

## NYC Department of Education Social Media Guidelines

### A. Introduction/Purpose

1. Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors.
2. The Chancellor is committed to ensuring that all DOE stakeholders who utilize social media technology for professional purposes described below, including staff and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. The DOE strives to create professional social media environments that mirror the academically supportive environments of our schools.
3. These Social Media Guidelines (“Guidelines”) provide guidance regarding recommended practices for professional social media communication between DOE employees<sup>1</sup>, as well as social media communication between DOE employees and DOE students.
4. In recognition of the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era, the lines between professional and personal endeavors are sometimes blurred, these Guidelines also address recommended practices for use of personal social media by DOE staff.<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the DOE’s [Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy \(“IAUSP”\)](#) for additional guidance.

### B. Definition of Social Media

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, and Flickr.<sup>3</sup>

1. Professional social media is a work-related social media activity that is either school-based (e.g., a DOE principal establishing a Facebook page for his/her school or a DOE teacher establishing a blog for his/her class), or non-school-based (e.g., a DOE office establishing a Facebook page to facilitate the office’s administration of a Chancellor’s Regulation).

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<sup>1</sup> DOE employees include teachers, principals, other school and professional staff, networks, superintendents, and central staff.

<sup>2</sup> These Guidelines do not address student-to-student communication via social media. The [Discipline Code](#) together with the DOE’s Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities, sets forth expected standards of behavior with respect to student communication. The Discipline Code establishes the range of disciplinary options and guidance intervention that can be used when students engage in misconduct involving social media.

<sup>3</sup> These Guidelines do not address the professional use of third-party collaboration tools for purposes other than social media. Further guidance from the DOE addressing the use of third-party collaboration tools is forthcoming.

2. Personal social media use is a non work-related social media activity (e.g., a DOE central administrative employee establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for his/her own personal use).

### **C. Applicability**

These Guidelines apply to all DOE employees.<sup>4</sup> The DOE will take steps to ensure that other DOE stakeholders, including vendors, volunteers, and independent contractors are informed of these Guidelines.

### **D. Professional Social Media Use**

#### **1. Maintaining Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts**

DOE employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate professional and personal e-mail addresses. As such, DOE employees should not use their personal e-mail address for professional social media activities, rather, employees should use a professional e-mail address that is completely separate from any personal social media they maintain. Regular and continuous use of a personal e-mail address for professional purposes, including social media use, may result in DOE considering the e-mail address, and the corresponding use of that address, as a professional account.

#### **2. Communication with DOE Students**

DOE employees who work with students and communicate<sup>5</sup> with students through professional social media sites<sup>6</sup> should follow these guidelines:

- a. Professional social media sites that are school-based should be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational, or extra-curricular program matters;<sup>7</sup>
- b. Each school year, DOE parents<sup>8</sup> will be notified about the professional social media activities their children may participate in. Here is [sample language](#) schools can use. DOE will instruct parents to contact the school with any questions or concerns;

#### **3. Guidance Regarding Professional Social Media Sites**

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<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> The term “communicates”, as used in this Guidance, refers to activity, including, but not limited to, “friending,” “following,” “commenting,” and “posting messages” using social media sites.

<sup>6</sup> The term “site” and “sites” refer to an online social media account or usage.

<sup>7</sup> DOE employees should use school-based professional social media sites that involve DOE students for professional purposes only.

<sup>8</sup> The term parent means the student’s parent or guardian, or any person in a parental or custodial relationship to the student. This includes: birth or adoptive parent, step-parent, legally appointed guardian, and foster parent.

