Social Media - Frequently Asked Questions

Can schools have their own social media sites?
**YES.** Each school should maintain their own school Facebook and Twitter accounts to keep parents and students updated of important events and news from their school. At a minimum, these accounts will be linked to your Connect 5 account so that your call-outs reach a wider audience. The District will provide training on utilization of these tools including basic navigation, proper settings to ensure success, branding/marketing your school, and effective online communication.

Can school organizations, clubs, or teams have their own Social Media sites?
**With Principal approval, YES.** The District does allow schools or school sponsored groups, clubs, organizations, or athletic teams to have social media sites/accounts providing they have received Principal approval. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. **HOWEVER,** groups of this nature must go through the approval process and adhere to District best practices to ensure their continued operation.

Note: as the District is required to produce public records upon request, you may be required to produce the contents of your page or account for such requests.

On social media sites, the District does **not** have control over the public records and/or student records potentially being created, and therefore cannot guarantee compliance with state laws which mandate:
- How public records or student records are maintained
- Student confidentiality
- Record retention
- Providing access to public records

What if an administrator, teacher, or school club/team sponsor wants to send out “one way” communications regarding school business or activities to students or parents via social media, is this okay?

**With Principal approval, YES.** Social media is an excellent tool to use to connect your school to some of its greatest stakeholders, the parents and community. One of the most powerful things you can do to promote your school to is be the one dictating what story is told by those who are familiar with the school. These accounts will be linked to the call out system for administrators and can also be useful for other groups.

The issue again is the creation of public records, and depending on the content, the potential to create student records. When utilizing social media, the District has no way of ensuring compliance with public records laws and laws regarding student records, as well as the confidentiality of those records. Therefore, any communications to students, parents, or community members on behalf of the school or its designee, must be made utilizing District approved communication tools.

What if a club or team wants to create a Facebook page? Is this okay?
If the club is not sponsored by the school, this may be allowable. An example could be a school booster club or PTA. These are direct support organizations (see School Board Rule 9215), which are not considered part of the school system. However, the District recommends that direct support organizations make the school’s principal aware of their intention to create a social media site. If the principal allows the school’s name, logo, and mascot to be used on the social media site, it is up to the school’s principal to monitor the site to ensure the school’s name, logo and/or mascot are being used appropriately and do not portray the school in a disparaging or negative way.

Can a teacher, administrator or school staff member communicate with students via their private social media sites?

A District employee should not communicate, follow, or friend a student or parent in his/her capacity as a District employee via a personal communication tool, including social media sites or personal email (See School Board Rule 3213, sections E, J, and K). This type of communication could result in the creation of public and/or student records that must be maintained according to state laws. If two-way communication is needed, please utilize your school-created e-mail account.

Can employees have personal social media accounts?

The District cannot restrict employees from having personal social media sites that are not related to any School District business or activity. However, the District does advise employees to exercise caution. Any communication with students or parents, regardless of whether the content relates to school business or is conducted via a personal, non-district owned communication tool, must not violate any School Board Rules/Policies, state statutes, or the Principals of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida.

Resources:
School Board Rule 3210 Standards of Ethical Conduct of Instructional Staff and School Administrators: http://www.neola.com/martin-FL/

School Board Rules 3213 and 4213 Student Supervision and Welfare: http://www.neola.com/martin-FL/

School Board Rule 9215 Direct Support Organizations: http://www.neola.com/martin-FL/