

Eighth Grade Parents and Guardians:

I wanted to share with everyone a social media tool that I will be utilizing for our social studies class. I have set this e-mail up in a format that I hope is easy to read and understand. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

What is the form of social media? The form is Facebook. There is a feature on Facebook where one can create a closed group for a certain topic of interest. Facebook allows for communication and dialogue to occur along with posting/sharing items of interest relating to the group.

Who will be invited or permitted to join the closed group? Those included will be the teacher (me), administration (Mr. Ross, Mr. Detweiler, and the district technology department), and current eighth grade students and parents.

What are the security features? Because this is a closed group, those who would like to be part of the group must be approved by me to be granted access. If I do not recognize a (parent/guardian) name, I will ask the office and/or administration to decide on approval. If a name is not recognized by school personnel (from student record), then the individual will be denied access to the group. As previously stated, Mr. Ross, Mr. Detweiler, and the technology department will be members of the group as well.

What is the ultimate purpose? The ultimate goal to using Facebook is to serve as a communication portal along with enhancing our current event discussions in class. Students have the ability to ask questions for clarification on material (perhaps for an upcoming exam). Parents have the ability to ask questions as well (regarding a school events, various social studies topics, and high school scheduling in the spring). I will be posting links to various news events for students to access, read, gain knowledge on, and share in class with others. Students are encouraged to do the same!

What about the students who do not have a current Facebook account? No worries! Students currently without a Facebook account will not receive penalties on academic and participation grades. This is simply a classroom tool made available for parents, students, and the teacher.

How do I access it? If you have a Facebook account, simply look up the group, **Mr. Gutzwiller's Social Studies Class**. Click on the name and ask to be invited. Once you have been approved, the closed group name will appear on the left side on your Facebook page. Remember, you must ask to be invited to join the group.

Is this really permitted by the school? Yes. When I entertained the possibility of utilizing Facebook, I knew there would be a lot of policies and procedures that would have to be examined. Last fall, I e-mailed the middle school administration about the possibility. The inquiry was sent to Mr. Sustarsic (assistant superintendent) and he supported it with the following Board Policy: *"Social media shall be defined as internet-based applications (such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, et cetera) that turn communication into interactive dialogue between users. The Board authorizes the instructional staff to access social media from the Corporation's network, provided such*

access has an educational purpose for which the instructional staff member has the prior approval of the Principal.”

This is a classroom tool where school rules do apply. There will be absolutely no negativity, no profanity, and information from other classes. This is strictly a safe environment to support the interactive learning of the social studies classroom.

I understand that initial reservations might occur as to allowing you or your child to participate on the closed group. This is your decision. However, I am confident that with the safety features and included personnel, this will be a safe, productive, informative tool to use for class.