- a. DOE employees should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in DOE professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site;
- b. DOE employees should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using professional social media sites.
- c. When establishing professional social media sites, supervisors and employees should consider the intended audience for the site and consider the level of privacy assigned to the site, specifically, whether the site should be a private network (for example, it is limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school) or a public network (for example, anyone within the school, a larger group within the DOE community can participate or individuals outside of the DOE). It is recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.
- d. To the extent possible, based on the social media site being used, DOE supervisors or their designees should be given separate administrator rights providing limited access to the professional social media accounts established by DOE employees. See [FAQ #22](#), for more information.
- e. DOE employees should obtain their supervisor's approval using a registration form the school chooses before setting up a professional social media presence. This approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. The DOE will provide supervisors with a [sample registration form](#).
- f. If a professional social media site undergoes a significant change (for example, a Facebook page being used to share questions about reading assignments will now be used to share ideas with a class at a school in another country), consider whether a revised registry form and revised parental notification is needed. As needed, schools can continue to inform families about newly created social media sites.
- g. Supervisors and their designees are responsible for maintaining a list of all professional social media accounts within their particular school or office.
- h. Professional DOE social media sites should include language identifying the sites as professional social media DOE sites to differentiate from personal sites. For example, the professional sites can identify the DOE school, department, or particular grade that is utilizing the site. See [FAQ 11](#) for more information.
- i. Central offices that wish to create a social media presence for their office should work with the office supervisor(s) and also consult with the DOE's Office of Communications and Media Relations for additional guidance prior to creating a social media presence (<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/default.htm>);

- j. Professional social media sites that are non school-based should have a reasonable relationship to the mission and function of the DOE office creating the site.
- k. DOE employees should use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites with the objective that professional social media communications only reach the intended audience. However, DOE employees should be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, each employee has a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.
- l. Professional social media communication must be in compliance with existing [Chancellor's Regulations](#), DOE policies and applicable laws, including, but not limited to, prohibitions on the disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language.
- m. No personally identifiable student information, as defined in [Chancellor's Regulation A-820](#) may be posted by DOE employees on professional social media sites that are open beyond the classroom, which may include, for example, a "buddy" class in another country. If images of students are to be posted online there must be a [media consent form](#) on file at the school for each child featured.
- n. DOE students who participate in professional social media sites may not be permitted to post photographs or videos featuring other students without the approval of the teacher or other DOE employee responsible for the site.
- o. It is not recommended that DOE employees post photos of other DOE employees on professional social media sites without prior permission of the photographed employee.

#### **4. Monitoring of Professional Social Media Sites**

- a. DOE supervisors, or their designees, are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback regarding their employees' professional social media sites. The monitoring responsibilities include reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis. If supervisors discover questionable communications or behavior on professional social media sites, they are required to contact the appropriate authorities for assistance.<sup>9</sup>

If DOE employees decide to create a professional social media site and they are notified of questionable communications or behavior on their site, they may remove the material

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<sup>9</sup> Existing DOE reporting requirements must be followed. Depending on the circumstances, the appropriate authorities may include, but are not limited to: the network or cluster leader, borough safety directors, the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigations, the Office of Special Investigations, the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Office of the General Counsel, the senior field counsel, the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and the New York City Police Department.

or contact their supervisor. The employee must contact the appropriate authorities, where required, as well as their supervisor for assistance.<sup>10</sup>

- b. DOE supervisors (i.e., principal/designee, network point, superintendent) reserve the right to remove postings and/or disable a page, of professional social media sites that do not adhere to the law or Chancellor's Regulations or do not reasonably align with these Guidelines.

To assist in monitoring, as a recommended practice to the extent possible, the DOE employee should examine the default settings for comments on professional social media sites and in general use more restrictive custom settings. The DOE employee creating the site should intentionally move to more public settings as dictated by need. If the default setting for comments is turned on, allowing any user to post a comment without review, the comments on the site should be monitored regularly.

- c. Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media. DOE supervisors, or their designees, will regularly monitor professional social media sites to protect the school community.
- d. DOE supervisors should maintain a detailed log of all reported non-compliant communications as well as any violations that are otherwise brought to the supervisor's attention. Such reports of non-compliant communications should be immediately shared with the DOE employee so that the DOE employee may take corrective action, if necessary and if possible.

## **5. Press Inquiries**

- a. Any press inquiries received via professional social media sites should be referred to the DOE Office of Communications and Media Relations  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/default.htm>.

## **E. Personal Social Media Use**

### **1. Communication with DOE Students**

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, DOE employees should not communicate<sup>11</sup> with students who are currently enrolled in DOE schools on personal social media sites. DOE employees' communication with DOE students via personal social media is subject to the following exceptions: (a) communication with relatives and (b) if an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case the DOE employee should notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.

