback about these Guidelines, email SocialMediaPD@schools.nyc.gov.



¹ This document provides general guidance and does not cover every potential social media situation.

² These Guidelines apply to all DOE students who are 13 years old and over. The law requires additional precautions for students who are younger than 13 using social media, guidelines for these students will be released at a future date.

³ This document is also meant to be a companion to the [Staff Social Media Guidelines <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/SocialMedia>](http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/SocialMedia).

Definition of Social Media

- Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including social networks, blogs, photo sharing platforms, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Edmodo, Schoology, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, and Flickr.
- Some examples of social media uses include:
 - ▶ *Blogging about movies, sports, or news events;*
 - ▶ *Posting updates or activities on your Facebook page;*
 - ▶ *Participating in a teacher-established Edmodo group; or*
 - ▶ *Using a Google Hangout to work on a class project.*



“Using social media with my students has helped me strengthen relationships with them. It has also enabled me to understand and support my students as bullying issues at school or online bubble up. Students know that if there is a problem, I am here to help them, not just in the classroom but also online.”

Anna Dawidowska
Teacher, Glover Cleveland High School
New York City Department of Education

Create the Digital Image You Want

■ **Align your online image with your goals.**

A digital footprint is the reputation you leave online and can include material posted on blogs, and mentions on websites and videos that are uploaded onto sharing sites. Online actions leave a permanent record and remain online, even if you click “delete.” Be thoughtful about what you share online and consider how it would appear to family, friends, colleges, and future employers.

Because many colleges and employers search social media before making admissions and hiring decisions, you might want to use social media as a tool to demonstrate your interests in positive ways. For example, social media allows you to show who you are as a student online by sharing what you think about and what matters to you. This can help as you get closer to graduation and begin considering post-secondary education and career options. Some examples of how you can use social media for academic advancement include:

- ▶ *Commenting on articles in a knowledgeable way; or*
- ▶ *Starting a blog about current events.*



■ **Stand behind your words.**

You should always take responsibility for the content you post in all social media environments. While you may think that using a fake name may prevent posts from becoming part of your footprint, there are still ways to link that information to the person who posted it (for example, through an Internet IP address or other distinguishing information linking posts). Be your best self online – post accurate information and be accountable for what you say.

■ **Families can be helpful partners.**

Share your digital footprint with your parents and consider their suggestions. Get your parents’ input about what information they feel should remain private and what is fine to post publicly. Your parents are responsible for what you do online if you are a minor and may want your passwords and usernames to monitor your social media use. Additionally, because technology is constantly changing, you may know more about social media than your family, so you may also want to show your parents and other family members how to create an online presence themselves.

Post Responsibly – Be Mindful of Your Audience

- **Using social media academically is an extension of your classroom environment.**

When you use social media for academic purposes, such as for a school assignment, treat the platform as a digital extension of your classroom – the same rules apply online as they do at school. For example, if you would not make fun of a classmate in English class, do not do it online either. For school-related social media, do not tag student posts, photos, or videos unless your teacher gives you permission, as this may expose the content to audiences for whom it was not intended.

- **Put your best foot forward.**

People of all ages sometimes act differently on social media than they would “face-to-face,” assuming that, because they are not communicating in person, they are not accountable for their actions. In fact, because of the nature of the digital world, you should be as responsible, if not more, when acting online. Since you never know who will ultimately be reading content online, always assume that anyone might have access. If you do not know who will be reading it, ask yourself if you would be okay with a parent or relative reviewing your content. If not, there might be a better way to get your point across.

- **Pause before you post.**

Once a comment is posted online, you cannot later say, “never mind.” It may seem funny or harmless when you post it, but it could hurt or offend someone. As guidance, take a few extra minutes to think about whether a post will be hurtful or embarrassing or whether it could negatively affect a future opportunity. For example, if you post an aggressive or inflammatory comment online because you felt heated in the moment, this may end up making you a less attractive candidate in some employers’ minds. Because online posts can never be completely deleted, it is important to make sure that each post is something you want to live with.



“If you want to be taken seriously and professionally, you must have an online identity that matches your purpose. If you want respect and credibility online, be deliberate about choosing a profile image, content, and name that represents the “you” you want the world to see.”

Monique Coleman
Actress, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist

Consider the Consequences to Your Online Actions

■ **Personal use of social media may have an effect at school.**

While at times, it is easy to tell whether a social media use is school-related or personal, at other times, it may be difficult to distinguish fully between different uses. Sometimes, personal social media use, including off-hours use, may result in disruption at school and the school may need to get involved. This could include disciplinary action such as a parent conference or suspension. It is important to remember that infractions outlined in the Discipline Code prohibiting certain types of communication also apply to electronic communication. To be safe, be in control of what you do online, even if it is during personal time. For example, if your classmate is tagging you in rude Tweets, do not reciprocate in a similar way. Instead, stay positive, do what you know is right, and consider blocking or reporting this person if you feel it is warranted.

