

# Social Networking “Dos” and “Do Nots” for Professional Educators



## DO

- Remember always that there really is no such thing as “online privacy.” When it comes to the Internet, there are only varying degrees of “public.”
- Remember that your online presence is like your “brand”: When you put yourself online, you are “advertising” the kind of person you are.
- For the greatest possible security, make sure only your friends can view your search listing and profile. Review your “privacy settings” and chose the “Only Friends” options.
- If possible, prevent your students from knowing you’re on Facebook at all by removing yourself from Google search listings. Your Facebook profile will show up in Google search results unless you go to “Privacy” and alter the “Search Result Content” to limit the information people can see about you.
- Be vigilant about what others post about you. Review all photos of yourself online and check often for new ones. Remove “tags” in photos of yourself that you don’t want students or parents to see—or, better yet, simply ask the person who posted the picture to take it down.
- Before YOU post something, ask yourself, “Would I want my [principal/students/parents/student teaching supervisor] to see this?”
- Be careful about linking your Facebook with other social networking sites. If you update your status on a linked Twitter account, it will publish to Facebook where others might see it.
- Monitor what is being published about you. If

KEA leaders and staff believe in the power of social networking. There are several KEA and KEA-related Facebook pages. But social networking has its dark and dangerous aspects as well.

KEA UniServ staff report that more and more members are having problems with school and school district personnel over things they have posted online—or over things others have posted about them.

KEA UniServ Director Susan Herron said none of the members in her service area have gotten into trouble yet over Facebook or MySpace. “I’ve had more issues with ‘texting’ and forwarding stupid emails, but I recommend to my members that they not post pictures of themselves drinking or even looking like they’re drinking.” Herron added, “As a rule, I advise my members to hide their personal information and not to ‘friend’ students.”

A KEA UD in another part of the state saw a well-liked new teacher who had gotten good evaluations lose her job because a school administrator found a picture of her online in which she was holding a drink. Another

you’re concerned that old friends or contacts could include you in online postings without your knowledge, try setting up a Google alert with your name, just to be safe. A Google alert will send you an email anytime you are published. Visit: <http://www.google.com/alerts> and enter your name to be searched, how often you want to receive the reports and your email address.

- Sort your friends by lists. If you’re friends with your fellow educators and principals, you may want to add them to a school list with restricted viewing abilities. Once you’ve created your list, go to “Settings,” and navigate to the Profile section. From there, you can select “Edit Custom Settings,” which will open a field for “Except These People.”
- Always use common sense when you’re using social media.

told *KEA News* about a principal in his service area who regularly monitors the Facebook and MySpace pages of her teachers—and found one who had been posting “crude and unprofessional photos.”

All the KEA UDs who spoke to *KEA News* for this feature said professionalism is the most important consideration for any school employee with a presence on any social networking sites. It’s up to you to carefully manage your presence on the Web so that it does not derail your career.

Rosalind Bryant, a UD who works out of KEA’s Lexington office, said she has not yet handled any cases involving social networking but, “I think the main concerns are around being professional with information and pictures.” Bryant said, “Just because you do it on your personal time, does not mean you can post it on the Internet!”

In the interest of helping school employees and pre-service teachers protect their careers, KEA has compiled this list of “Social Networking Dos and Do Nots.”

## DO NOT

- Do not accept “friend requests” from current or potential students or their family members.
- Do not accept a “friend request” from anyone whom you do not know personally. Just like email, information and photos from sites like Facebook are not fully protected.
- Do not join groups that may be considered unprofessional or inappropriate, and remove yourself from any such group of which you may already be a member.
- Do not post vulgar or obscene language, materials, photos or links that may be considered inappropriate or unprofessional. If you don’t want to see it on the front page of the local newspaper, don’t post it.
- Do not EVER post negative information or comments about—or unflattering images of—your students, co-workers or school administrators.

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