



Electronic Communications & Social Media Recommendations Exeter High School

Expectations for Communicating Electronically with Students

Exeter High School recognizes that today's students are deeply engaged in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family, and their larger social networks. As educators, we too have turned to email, websites, blogs, text messaging, and use of social media websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in many circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students that we set for ourselves here at Exeter High School.

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

1. Protecting the students, staff, Exeter High School and the SAU 16 District;
2. Raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students; and
3. Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students.

Does the communication pass the TAP Test?

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

1. **The communication is transparent** ~ All electronic communication between staff and students should be transparent. As a public high school, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility, and accountability with regard to all communications.
2. **The communication is accessible** ~ All electronic communication between staff and students should be considered a matter of record, part of the high school and district archives, and/or may be accessible by others.
3. **The communication is professional** ~ All electronic communication from staff to student should be written as a professional representing Exeter High School and the SAU 16 District. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of an Exeter High School professional. Please always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally business-like in manner.

If your communication meets all three of the criteria above, it is very likely that the methods of communicating with students that you are choosing are very appropriate; moreover, these methods of communication are encouraged.

Acceptable Communication Methods

PowerSchool: With the implementation of this student information system, teachers will be able to communicate directly with students and parents regarding information related to real-time grades, attendance, comments, assignments, and much more directly from their grade books.

SAU 16 District Email: Use of district email is always a very appropriate means to communicate directly with students and parents. District email provides the staff member with a record of the communication. For this reason, only the district-provided email system (your @sau16.org address) should be used. Please refer to the Exeter High School Email Standards (link) for best practice guidelines in its use. *Note: Staff members experiencing difficulty receiving emails from students and parents via the SAU 16 District email account should first check their daily Spam Summary to see if the emails have been inadvertently filtered. Should staff need further assistance, contact the IT Department/Richard Pratt.*

School Websites and Moodle: The use of these district-provided tools is strongly encouraged. Their accessibility is ubiquitous and their content is highly transparent. With Moodle, teachers can provide some of the same types of communication that commercial social media websites provide while also providing access to your curriculum beyond your classroom. Moodle allows for effective online learning by supporting online discussions, secure chat rooms, online delivery of assessments, and the sharing of documents, images, and other media, all in a secure password protected environment housed entirely on district equipment. All of the content is backed up and directly accessible. Unlike Facebook, Moodle meets all three TAP criteria detailed earlier in this document.

Less Acceptable Communication Methods

Text Messaging: Nearly every student has a cell phone today and use of text messaging is rising sharply. This form of communication is typically between individuals and highly personal. Since text messaging 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, staff members should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can easily be misinterpreted by a parent.** If a teacher/coach/advisor plans to use texting for immediate and urgent contact with students/team members, they must be transparent about such use. She/he must make parents aware at the beginning of the school year or season that she/he may use texting.

Unacceptable Communication Methods

Non-District Email Accounts: Exeter High School employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate with students pertaining to school matters. Coaches not employed by the SAU 16 District during the school day must also follow this expectation.

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 staff members to engage in with students.

Using Facebook

How about setting up a Facebook Fan Page for my student groups?

A Facebook Fan Page, not a Facebook Group, can be appropriate as a supplemental method of communicating electronically with student groups if it is set up correctly. Unlike Facebook groups, fan pages are visible to unregistered students and parents and thus indexed and easier to find. Be sure to follow the same district guidelines for publishing content to any website, in that photos of students are not posted in conjunction with their names or other personally identifiable information. Use your “@sau16.org” email address to register as contact for the page so that any feedback or comments on the page are sent to the district, not to any personal email addresses.

If you decide to establish a fan page, be sure to notify the parents of your students that you’ll be using this site to communicate information for your group in addition to your other methods (websites, email, formal letters, etc.) and that these pages may contain commercial advertising that is not endorsed by the SAU 16 District. Since not every student has a Facebook page or even access to Facebook, you must consider this when posting to your page. Exeter High School cannot require students to have Facebook accounts, as this should be a family decision. Therefore, you must make any information posted on Facebook accessible to non-Facebook users by alternative means.

