



Professional Communication and the PTPC

A great deal of the Code for Ethics for Educators is related to professional **communication** with students, the public and with colleagues. **Know your obligations** to uphold the [Code of Ethics of Educators](#).

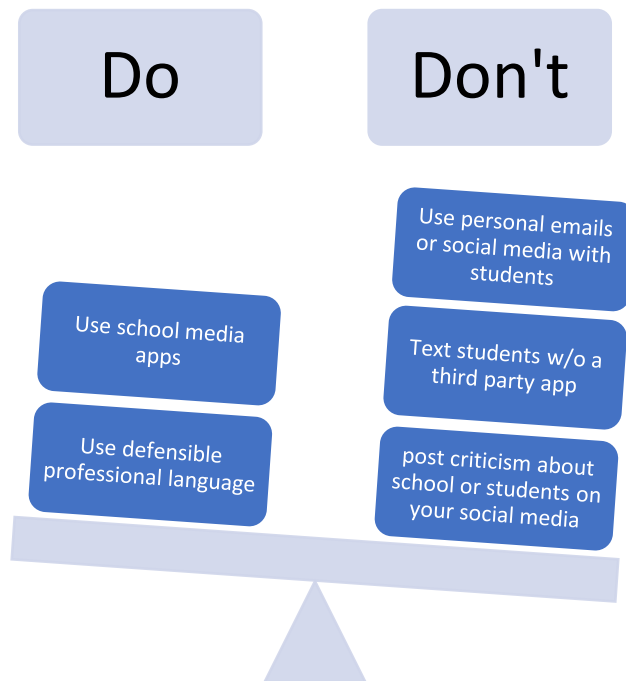
Communication whether in person or via any communications device is expected to be *professional, responsible, reasonable, and appropriate*.

It's important to consider how one might have to defend one's communication as educationally sound, or for student or staff health or safety.

Locate, review, and become familiar with School Board Policy and communication expectations.

Take seriously the Internet User Agreement with the District. Post it prominently and review it regularly, include all internet users.

Appropriate Electronic Communication



Accessing inappropriate websites using school district resources (computer, device or network) is a NO!

Consider time of day when you are communicating with students. **Set boundaries** that allow you to meet your contractual obligations, and that serve students responsibly. Use your signature line to communicate when you're available and keep appropriate school hours.

Know your **dual relationships**, especially if you have other roles in which you interact with students, parents, and community. Public venues are not appropriate places to have parent/teacher conferences. Be sure to avoid messy conflicts that may disrupt your instruction, distract from your teaching, or harm the public's trust in your credibility.

Cybertraps by Fredrick Lane (forensic legal expert, author, and podcaster)

I'm invariably asked about the First Amendment. Doesn't it protect what teachers say online? "Great question," I reply, "but in general, no." warns Cybertraps author Frederick Lane

The Supreme Court has placed serious restrictions on what school employees can say without job repercussions.

If your social media post causes disruption in the classroom or the broader school community or lessens your effectiveness as an educator, then your district can take disciplinary action against you. (Lane)

Social Media

Use of social media is the source of many complaints to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission. It continues to be used as evidence of inappropriate communications with students and the public, which have led to sanctions ranging from warnings and reprimands to suspensions.

Recent investigations that led to sanctions against educators' teaching certificates include Facebook posts of student photos or names (FERPA violations) as well as disparaging colleagues. Other investigations include inappropriate interactions by educators to students using Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. WhatsApp usage caused inadvertent syncing of inappropriate data with school devices has also been the subject of a complaint.

Remember to **pause and think before you post**, check your privacy settings, make sure what you post is professionally defensible and remember every post is potentially permanent!

Maintaining professional boundaries in all forms of communication, technology-related or not, is vital to maintaining the public trust and appropriate professional relationships with students, parents, and colleagues.