■ **Protect yourself.**

There are many ways to protect yourself online. For example, only accept friend requests from people you know. You may interact online with people you have never met in person. Use caution, find out as much as you can about the person, and tell a parent if you are considering meeting one of these people face to face. Additionally, while it is important to be yourself online, it is also important to remember not to post too many identifying details (such as where you live or your social security number) because revealing that information can be potentially dangerous or compromise your identity in some way. Do not share passwords with friends and be sure that the computers do not automatically save passwords. Always log off when you have finished using a site – do not just click out of the browser.

■ **Adjust your privacy settings appropriately.**

Privacy settings are automatically set by social media providers governing who can see your posts, how information is linked, and what data is available to the public. Each social media platform has different privacy setting defaults and some change those settings without making it obvious to you. As a user of social media, you should determine whether to change the default settings to make access to postings more or less private. For example, if you are creating a personal site to promote a social or political issue, you likely want to make that site open to everyone. However, if you want to discuss a project you are doing in class, it may be better to limit access only to a small group of classmates.

“When I apply for part-time work or internships during college, I make sure employers know to look at my digital footprint, which demonstrates that I have the skill set they want. I ensure my resume contains links to social media sites, which is fantastic for showing what I’m capable of and for giving employers background about me and my work.”

Armond McFadden
Chelsea Vocational High School Alumni

Take Threats of Cyberbullying Seriously

■ Cyberbullying takes many forms.

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic technologies to hurt or harm other people. Examples include:

- ▶ *Sending offensive text messages or emails;*
- ▶ *Posting statements that are not true and create rumors; or*
- ▶ *Circulating embarrassing photos of a classmate online.*

Sometimes, it may be difficult to draw the line between a harmless joke and one which goes to far and becomes hurtful. [Chancellor's Regulation A-832](#) has a comprehensive definition of the behavior that constitutes cyberbullying.

■ Report the behavior and get help.

If you are being cyberbullied or hear about/observe someone else being cyberbullied, report the behavior and get help. You can tell a parent, school staff, another adult family member, or a trusted adult. If no adult is available and you or someone else is in danger, call 911. If you are not sure who your school's Respect for All Liaison is, please look for their name on the RFA posters. DOE's [Discipline Code](#) <<http://tinyurl.com/DisciplineCodeNYCDOE>> and Chancellor's Regulations [A-830](#) <<http://tinyurl.com/NYCDOECRA830>> and [A-832](#) <<http://tinyurl.com/NYCDOECRA832>> also discuss what to do when you become aware of harassing or discriminating behavior, including behavior conducted online. Students who violate those rules may be subject to discipline.

■ Know what to do.

It is important not to respond to, retaliate to, or forward any harassing, intimidating, or bullying content. "De-friend," block, or remove people who send inappropriate content. It may also be a good idea to save harassing messages, as this evidence could be important to show an adult if the behavior continues. If the behavior is school-related, print out the messages and provide them to the school when you report the incident (do not email them to anyone). If you have questions about reporting incidents, DOE's [Respect for All](#) <<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll>> materials provide more information about appropriate support available and reporting procedures to your school. You can also send an email to RespectForAll@schools.nyc.gov.

"At our school, students know that if there is ever any drama that carries over to the online world, our teachers and principal have our back. We can go right to them if need be. When we do, I don't know how they do it exactly, but they make sure they always put an end to it. This makes for a more positive online experience for all of us."

Kevin Torres
Hudson High School

Understand the Fine Print and Other Rules

- **There is no right to privacy when using school-related social media.**

If you are using the school's device or network, the school may review what you post. The (IAUSP) < <http://tinyurl.com/IAUSP> > sets forth the "Internet-Don't List" related to online communication that includes the following:

- ▶ *Causing harm to others or damaging technology-related property;*
- ▶ *Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to school systems;*
- ▶ *Using school technology and/or systems for financial gain or business activities; or*
- ▶ *Engaging in criminal or unlawful activities online.*

- **Get to know other DOE rules.**

In addition to the IAUSP, applicable Chancellor's Regulations and DOE policies include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ Chancellor's Regulation [A-830](#), Discrimination/Harassment <<http://tinyurl.com/NYCDOECRA830>>;
- ▶ Chancellor's Regulation [A-831](#), Peer Sexual Harassment <<http://tinyurl.com/NYCDOECRA831>>;
- ▶ Chancellor's Regulation [A-832](#), Student-to-Student Harassment, Intimidation and/or Bullying <<http://tinyurl.com/NYCDOECRA832>>; and
- ▶ Citywide Standards of Intervention and Discipline Measures ([Discipline Code](#)) <<http://tinyurl.com/DisciplineCodeNYCDOE>>.