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<sup>10</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 5.

## 2. Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

DOE employees should exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

- a. As a recommended practice, DOE employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilized.
- b. It is not recommended that DOE employees “tag” photos of other DOE employees, DOE volunteers, DOE contractors or DOE vendors without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.
- c. Personal social media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption at school and/or the workplace, and can be in violation of DOE policies, Chancellor’s Regulations, and law.
- d. The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites, in violation of [Chancellor’s Regulations](#), is prohibited.
- e. DOE employees should not use the DOE’s logo or make representations that their personal social media sites speak in an official DOE capacity. Use of the DOE logo that is automatically populated on personal social media sites, such as LinkedIn, is permitted.
- f. Notwithstanding the guidelines above, postings by a DOE employee may be protected activity under applicable labor laws and collective bargaining agreements.

## F. Applicability of DOE Policies and Other Laws

1. These Guidelines provide guidance intended to supplement, not supersede, existing DOE policies, Chancellor’s Regulations and laws. Users of professional social media sites must comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, including, but not limited to the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act ([COPPA](#)) (<http://business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security/children>), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>), and intellectual property laws.
2. These Guidelines are not designed to serve as a code of conduct for social media use and do not constitute separate bases for potential discipline. However, all existing DOE policies, regulations and laws that cover employee conduct may be applicable in the social media environment. These include, but are not limited to, [Chancellor’s Regulations](#), the [Conflicts of Interest Law](#), the [DOE Internet and Acceptable and Use Safety Policy](#), and [Section 3020-a of the Education Law](#).

3. DOE employees who are mandated reporters<sup>12</sup> are required to abide by the same reporting responsibilities in a social media context.

### **G. Additional Inquiries**

This document is meant to provide general guidance and does not cover every potential social media situation. Should any questions arise, please consult the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or contact your DOE senior field counsel or the DOE's Office of Legal Services at 212-374-6888 or [asklegal@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:asklegal@schools.nyc.gov). As these Guidelines address rapidly changing technology, the DOE will regularly revisit these Guidelines and will update them as needed.

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<sup>12</sup> Various Chancellor's Regulations impose reporting requirements on DOE employees for issues such as child abuse, child maltreatment, school-related incidents and crimes, corporal punishment, verbal abuse, unlawful discrimination or harassment by DOE employees, student-to-student sexual harassment, and student-to-student bias-based harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying. For example, see Chancellor's Regulations [A-412](#) – Security in the Schools, [A-420](#) – Corporal Punishment, [A-421](#) – Verbal Abuse, [A-750](#) – Child Abuse, [A-830](#) – Discrimination/ Harassment, [A-831](#)- Peer Sexual Harassment, [A-832](#) – Student-to-Student Bias-Based Harassment, Intimidation and/or Bullying.

## H. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### General

1. Why is the DOE issuing guidance regarding social media?
  - Social media technology offers many educational benefits. The DOE is issuing this guidance to provide recommended practices for employees to take advantage of this technology in a manner that encourages professionalism, responsibility, safety, and awareness. In addition, these Guidelines provide recommended best practices for employees who use social media for personal communications.
2. May DOE parents, students and employees provide feedback on these Guidelines?
  - Yes. The DOE welcomes feedback regarding these Guidelines and the FAQs. Because technology and best practices change rapidly, the DOE plans to review and update its guidance as necessary. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please send an e-mail to [SocialMedia@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SocialMedia@schools.nyc.gov).
3. Do the Guidelines apply to all DOE employees or just school-based employees?
  - The Guidelines apply to all DOE employees: school-based staff, as well as central, network, and cluster staff.
4. Do the Guidelines apply to e-mails, video chat, and instant messaging?
  - No. The Guidelines apply to sites that are used primarily for the purpose of social media as defined in [Section B](#). The DOE is not including, nor do the Guidelines address, sites that are primarily utilized for one-to-one communication such as e-mail, Voice Over Internet Protocol (such as Skype or Facetime), or chat (such as Gchat or AIM).
5. What are some common types of social media?
  - **Blogs** - Short for 'web-logs', these are sites that can function as ongoing journals with multiple entries. Typically, entries are categorized with 'tags' for easy searching. Most blogs allow for reader comments. Examples: *Blogger, Wordpress, TypePad*.
  - **Micro-Blogs** - These blogs allow for shorter content posts, typically with a limited set of typed characters allowed. Micro-blogs can be used for status updates and to quickly communicate information to 'friends' or 'followers.' Examples: *Twitter, Tumblr*.
  - **Networking** - These sites allow people to connect with each other around common interests, pursuits and other categories. Examples: *Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Ning*.
  - **Photo/Video** - These sites allow people to share videos, images, slideshows, and other media. Often these sites allow viewers to comment and share posted content. Examples: *YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr*.