Guidelines for Using Facebook with Students

Important reminders for employees who use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media sites for personal purposes

Staff members who are presently using Facebook to communicate with friends, family, and their personal networks should ensure that their privacy settings are set to “only friends.” If the “friends of friends” or “networks and friends” settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. **Staff members should never “friend” students who are currently enrolled at Exeter High School or in the SAU 16 District, 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.

Any content that staff members 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 an Exeter High School professional. A good question that staff members 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.

Staff members should contact the building principal or director of technology with any questions.

Guidelines for Using Facebook and Twitter with Students

For many of today's teens, having a Facebook or Twitter account equates to having a mobile phone. It is their primary vehicle for communicating with friends, family, and a much larger learning and social network. Our high school students check their Facebook and Twitter news feeds before they have breakfast, before they go to bed, and likely dozens of times throughout the day.

What are the advantages of using Facebook or Twitter with students?

- Important information is pushed out to your students in a medium they prefer and are comfortable using. They do not have to check a website to see if anything has been updated. The information comes to them directly as soon as you publish it.
- The high quality content your students and parents receive is authentic, fresh, and from an official representative of Exeter High School.
- Students can interact with your information. A student or parent who has a question or needs further clarification about the information you posted can post a comment.
- The information reaches your students and parents quickly. Students and parents who have mobile devices that they carry with them, such as a cell phone or tablet PC, can receive your posts within minutes.
- By using Facebook and Twitter with your students, you are preparing them for the types of communication practices commonly found in higher education and the workplace. Social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter allow for members of an organization to share and interact with information, communicate in real time, provide links to external web resources, and reach an audience in a timely, responsible, and authentic fashion.
- Your fan page or tweets are connected directly to you, the administrator, with rights that could never be transferred.

Guidelines for teachers, coaches, and club advisors when setting up and administering their official Facebook fan page or Twitter account

- Communicate your goals for using social media. Prior to setting up your Facebook fan page or Twitter account, discuss your goals with your immediate supervisor and encourage her/him to assist you in monitoring your feeds and providing regular feedback.
- Make your use of social media official. Use our Exeter High School logo and publish appropriate titles that clearly identify your posts as the official source of news and information for your class, team, or club. Always use your school email address and school contact information when setting up your public profile. You should never provide personal information in your posts and never use your personal email account for contact purposes.

- Always remember that your use of this form of electronic communication constitutes a public record, must be transparent to all stakeholders, and always contain content reflective of an Exeter High School professional. Inappropriate comments, language, or links on a page that you are responsible for could quickly bring your professionalism into question.
- Notify all of the parents of your students that you are using Facebook or Twitter to share information, and encourage parents to participate as well. Remember to always remain transparent about your use of electronic communications.
- Should your Facebook fan page allow others to post comments? This depends on your goals for the page. If your goal is to simply push out relevant and current information to your stakeholders, then prohibiting new posts to your wall is encouraged. This option keeps your page uncluttered and emphasizes only your information. If your goals are to provide an environment that promotes an exchange of information and encourages students and parents to ask questions, then allowing posts may be appropriate. This option will require you to monitor your page more frequently as removing comments, links, or images that are not relevant or inappropriate may be necessary.
- The Facebook fan page should never be used as a medium for personal conversations. If a student or parent posts a comment that you feel requires a more personal response, use your district email to communicate with them, or give them a phone call and speak to them directly.
- Never associate names or other personal information with a photo of district students on your Facebook fan page.
- Facebook fan pages or Twitter accounts should not be the only means by which you communicate with students. Rather, it should supplement your other communication sources (class or team websites, Moodle, Google Apps, email, letters home, etc.). Not every student may have a Facebook or Twitter account and we should always respect family decisions in this regard.
- Exeter High School employees should never “friend” any student currently attending EHS when using Facebook. When you set up a Facebook fan page, your students become friends to your class, club, or team, not you as an individual.

