

Being Smart About Technology

Students today are very tech-savvy. They have the ability to disseminate your postings to their friends and your employer. As a new teacher, you must carefully monitor your on-line presence and learn to use proper boundaries when integrating technology into the classroom and your personal life.

School computers and e-mail

The school board is the owner of all technology equipment purchased with public funds, donated to the system or received through grants.

Lists of Internet sites visited on a computer can be harvested by the school system.

SMTP (simple mail transport protocol) mail is downloaded on the system's server and can be easily monitored.

Other personal e-mail accounts — even home e-mail — read over the Internet at school can be monitored by the school system. This mail is stored on the computer and can be retrieved by the system or law enforcement.

Social networking sites can be very detrimental to your career as a teacher. Practice caution and NEVER allow students to view personal blogs or pages.

E-mail sent over a school system computer is subject to reading, copying or printing by the employer.

E-mail messages can be used against an employee in court or during a board hearing.

In short, you should be very cautious if using your school computer for personal Internet use. This should not be done during time when you should be working, including your planning time. The best policy is to check personal e-mail and conduct personal on-line business from your own computer outside the school day.

Social networking

Social networking sites are designed to create relationships and friendships. Many students and young adults are very interested in these types of interactions. MySpace, Facebook, Xanga, Second Life and other sites are extremely popular with teens.

Some employers "Google" potential applicants. Your online blogs or Web sites may be viewed. There have been many examples of applicants being turned down for jobs due to inappropriate online material.

Teachers have lost their jobs due to material posted online. Examples that have caused trouble for teachers include posting candid photos of students, sexually explicit writing, inappropriate photos and references to alcohol and drugs.

Social networking sites can be very detrimental to your career as a teacher. Practice caution and NEVER allow students to view personal blogs or pages. Do NOT write about events at school or students on your blogs or Web sites. Courts have ruled that school employees can be disciplined for off-duty conduct if the school district can show that the conduct had an adverse impact on the school or the teacher's ability to teach.

Cell phone and e-mail communication

Refrain from communicating with students via cell phone or text messaging. Although many see this as a rapid way to communicate with groups of students, text messaging can be easily misconstrued. You should never text message your students and you should refrain from giving out your cell phone number.

E-mail communication with students should be limited to school work. A teacher should never contact students in any way outside of school for personal communication purposes.

If conversations and e-mails are strictly about school work, then the communication is probably appropriate. Practice caution in any outside communication with students.