6. The Guidelines state that they are intended to supplement not supersede, existing DOE policies, Chancellor's Regulations and laws. What does this mean?
  - This means that all social media use should be in compliance with existing Chancellor's Regulations, DOE policies, and applicable laws. Therefore, before using a student's name or other personally identifiable information on social media, DOE employees should pay attention to any ATS red flags or other legal precautions linked to individual students.

Applicable Chancellor's Regulations include, but are not limited to, [A-412](#) – Security in the Schools, [A-420](#) – Corporal Punishment, [A-421](#) – Verbal Abuse, [A-750](#) – Child Abuse, [A-830](#) – Discrimination/Harassment, A-831- Peer Sexual Harassment, [A-832](#) – Student-to-Student Bias-Based Harassment, Intimidation and/or Bullying. Some applicable laws include, but are not limited to, Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ([COPPA](#)), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)), Intellectual Property Laws, Conflict of Interest Law, Section 3020-a of the Education Law.

### **Personal Social Media Sites**

7. Why is it a recommended practice to have separate professional and personal social media sites and e-mail addresses?
  - The reason for this distinction is to ensure separation between personal and professional spheres of online communication for DOE employees. In this context, this separation is intended to clarify that professional social media and personal social media are different. Professional social media is work-related and may involve employee-to-student communication. Personal social media is not work-related and, subject to [certain exceptions](#) noted in the Guidelines, does not involve employee-to-student communication.
8. May DOE employees using social media for personal use communicate with DOE colleagues?
  - These Guidelines do not address communication between employees on personal social media sites. DOE employees who use personal social media are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites.
9. What are recommended best practices for DOE employees with personal social media sites that are professional in nature and involve students but are unrelated to the DOE? For example, a DOE staff member who runs a book club in their free time.
  - Employees should follow the identified best practices as stated in the Guidelines. Employees should think about their privacy settings and limit their audience. Also remember, even though an employee is "off the clock," students will think of the employee as an authority figure. If an employee discovers that he or she is engaging with DOE students through social media in this type of activity, the DOE employee should notify the students' parents or guardians.

## Employees

10. What if DOE employees are already using social media for either professional or personal purposes?

- Professional social media use: DOE employees currently using social media for professional purposes should examine whether their use aligns with the Social Media Guidelines and these FAQs. Any use not consistent with these documents should be altered or amended within a reasonable period of time. We will answer any questions and address concerns during training sessions. If employees have linked a professional social media site to a personal e-mail address, they should transition the site to a professional e-mail address.
- Personal social media use: The Guidelines recommend that DOE employees who use social media for personal purposes should remove current DOE students, from those sites. There are [exceptions](#) noted in the Guidelines.
- Employees should periodically review the Social Media Guidelines and FAQ – which will be updated as needed – to ensure familiarity with the recommended practices. The DOE will notify employees when the Guidelines are updated. School administrators will ensure their teachers and other staff are informed.
- DOE shall provide regular training for employees who are using social media for professional purposes. To schedule a training session, either contact your network or send an email to [socialmediaPD@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:socialmediaPD@schools.nyc.gov).

