

HOW NOT TO FEEL THE HEAT BECAUSE OF YOUR TWEET

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When you have something on your mind, do you grab a bullhorn, go to a crowded intersection and yell it out loud? Do you stand in front of school and yell it to everyone within earshot? Do you stand on a street corner and hand out off-color pictures and tell off-color jokes (with your name clearly visible) to everyone who passes by?

You probably don't do those sorts of things.

And yet... it seems that everyone these days can't wait to grab their computer or smartphone, and write, post, share, whatever is on their mind. They figure *"It's on my private Facebook page so only a few people will see it, right?"...Or..."I'm only sending this email to a few people so I'm safe, right?"...Or..." I have a First Amendment right to say whatever I want whenever I want, right?"*

No. Wrong, wrong and wrong.

Employees all over the country are facing serious consequences because of social media. Sometimes the employee said or did something intentionally. Sometimes it was inadvertent, such as when a student takes your phone and locates pictures that aren't exactly rated "G," and finds off-color jokes...then distributes them to the entire class.

Much of this can be avoided. Here are some suggested Do's and Don'ts:

Do:

✓ Use Maximum Privacy settings on all social media sites and regularly make certain that the settings are intact.

✓ Do take extra precautions to prevent students from viewing your personal information on your social media sites. Regularly re-check your privacy settings.

✓ Do communicate student information only through portals that the school board has authorized for that purpose.

✓ Remember that you have no expectation of privacy when you use social media even on a "private" page. Remember...anyone with access to that page can copy it and distribute it to anyone they want.

✓ Be careful what you store on your smartphone. You may unknowingly have a setting that shares pictures with others even without your knowledge.

✓ Do communicate with the Federation only through your personal email address, through your personal smartphone or your personal computer.

✓ Do be professional when communicating with students. Remember...you are a role model.

✓ Do be careful what you post. Remember...it's in writing so there's a written account of what you have said.

✓ Remember: when you use social media for personal or professional purposes, be aware that the content has the potential of being viewed by anyone, including students, parents, supervisors, and anyone else.

✓ Remember: although the First Amendment does give you some protection to post and write certain things, it's not an unlimited right. There are some exceptions in some situations.

✓ Check with the Federation if you have questions concerning something that you are considering posting.

Don't:

· Don't communicate with students through electronic devices that your principal or supervisor hasn't approved.

· Don't use your school board email address to send or receive personal emails.

· Don't "friend" students unless you and the student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship that originated outside of the school setting.

· Don't ever send or post pictures or images of students, or confidential information about students, or anything that would personally identify a student, unless you and the student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship that originated outside of the school setting.

· Don't send or post anything that is threatening, vulgar, obscene, racist, sexually suggestive, or is likely to cause you to be accused of bullying, sexual harassment, etc. Remember: any recipient can forward it to anyone they want.

· Don't use social media to harass, bully, threaten, or intimidate students.

· Don't use school board equipment for personal use or send personal emails during instructional time...they can tell when you are doing so!

· Don't leave your computer or smartphone unattended around students. And if you feel that someone has accessed improper websites, immediately report it.