

Early Light Academy
Policy: Website and Social Networking Policy
Adopted: March 28, 2011



Purpose

Early Light Academy (ELA, or the "School") realizes that education in the 21st century requires adaptation to changing methods of communication. ELA recognizes both the educational value and the dangers of the internet and social networking sites. When teachers, students and parents engage, collaborate, learn, and share in these digital environments, they can be a valuable tool. To ensure that these tools are used appropriately, ELA has developed the following guidelines for instructional employees, students and the School community when creating school-related web pages and for employees who choose to participate in social media.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, "web page" means a social networking site, personal web site, wiki, blog or other Internet location that can be edited by an individual with the correct username and password and/or can be viewed by the general public.

Participation and Free Speech

Whether an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. The principle of free speech generally protects individuals who participate in online social media, but the laws and courts have also ruled that schools can discipline teachers if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. ELA social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social media if they wish, but with an emphasis on creating an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability. Participants must be aware that information produced by ELA teachers, parent organizations and/or students is a reflection on the entire School and can directly affect the privacy and even safety of individual students and educators. To protect school employees, students, parents, and resources, ELA requires all school employees, parent organizations and students who create or modify school-related web pages to abide by the provisions of this policy. In addition, employees who choose to participate in other outside social media are also to abide by the provisions of this policy.

Guidelines for School-related Web Pages

Web pages may only be accessed at ELA or using School resources for instructional purposes directly related to the educator's curriculum.

Prior to creating or using a web page for instructional purposes, an educator must obtain written consent from the School Director. The consent must include the purpose

of the access, the names of students permitted to access the web page, and the anticipated duration of the instructional activity. The Director may withdraw consent at any time.

An instructional-use web page shall comply with all School policies, including the student Code of Conduct. Profane, obscene, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate comments are not permitted.

Educator web page postings may not violate any state or federal laws. Accordingly, educators must comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and may not post student photos or personally identifiable information without prior written parental consent.

Educators are responsible for ensuring that student posts that violate laws or School policies are removed immediately and that students are referred to the Director for appropriate disciplinary action. Educators are responsible for all content on the educator's web page, including posts by students.

ELA's Parent Organization web pages must obtain written consent from the School Director. The consent must include the purpose of the access, the names of students permitted to access the web page, and the anticipated duration of the instructional activity. The Director may withdraw consent at any time.

Web pages created by ELA's Parent Organization are held to the same rules and guidelines as ELA's Educators in that the web page shall comply with all School policies, including the student Code of Conduct. Profane, obscene, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate comments are not permitted.

For privacy and safety reasons, web pages that are accessible to the public are not permitted to include photos of students or students' first and last names.

Access to instructional and web pages must be limited to those students whose parent or legal guardian has given written permission for the student to participate on and use the web page. School administrators must be granted access to the web page and shall monitor the site for compliance with this policy.

Educators must include a disclaimer on their web page noting that the content, views, or opinions expressed on the web page do not represent the School and that the educator is solely responsible for any opinions, views, or content on the web page.

Guidelines for Employee Use of Online Social Media

School employees who maintain a personal web page shall not invite or encourage students to access their personal web page or solicit students to connect as friends or connections in online social networks.

School employees should generally not access personal web pages using school resources or during work time.


School employees may face disciplinary action for posts on their personal web pages that violate School policies or state rules regarding professional conduct and create a disruption in the school or interfere with the employee's ability to serve effectively at the School.

School employees may not use School logos, mascots, symbols, or trademarks on their personal web pages.

School employees who use School resources to create, maintain, or post to personal web pages or the pages of others have no expectation of privacy, and their activities may be subject to review by administrators.

School employees who violate this policy will be subject to discipline.

Signature:


Mary Cannon, Board Vice-Chair

3/29/11
Date