11. When using social media, when and where should the DOE logo be used?

- The DOE logo should be used for official DOE business. Websites that officially represent a school may use the DOE logo. For example if a school has an “eChalk” site in addition to a DOE-provided school portal, it may display the logo. If networks and clusters create sites to serve their schools, they may use the DOE logo. DOE employees should not use the logo if they are creating a non-official communication. A blog, for example, where an employee discusses education, but where the employee does not officially represent the DOE, should not have the DOE logo. Please note that when a social media site, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, generates the DOE logo automatically, it does not pose a problem.

12. What other technology-related guidance exists to guide DOE employees participating in social media?

- The DOE’s [Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy \(IAUSP\)](#) was updated in 2012 and governs all electronic activity of users using and accessing the DOE’s network, including Department e-mail. Student use of DOE Internet systems, including social media, is also governed by the IAUSP, in addition to other applicable [DOE Chancellor Regulations](#), policies and guidelines, the Citywide Standards of Conduct and Uniform Disciplinary Measures (“[Discipline Code](#)”) and applicable law.

13. Who monitors professional social media sites and how frequently are they monitored?

- The Guidelines recommend that professional social media sites should be reviewed and monitored by supervisors, or their designees, on a regular basis.

The specific frequency and level of review required for each professional social media site will depend on the particular characteristics of the site. Sites that are interactive, for example, those that allow comments and posting, should be monitored more closely. Other factors that impact the frequency include the level of privacy assigned to the site, specifically, whether the site is a private network (for example, limited to a particular class) or a public network (open to anyone within the school or a larger group within the DOE community). Employees who decide to establish professional social media sites can engage in a voluntary review of their specific site on a regular basis.

14. What should DOE employees who want to develop professional social media for their classroom, school, or office do?

- Employees should review the Social Media Guidelines and FAQ periodically to ensure that they are familiar with their contents and are aware of any updates. Employees should research and familiarize themselves with the social media site they intend to utilize.
- If the proposed professional social media use involves students, employees are required to review the social media site's regulations and determine at what age children are allowed to use the site. For example, if a teacher planned to create a Facebook page for his fourth grade class, he would learn that Facebook requires users to be 13 or older to use their site and he would need to use something else.

Employees should understand the default privacy and viewing settings for the social media site. Where possible, we recommend that DOE employees establish groups or pages, rather than individual profiles, for educational purposes. DOE shall provide training when assigned to set up a social media site. To schedule a training session, either contact your network or send an email to [socialmediaPD@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:socialmediaPD@schools.nyc.gov).

### **Guidance for School Leaders**

15. How should principals address parents who express concerns about their children's use of social media?

- The DOE recognizes the powerful benefits for students, teachers, and school communities through the thoughtful use of social media. We expect many schools will utilize these 21st century tools. We also expect that schools will inform parents of the opportunities social media will provide with respect to college and career readiness. In some cases, schools may need to "market" these tools to parents who may be unfamiliar with the benefits of social media.

Schools should let families know that use of technology, and more specifically

technology-based tools, is an important piece of what it means to be work-ready in today's society.

Skills learned by using social media responsibly cover all five of the most frequently reported applied skills employers rated as "very important:" Professionalism/Work Ethic, Oral and Written Communications, Teamwork/Collaboration, Critical Thinking/Problem Solving and Ethics/Social Responsibility, as reported in a study entitled [Are they Really Ready to Work?](#), highlighting employers' perspectives on skills needed for the 21st century workforce.

16. What are effective methods that administrators can use to monitor information that is posted on professional social media sites?

- Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:
  - Have a comprehensive register of all professional social media sites being created and used by your staff,
  - Create one administrative account that can be used by administrators or network point person,
  - Ask to be made a member of all professional social media sites to view posted materials,
  - Depending on the site, set up e-mail notifications to alert you when any new material is posted,
  - Consider having more than one person monitor the sites set up for professional use, and prioritize which sites need to be monitored more frequently.
  - Highlight examples of model social media usage with your staff.

17. Do I need to be an administrator on every site?

- Principals do not need to be an administrator on every site, a designee – an AP, for example – may fill this role.

