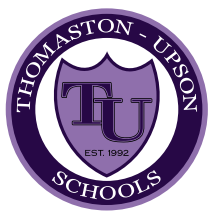# Thomaston-Upson Social Media Use Guidelines

The Thomaston-Upson County School System uses social media as one of many communication tools. Our mission with social media is to share meaningful content regarding educational and extra-curricular goals, activities, and accomplishments with parents, students, staff, and the greater community.

Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of user-generated content, such as, information, ideas, interests, photos, videos, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social networks include, but are not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.

The purpose of these guidelines is
- to protect the credibility and reputation of our school system, students, and employees
- to provide direction for employees utilizing social media, professionally and/or personally
- to ensure student rights are protected under the Federal Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

Your Personal Responsibility:
We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies, including, but not limited to, TU BOE policies and regulations, relevant local, state, and federal laws - copyright, fair use, Family Education Right to Privacy Act, and criminal statutes. All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in this community. We ask that you carefully consider the public forum you are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and the Thomaston-Upson County School System.

Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Seek to build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Avoid insulting others, including students, staff, parents, our extended school community, or other school districts. Do not use obscenities or language that reflects hate or bias towards others, due to, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, and ability. Avoid posting, sharing, commenting, or otherwise engaging in rumors or unsupported information.

Represent the District and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. You are responsible for what you post. Communications that would be considered inappropriate or actionable if they occurred inside or outside the classroom do not become acceptable because they are made online. One's online behavior, whether utilizing a professional or a personal online presence, should reflect professional and personal standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that one uses when communicating face-to-face. Please note that once posted, you cannot take it back.

1. **SOCIAL MEDIA - PROFESSIONAL USE** – For employees administering a TU social media site for a school, club, group, etc.

- The site/page must be approved by the school principal.
- The site/page must be registered with the TU Public Relations Office. (See Appendix 1)
- The site/page must have at least 2 site administrators.
- The site/page must post Thomaston-Upson School System Social Media Rules of Engagement. (See Appendix 2)
- Students and/or parents MAY NOT have administrative rights to a TU social media page. Administrators of TU social sites must be employees of the Thomaston-Upson School System.
- The site administrators must ensure that they have set appropriate security settings and that visitors to the page may comment on TU posts but may NOT post content on the page. (This does not apply to closed, private groups that have been approved for educational purposes or to spread news and information about extracurriculars, etc.)
- Employees must adhere to the TU Internet Appropriate Use policy, TU BOE policies & procedures, and The Code of Ethics for GA educators.
- Do not post photos of students whose parents have opted not to give permission for their students to be pictured on the Internet.
- Be mindful of providing too much identifying information on social sites. For example: Avoid posting photos of students wearing name tags that identify their first and last name and teacher name or first and last name and bus number.
- Do not tag students, parents, or staff in photos on an official school/district page. Set page security where others may not tag your official page in their posts.
- Adhere to all copyright and fair use guidelines.
- Use proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation, and spell check, spell check, spell check. We are educators!

- If you use education acronyms in a post, please define the acronyms upon first use.
- Do not get involved in a heated debate with a commenter. Often it is best not to comment when someone is upset about something. Deliver a private message to the commenter with contact information for the school principal, coach, etc. Contact the TU Director of Public Relations for guidance regarding questionable comments.
- Respect the diversity of a public school district in your words and in your photos/videos.
- Be honest, accurate, and supportive of your district, school, team, club, etc.
- Social media content sometimes generates press and media attention or legal questions. Page administrators should refer these inquiries to authorized district spokespersons.
- Do not delete a follower's comment on an official district, school, group, club, etc. page just because you disagree with the commenter's point. Engagement with stakeholders is a key component of social media. You may delete comments that contain profanity, hate or bias, and disparaging comments using specific student and/or employee names. Refer to other items in the TU Social Media Rules of Engagement. (Appendix 2)
- If unsure about how to respond to ANYTHING, please contact the TU PR Dept. at 706-647-9621 before taking any action.

2. **SOCIAL MEDIA - PERSONAL USE** – For employees with personal social media sites

- Although the lines between public and private, personal and professional, can become blurred in the digital world, while employed by the TU System, you are responsible for what you and others post on your personal social sites.
- Material that TU employees post on social networks that is publicly available to those within the school community should reflect the professional image applicable to the employee's position. Posts/comments may not impair the employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students, parents, guardians, and colleagues. It may not impair the employee's ability to serve as a role model for students.
- Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor the district in general. Negative comments about others could be perceived as cyber-bullying and could result in disciplinary action.
- Parent permission to post student photos does not extend to teacher/staff personal social media sites. If you post student photos on your personal social media sites, you may be violating a student's privacy rights. Consider creating a private, professional page for your class to share information and photos with families.
- Engaging in personal social-networking friendships with students on social media sites is highly discouraged.
- Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful way. Be respectful of others' opinions in your personal posts, comments, and replies.
- There can be no realistic expectation of privacy on the World Wide Web, even if marked "private." For example, "friends" may copy and paste your information and send it to others.
- Try to always use proper grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spell check, spell check, spell check. We are educators!
- Employees who post inappropriate personal information must understand that if students, parents, other employees, or community members obtain access to such information and report this to the district, their report will be investigated by school and district officials. This includes, but is not limited to, provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, messages of hate or bias, and abuse of alcohol or drugs.
- Employees are not to publish, post, or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with the Human Resources Department and/or their school principal.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to authorized district spokespersons.
- Any online content must be in accordance with appropriate policies, guidelines, and relevant laws. Consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. A violation of these policies, guidelines and/or relevant laws could be regarded as a form of professional misconduct and may result in disciplinary action

