

# Teachers on facebook

## Teachers have rights, too Social network connections should be personal decisions

by Amanda Hutchinson, Managing Editor

### Pro

A small red alert appears in the left corner of senior **Lauren Rodrigues's** screen. "Your teacher wants to be your friend! You have 85 friends in common."

The mouse hovers over the buttons: Accept, Ignore? She clicks accept. If this act were to take place in Missouri, Rodrigues's teacher could lose their job over the millisecond it took to click a button, and it would be a shame.

In Aug. 2011, a law was signed in Missouri stating that it was illegal for teachers and students to be "friends" on any site, most commonly Facebook, that allows private communication. The Missouri state teacher's union soon filed suit claiming infringement upon their rights to free speech. Debates across the nation have occurred discussing whether this law was taking the potentials of social networking too far.

Social networking connections should not be regulated by law. It is ultimately the decision of the user whether or not to accept the request of association with a teacher, or a teacher with a student. Teacher restriction of private communication violates their personal rights to free speech.

"I don't think that students and teachers being friends on social networking sites are that bad. If you're worried about something that you do [or] say being seen by a teacher, then it's just the same as any other adult," said senior **Meredith Masch**, who is Facebook friends with one of her teachers.

Students may be hesitant to accept teacher friend requests for personal reasons.

"I think it is weird because it's the teachers knowing our personal lives, when we aren't supposed to know anything about theirs. It's making too close of a relationship when they should separate business and pleasure," said an anonymous junior who is not Facebook friends with any of their teachers.

When a student or teacher feels uncomfortable becoming connected with one another through a social networking site, it should ultimately be their own decision whether to friend or not. State laws threatening teacher termination could blow a small situation out of proportion, a situation where either a student or teacher should have drawn the line.

The Missouri law was erected due to issues with sexual misconduct, some of which occurred during private messages between teachers and their current pupils.

Facebook remains a place to "stay connected," as stated on their homepage, and could be the perfect option for teachers to reach current students for class work, or for graduated students to remain in touch with their favorite teachers.

Forty-seven point eight percent of 23 surveyed PRHS teachers are Facebook friends with their former students.

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## Will you be my friend? Some Facebook interactions become inappropriate

by Nicolette Jolicoeur, Managing Editor

### Con

Public humiliation, plummeting grades and disapproving looks are all possible results of a teacher student friendship on Facebook. A person who you are forced to sit in

class with 340 minutes a week, and who is in charge of your future grade and possibly even your future, has a first-hand look into your personal life if you accept a teachers friend request on Facebook. If they disapprove of anything on your Facebook page, their perception on you could change, with maybe a change in their perception of you deserving a good grade.

Teacher-student interaction is not just a topic at PRHS. In Missouri, it has been banned by law for teachers from making friends with students under 18 on Facebook. Missouri recently passed a bill signed by Governor Jay Nixon on Jul. 14, that was put into action on Aug. 28, that banned teachers contacting students via any social networking websites.

The text under in the bill states that "teachers cannot establish, maintain, or use a work-related website unless it is available to school administrators and the child's legal custodian, physical custodian, or legal guardian. Teachers also cannot have a non-work-related website that allows exclusive access with a current or former student," according to csmonitor.com.

This law violates the first and 14th amendments, or at least that's what the Missouri Teacher Association is claiming, who said the measure is deeply unfair.

Although PRHS doesn't have the same issues and needs as Missouri did for this ban, a fairly high amount of students just don't want any interaction. And if students don't want the interaction, teachers should not put the pressure on students to accept their friend requests, and vice versa.

"The teacher student relationship should be just that. If teachers think you're a good student/kid in class, but they see things on your Facebook they don't like, they could judge you for it and treat you differently," senior **Vicente Garcia** said. "I think maybe if you had a connection with the teacher, like it was an advisor for FFA or something [or] you are an alumni and you [want to] keep up with them I think it'd be okay."

Various PRHS students have experienced an awkward event in cyberspace recently, a friend request from a teacher. Forty-seven percent of surveyed teachers say that they are friends with their former students. But with that teachers could have an incident like living skills teacher **Val Poalillo** had. Poalillo says she had an encounter with a former student and their friend's conversation that she commented on because she felt uncomfortable with the conversation. "I later messaged her and told her I was deleting her because I didn't feel right that I commented more as her instructor than a friend," Poalillo said.

Poalillo got out of the situation in a respectable way. But the main question of this is, is it appropriate for teachers to be friending any students, former or present, on Facebook?

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## Teachers weigh in:

25 teachers respond to these three questions

### 1. Is it appropriate to be friends with current students on Facebook?



### 2. Are you friends with former students on Facebook?



### 3. Are you friends with your current students on Facebook?



Survey by Nicolette Jolicoeur, graphic by Dakota Cleland

**the almighty facebook**

Percent of World Facebook Users  
8.5 percent of the world have facebook

Mark Zuckerberg's friends call him: "Zuck"

Percent of American Facebook Users  
51 percent of America has Facebook  
According to www.prdaily.com

That's 156 million!

Growth of Facebook According to www.facebook.com

|          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| Dec. '04 | 1 million users   |
| Oct. '07 | 50 million users  |
| Aug. '08 | 100 million users |
| Jul. '10 | 500 million users |
| Jul. '11 | 750 million users |

"Zuck" has red-green color blindness, which is why he chose the color: blue  
According to www.cnn.com

Chat  
that's an average of 104 million people currently stalking each other.

Amount of users currently online: 13 percent

Graphic by Ryan Morrison