Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area School District's (CWASD) Expectations for Communicating Electronically with Students and the World.

Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area School District recognizes that today's students are deeply engaged in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family and their larger social networks. As educators, we too have turned to email, websites, blogs, text messaging, and use of social media websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in many circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students that we set for ourselves here in CWASD.

The expectations outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of:

1. **Protecting the students, staff, and the District.**
2. **Raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students.**
3. **Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students.**

The following is a set of expectations that all members of the CWASD professional community are expected to adhere to when communicating with students electronically.

Does the communication pass the TAP Test?

Electronic communication with students should always be **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional as defined below:

1. **The communication is transparent.** – ALL electronic communication between staff and students should be transparent. As a public school district, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility and accountability with regards to all communications.
2. **The communication is accessible.** - ALL electronic communication between staff and students should be considered a matter of record, part of the District archives, and/or may be accessible by others.
3. **The communication is professional.** – ALL electronic communication from staff to student should be written as a professional representing CWASD. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a CWASD professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

If your communication meets all three of the criteria above, then it is very likely that the methods of communicating with students that you are choosing are very appropriate; moreover, encouraged.

Acceptable Communications Methods

Skyward - With the implementation of Skyward, teachers will be able to communicate directly with students and parents regarding information related to real-time grades, attendance, comments, assignments, and much more right from their grade books.

CWASD Email - Use of District email is always a very appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents. District email provides the staff member with a record of the communication. For this reason, only the district-provided email system (your @cwasd.k12.wi.us address) should be used. (*Staff members experiencing difficulty receiving emails from students and parents via their District email account should contact the Technology Department and they will check the Spam Filter settings.)*

Less Acceptable Communications Methods

Text Messaging - Nearly every student has a cell phone today and use of text messaging is rising sharply. This form of communication is typically between individuals and highly personal. Since texting is such a quick and convenient way of communication, a simple message may lead to an extended texting conversation that can get "off topic." **That said, staff members should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student can easily be misinterpreted by a parent**. If a teacher/coach/sponsor plans to use texting for immediate and urgent contact with students/team members, they must be transparent about such use. He/she must make parents aware at the beginning of the school year or season that he/she may use texting.

Unacceptable Communications Methods

Non-District Email Accounts – CWASD employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate with students about school matters. Third parties not employed by CWASD during the school day must also follow this expectation.

Online Games and Related Activities – While many people enjoy a variety of gaming systems (Wii, Xbox,etc.) and recreational websites that allow them to compete with others through the Internet, this is not an acceptable activity for staff members or third parties to engage in with students.

Important Reminders for Employees and Third Parties who use Facebook, Twitter, or other Social Media Sites and Blogs for Personal Purposes

Staff members and third parties who are presently using Facebook to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks, should ensure that their privacy settings are set to "Only Friends." If the "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. **Staff members should never "friend" students who are currently enrolled in CWASD, nor should you accept their "friend requests."** The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated.

Published Content. Any content staff members or third parties publish, pictures they post, or dialogue they maintain, whether in Facebook, Twitter, a blog, a discussion thread or other website, should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in their role as a CWASD professional. A good question that staff members should ask themselves before posting or emailing a message is, "Would I mind if that information appeared on the front page of the local newspaper?" If the answer is "yes," then do not post it. Contrary to what some people think, email and social networking sites are very public places.

Respect your audience and your coworkers. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. For example, if your blog is hosted on a School-owned property, avoid these topics and focus on subjects that are business-related. If your blog is self-hosted, use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of School. It is fine for School employees to disagree, but please don't use your external blog or other online social media to air your differences.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. In a blog, if you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Use your best judgment. Remember that there are always consequences to what you publish. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think about why that is. If you're still unsure, and it is related to School business, feel free to discuss it with your supervisor. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of online social media. The School reserves the right to require any inappropriate posting to be removed upon notice.

Don't forget your day job. You should make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your work commitments.