



Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization

Social Media and Personal Technology Procedures

The expectations outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of:

1. protecting students, staff, and NSSEO
2. raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students
3. raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students

The following is a set of expectations that all NSSEO staff are expected to adhere to when communicating with parents or students electronically.

Does the communication pass the TAP Test?

Electronic communication with students should always be **Transparent, Accessible and Professional** as defined below:

- **The communication is 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 regards to all communications.
- **The communication is 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.
- **The communication is professional.** ALL electronic communication between staff to students should be written as a professional representing NSSEO. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a NSSEO professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally business like in manner.

If your communication meets all three of the above criteria, then the methods you have chosen to communicate with parents and students are appropriate.

Acceptable Communications Methods

Always use NSSEO-provided or supported technology in all communications with students and their parents/guardians regarding NSSEO and NSSEO-related school activities including student's activities in the NSSEO member districts of residences whenever possible. After an NSSEO employee's normal work hours or when NSSEO-provided or supported technology is not available, s/he may use a personal telephone from outside his/her NSSEO work sites(s) to contact a parent/guardian.

NSSEO Email - Use of NSSEO email is always the appropriate way to communicate directly with parents/students. District email provides NSSEO employees with a record of the communication. For this reason, only the district-provided email system (your name@nsseo.org address) should be used.

Less Acceptable Communications Methods

Text Messaging – Some of our students have a cell phone and texting 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 can get “off topic.” That said, NSSEO employees should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can easily be misinterpreted by a parent.

NSSEO employees are specifically prohibited from using personal technology for the purposes of text messaging students. However, when a District provided or supported technology is unavailable during community based learning experiences for school related activities and student safety, employees are permitted to use personal cell phones for text messaging students with prior administrative approval and parental knowledge.

Unacceptable Communications Methods

Non-District Email Accounts – NSSEO employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate about school matters with parents or students.

Online Games and Related Activities – While many people enjoy a variety of gaming systems (Wii, Xbox, etc.) and recreational websites that allow them to compete with others through the Internet, this is not an acceptable activity for NSSEO employees to engage in with students.

Important Reminders for NSSEO employees who use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, or other social media websites.

NSSEO district employees should never “friend” students who are currently enrolled in NSSEO programs or member districts, nor should you accept their “friend requests.” The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated. NSSEO employees should never “tweet” or communicate in similar social media with students.

Any content NSSEO employees 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 NSSEO professional. A good question that NSSEO employees should ask themselves before posting or emailing a message is, “Would I mind if that information appeared on the front page of the local newspaper?” If the answer is “yes,” then do not post it. Contrary to what some people think, email and social networking sites are very public places. Never post student pictures on these sites. Do not discuss students or school situations on these sites.

NSSEO employees are responsible for making sure that their online activities do not interfere with the fulfilling of their job requirements or their commitments to the students or NSSEO.

NSSEO employees should be responsible for their online content.

- Use good judgment and common sense
- Do not violate the privacy of another staff member

NSSEO employees must maintain confidentiality of privileged information. i.e., student record information, personnel information, and other confidential district information.