

Best Practices For Teacher Web Pages

Below are tips and tricks to keep your Web page safe, user friendly, and in compliance with Grand Island Central School District's Web guidelines and AUP. The following points are intended as a guide and are by no means all inclusive.

CONTENT INTEGRITY

Your Web site is an instructional tool and a source of communication. You are encouraged to actively teach civil discourse and digital citizenship when utilizing the district Web site and Web 2.0 applications. To make the most of your Web site, remember these important points as you build it:

- **Keep it professional and appealing.**
All subject matter must relate to curriculum and instruction.
- **Be sure your messages are clean and concise.**
- **Choose fonts that are easy to read.**
Remember your end user. Fancy fonts may not be viewable by the person reading your site. Macintosh and Windows operating systems display fonts differently so it is best to choose a font that works well on both platforms. Stick to the basics! *Examples include: Arial, Courier, Georgia, Times New Roman, Verdana, or Trebuchet.*
- **Keep information fresh & current.**
If not, at the discretion of the district, it may be taken down.
- **Turn off unused or expired pages.**
If you are still creating a page, turn it off. Wait until it is complete to share with everyone. If it is a page that does not reflect what is currently happening in your classroom, turn it off until next year. Get in the habit of setting start and stop dates (built in to School Word Teacher Pages) for timely information when creating a page.
- **Don't forget to use spell check.**
- **Organize your information.**
Chunking - readers appreciate short chunks of information that can be located and scanned quickly.
- **Choose colors wisely.**
Go with colors that offer the most contrast. Example: Don't create yellow text on a white background.
- **Do not post personal information.**
This is not about you - it is about your classroom. For your own safety, please keep all personal information off your web page.
- **Keep all users in mind as you design your site.**
Design your pages to be kind to the students with slow connectivity. Large file or intensive graphics will cause the page to load much slower for the end user.
- **Represent GICSD and yourself well.**
By being on the Web 24/7 you are marketing your class and are an ambassador for GICSD. Remember anyone can access these pages, even the press. It is important you present yourself on the Web the same way you would like the news to present you on TV. If you don't want it in the headlines – don't write it!
- **Don't invite danger.**
For Example, when listing a field trip or posting bus schedules on the Web, be certain to do just that. Do not give too many details such as exact times, locations, etc ...leave those details to the parent letter. Don't invite a predator. If you do choose to post details, be sure they are password protected.

- **Safety first.**
Student privacy must be protected at all times. Remember to use students' first names only, and last initials for duplicates. Personal information regarding the student should not be published.
- **Lock down your attached documents. (*with the exception of instructional templates*)**
It is recommended that you turn all Word, Excel, etc. documents into PDF files before posting them to the Web. People can manipulate and change documents which brings up copyright and security concerns. Prevent students from altering your attachments by locking down your file as a PDF.
- **No Soliciting.**
Solicitations or advertisements for the purpose of commercial or financial gain are prohibited.
- **Abide all copyright laws when posting material.**

LINKING

Links to outside Web sites are a great source of information for you to share with parents and students. However, please use caution when doing so.

- **Links should be functioning, appropriate and current.**
Web sites frequently change. Check any links you may post from your site regularly to be sure they are still functioning and current.
- **Use caution when linking to an outside Web page.**
You can't censor material from other Web sites so be sure who you choose to include on your Web page is in compliance with the GICSD Web guidelines and AUP. Another good reason to check your links regularly.
- **Disclaim, disclaim, disclaim!**
If your Web page links to a non-district Web site, don't forget the disclaimer. Remember to indicate to the user that they are leaving the district site and that the district does not necessarily approve the linked material. A disclaimer should be placed on every page that includes a link. A district disclaimer can be found on the Educational Resources section of the district Web site.
- **Do not link to Web pages that are not complete.**
- **Don't link to chat rooms and personal web sites.**
They are prohibited and you are breaking AUP.

BLOGS, WIKIS, VODCASTS & PODCASTS:

While technology in the classroom is ever-changing, the laws (such as Copyright, FERPA and Freedom of Speech) still apply. When you are dealing with the World Wide Web you could be broadcasting your mistakes to someone in China as well as an attorney. Here are some reminders:

- Copyright laws still apply.
- Student approvals for photos and student work still apply.
- Must be relative to the classroom curriculum.
- Teachers must monitor and approve all posted entries.
- Whenever appropriate, use security/teacher controls (Ex. password protect a page).
- It is recommended to provide and post a rubric for each project.
- Encourage parent participation.

IMAGES:

Images are a great way to enhance a Web page. Exercise caution when choosing an image because the wrong image can send the wrong message, crash the server or even break the law.

- **Conserve server space and maintain fast loading of pages.**
 - Avoid large or multiple graphics and animations.
 - Avoid extensive files with tiled backgrounds.
- **Choose images that compliment your site and are appropriate to the message.**
Example: Flying hot dog clipart does not compliment your message unless your class lesson involves hot dogs.
- **Use approved images.**
GICSD subscribes to clipart.com – schools edition and animation factory.com. Make it easy on yourself and stick to using images from this site. If you choose to download other clipart images from the Web, please be aware of their licensing agreement so as not to break copyright laws.
- **Abide by all copyright laws when posting an image.**

IMAGES REGARDING THE USE OF STUDENT PHOTOS:

- **ALWAYS verify permission to use a photo.**
GICSD has an opt out policy regarding the use of student photos. That means that unless the District has written documentation from the parent (or student if over 18 years of age) requesting not to release their student's photo, we have permission to do so. **You must still verify that the student in the photo is not on the Opt Out list.** Check with your building's main office for the most current list. If you are not sure – don't post!
- **When using a student's photo, do not use a student's full name or any identifying information in the content associated with the photo.**
- **Choose sweeping photos**
It is encouraged to include a sweeping image of a group rather than singling out one student because an identity is harder to pin point.
- **Password protect photo galleries**
Be safe and post photos in a gallery which you can protect by requiring a password. This allows you to target your audience to parents and students instead of the general public.