

**Candidate Social Media Guidelines
College of Education
University of South Florida**

It is understood that candidates might use social media and networking sites, message boards and other forums, personal websites, and blogs. However, use of social media presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. It is important to use these sites with caution to avoid damage to your reputation, the school district to which you are assigned, and/or the reputation of the College of Education and the University of South Florida. Also, the University's Student Code of Conduct can sometimes extend to online activity and both civil and criminal laws can apply to online activity. Responsibility for your social media postings falls on you. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your social media use, we have established some guidelines for appropriate use of social media. Please review the University's Student Code of Conduct, the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy, and the Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Harassment Policy (located at <http://regulationspolicies.usf.edu/regulations-and-policies/regulations-policies-procedures.asp>) and ensure that postings are consistent with these policies, as well as College of Education guidelines and procedures. Postings that violate these may subject you to adverse academic action.

Candidates should be aware that posting certain information on social media sites is illegal. For example, there are legal restrictions on posting information related to students' educational records and on posting defamatory statements about someone. Violation of existing statutes and administrative regulations may expose the offender to liability and may subject a candidate to adverse academic action.

Social media postings that: (i) violate academic program rules, regulations, or policies regarding professional conduct standards for teachers; (ii) violate students' privacy rights; (iii) cause or are reasonably foreseeable to cause substantial disruption to school operations; (iv) are defamatory; (iv) display vulgar, obscene, lewd or sexually explicit language; (v) present photographs that may reasonably be interpreted as condoning irresponsible use of alcohol, substance abuse, or sexual promiscuity, or showing the candidate violating a criminal law may result in adverse academic action.

Once you post something on the Internet, that post is no longer private. . Candidates are encouraged to carefully review and set privacy settings so that only trustworthy "friends" have access to the websites and to be extremely careful as to what is posted. However, candidates need to understand that even though one believes information posted is "private" it often

becomes public without one's consent. Also, anonymous posts can be tracked back to the candidate and there is no such thing as a private website or post. And remember, it is not just what you post, but what others might post on your site. Be certain that teachers and teacher candidates are held to a much higher moral standard in the community than the general public and persons in many other professions. Also, please be aware that potential future employers often review social network sites when considering candidates for employment.

When making posts to social media and other forms of communication always be honest about your identity and never pretend to be someone else. You should make every effort to present yourself in a mature, responsible and professional manner. Discourse should be civil and respectful. Candidates are discouraged from including students as "friends" or "followers" (or any other similar terms that sites might use) at the school at which he/she is assigned or has been assigned. This not only includes students to whom you are assigned, but anyone at the school. In some cases the school district will forbid it, and going against their policy will be grounds for dismissal from the school, the district, and/or the College of Education at the University of South Florida. If the school allows it, the proper procedures that the school has implemented must be followed which might mean written permission slips from parents or legal guardians.

Keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve complaints by speaking directly with your fellow students, faculty or administrators than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, defamatory, obscene, physically threatening, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation or any other status protected by law or University regulations.

Again, a candidate should never make posts that violate school districts' policy. Further, never disclose confidential information obtained during the course of the school placement or after the placement has been concluded about students, their families, or the school district. Doing so could lead to disciplinary action by the district, including removal from the placement in the district. It is possible that an improper posting could lead to adverse academic action from the College of Education at the University of South Florida.

Finally, just because posts are deleted, archival systems save deleted information and it has the potential to resurface later. Any digital exposure can "live" beyond its removal from the original website where it was posted and continue circulating in other venues. Therefore, think carefully before you post any information on a website. Always be modest, respectful and professional in your actions.

My signature indicates I have read this document and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the contents.

Name (print) _____ UID _____ Major _____

Signature _____

Date _____