18. How should questions be addressed regarding how social media use relates to the First Amendment?

- DOE employees should be in touch with their supervisor with any questions related to social media and the First Amendment. As each scenario is fact specific, supervisors are directed to contact their Senior Field Counsel or the DOE's Office of Legal Services at 212-374-6888 or [asklegal@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:asklegal@schools.nyc.gov) to discuss any legal questions that arise.

19. Certain social media sites are blocked at my school. How can schools access blocked websites?

- If all principals in a building agree, a site can be unblocked for all schools in the building. Principals can request sites be blocked or unblocked by filling out [this online form](http://www.nycboe.net/applications/filtering/) (<http://www.nycboe.net/applications/filtering/>) on the DOE Intranet.

### Teachers and Other School-Based Staff

20. What happens if a DOE employee changes the privacy or access level of a social media site beyond what was initially approved during the school year?
- If the professional social media site undergoes a significant change (for example, a Facebook page being used to share questions about reading assignments will now be used to share ideas with a class at a school in another country), the DOE employee should inform his or her supervisor of the change. If the change is deemed significant, the supervisor should advise the DOE employee whether a revised registration form (of the school's choosing) is needed.
21. Should parents be notified regarding their child's social media use for school-related activities?
- Yes. DOE schools should notify parents on an annual basis if their child is invited to participate in professional social media activities. Parents who have questions or concerns about their child's use of social media for school purposes should contact the school for more information.
22. The Guidelines recommend that principals (or their designees) have administrator rights. Does this mean that teachers or school-based staff are required to hand over their professional social media username and password to principals and their designees?
- [It does not](#). Teachers and staff can give the principal or principal's designee administrator access to a site. The purpose is to provide supervisors with limited access, using their own log-in username and password. For example, if a teacher is out recovering from an extended illness, the principal or designee, or network point person can continue to monitor the professional social media site.
23. Are teachers mandated reporters when it comes to online activity?
- Yes. As [indicated in the Guidelines](#) teachers are mandated reporters.

### Relating to Students

24. Do these Guidelines apply to DOE students?
- As [indicated in the Guidelines](#), student-to-student communication via social media is not addressed.
25. How should DOE employees respond to "friend" requests by current DOE students on their personal social media sites and accounts?
- If DOE employees receive a request from a current DOE student to connect or communicate through a personal social media site, they should decline the request.

Here's a suggested response: "Please do not be offended, but I cannot accept your request. As a DOE employee, it's best for us to communicate using my professional social media account. The agency's Social Media Guidelines discourage interactions with current DOE students on personal social media sites. If you do want to connect, please contact me through the school (or class) page or group at \_\_\_\_ [insert link to your page]."

26. What should DOE supervisors and their designees, who are responsible for monitoring professional social media, do when they discover or receive a report of inappropriate activity?

- A DOE supervisor who discovers or receives a report of inappropriate or questionable content posted on a professional social media site should contact the appropriate authorities for assistance in accordance with existing DOE reporting requirements.

Depending on the circumstances, the appropriate authorities may include, but are not limited to: the network or cluster leader, borough safety directors, the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigations, the Office of Special Investigations, the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Office of the General Counsel, the senior field counsel, the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and the New York City Police Department. If other members of a school community find inappropriate material on a professional social media site, they are encouraged to report it to a DOE supervisor and the person who administers the social media site.

27. How can DOE employees and supervisors determine what constitutes confidential information or personally identifiable student information that should not be posted or disclosed? What about graded work?

- Posting certain graded material may be in violation of [FERPA](#). If DOE employees and supervisors have any questions about what constitutes confidential information or personally identifiable student information, they should contact their Senior Field Counsel or the DOE's Office of Legal Services at 212-374-6888 or [asklegal@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:asklegal@schools.nyc.gov).

28. Are teachers or other school-based staff personally liable for student posts on professional social media sites?

- No. For example, if a teacher views an inappropriate post, the teacher is required to follow existing DOE regulations regarding reporting obligations. The DOE also recommends that teachers act as moderators for professional social media sites – and that students should not be able to post on professional social media sites without teacher approval.

29. Can the Guidelines be used for disciplinary purpose?

- No, these are guidelines and no one will be disciplined for failure to follow the guidelines.