

## **LEGAL ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING INTERNET WEB PRIVACY**

The following represents “key” points to research and consider before setting/enforcing group rules/regulations about your students and their usage of “MYSpace”, “Facebook”, and other internet sites designed as personal centers for wide-based communication.

1. Make sure to educate your students about the “pros and cons” of having their own web pages for communication. These are great ways to keep in touch with people all over the world, stay updated on events, and sites that businesses and colleges can visit to learn more about them and their circle of friends. However, with the advantages come the problems...attracting sexual predators, being sabotaged with compromising photos, lacking “guaranteed privacy” (these sites can be accessed completely by anyone who is really computer savvy), and serving as monitors for their school districts and parents to keep up with their behavior, friends, and plans.
2. Do an internet search under “legal issues and cases involving “MySpace and “Facebook” to familiarize yourself with this “hot topic” and how other school districts and the court system are handling lawsuits.
3. Know your school district policy because concerning “privacy issues” because most vary throughout the state and nation. You need to know the board’s stand on supporting teachers who review the information of their students posted on these websites.
4. Find out if your school district is a member of an association like (TASB) Texas Association of School Boards, that provides liability insurance for administrators and teachers involved in lawsuits over the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights and rights to privacy. If not, you might suggest such membership because the cost is relatively inexpensive.
5. Make sure to suggest that all organizations in your school operate under the same rules and guidelines because it is much easier to defend school policies. That means the same rules and consequences apply to bands, cheerleaders, dance teams, service clubs, etc.
6. Peer Pressure is the best tool to monitor the behavior of your students on personal websites—it keeps you out of it!
7. Open a personal account for yourself on these various sites. The cost is free because, as you will see, it is paid for by the plethora of advertisements appearing on each person’s home page.
8. Once you have a website, suggest to your students that you are willing to add them to contact/friends list. Point out to them, however, that once added, you will be able to access their pages. This should make them think twice about who they have already added as friends or what written information is now available.
9. If your group/team has a website, make sure you monitor it – do not leave this job to your team members or to the Booster Club. Without your supervision, you may find that the entire “flavor” of the page has become far different than your philosophy would like.