Referenced Sites and Resources
- *Social Media Guidelines for Schools -AndyMann, Calhoun ISD http://www.scribd.com/doc/28430149/Social-Media-Guidelines-for-Schools*
- *Social Media Guidelines for District Employees – Pike County School System https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/ePolicy/policy.aspx?PC=IFBGC-R(1)&Sch=4130&S=4130&C=I&RevNo=1.23&T=A&Z=R&St=ADOPTED&PG=6&SN=true*
- *Social Media Guidelines for Faculty & Staff – Houston County BOE http://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/HoustonCS/HoustonCS/Sites/DocumentsCategories/Documents/social%20media%20guidelines%202013.pdf*
- *Social Media Guidelines for Schools Wiki, http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com/*
- *Social Media Suggestions: http://blogs.stvrain.k12.co.us/helpdesk/2010/03/29/social-media-suggestions/*
- *Social Media Guidelines for Educators (Facebook group): http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=80354045978*
- *http://thinkingmachine.pbworks.com/Think-Social-Media-Guidelines*
- *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media*

Appendix 1

TU Social Media Account Registration Form

The Thomaston-Upson School System encourages the appropriate use of social media for the district, schools, sports, programs, and extracurricular groups. Social media sites representing the Thomaston-Upson School System and any of its schools, educational programs, athletic programs, and extracurricular programs must be approved by the school principal and this registration form must be sent to the TU Department of Public Relations where it will remain on file. Any changes to the page administrators and/or password must be sent immediately to the TU Department of Public Relations. All TU social media page administrators must complete the registration form and must follow the TU Social Media Guidelines for professional use.

Please submit a separate form for each social media account/page.

Account Type: _____ (Include the name of the school, club, sport, etc.)

_____ Facebook Page   _____ Twitter   _____ Instagram   _____YouTube

Social Media Name/Page Name: _____

Page url: _____

Emails Associated with the Social Media Account: _____

Password Associated with Account: _____

Page Administrators' Names and signatures:

Name (print)_____Signature_____

Name (print)_____Signature_____

You must have 2 page administrators. These must be school district employees. Students and parents may not be administrators of TU social media pages. (Booster Club sites are not official TU social media pages and may be administered by parents and/or community members.)

_____

To be completed by the school principal:
I give permission to the above listed employees to administer this social media account.

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Send this completed form to Central Office c/o TU Public Relations Department

Appendix 2

Thomaston-Upson School System Social Media Rules of Engagement

The Thomaston-Upson School System uses social media as a communication tool to share important educational and extracurricular information with our stakeholders and to engage in an open and respectful dialogue. To help us accomplish this goal, please follow our social media rules of engagement when making comments on our district and/or school pages. Social media pages not intended to circumvent regular communication channels for sharing personnel and student issues and concerns. Please contact the school or the district office with matters involving personnel and/or students.

The Thomaston-Upson School System reserves the right to delete comments that:

1. Contain abusive, discriminatory or inappropriate language or statements. This includes remarks that contain obscenities and hate or bias towards others. We are a public school district, and all comments should be appropriate for even the youngest of social media users.
2. Identify students and/or staff in a defamatory, abusive, or negative manner.
3. Violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
4. Promote a service or product or are considered spam.
5. Do not adhere to copyright and fair use laws.
6. Break the law or encourage others to do so.

While we make every effort to respond to questions in a timely manner, we ask that you do not post questions as comments to a social media post. Please address questions to the Facebook administrators in a private message. We also ask that you understand that no one is monitoring TU district and school social media pages during non-working hours; and, even then, social media administrators have additional duties at the schools or district office. Someone will respond to your question during school hours.

The page administrators reserve the right to not post or remove any comments at any time, for any reason. Repeat offenders will be blocked from posting. If you have feedback or would like to report an inappropriate comment for us to review, send an email to ktruesdale@upson.k12.ga.us.

All statements and viewpoints expressed in the comments are strictly those of the commenter alone, and do not constitute an official position of the Thomaston-Upson School System unless they are posted by the original author (who is an authorized representative of the District) or by a subject matter expert responding on behalf of the District.

Repeated abuse of the TU Social Media Rules of Engagement may lead to a user being blocked from commenting on our pages.