



Niagara Falls City School District Guidelines for Teacher Websites

This document has not been adopted by the NFCSD.

This guideline is meant to be a starting point for teachers who wish to create, publish, and maintain teacher websites. It is not a complete guide to all aspects of teacher websites. If more specific questions arise, especially those concerning copyrights or student materials, it is best to seek information from relevant Board personnel.

Why Should I Have a Teacher Website?

A teacher website can be a powerful tool. Its main purpose is to communicate up-to-date class and school information to the students, the parents and to the community at large.

- The content presented in the website can present a “picture” of the programs and curriculum happening in the classroom.
- It can inform the parent and community about curriculum, events, projects, and student activities, as well as classroom and school policies.
- It can link to academic resources of value to students and parents.
- It can be a great way to communicate and share successes with the community.
- It can provide another source where parents and the community can communicate with the teacher.

What are My Responsibilities in Creating a Website?

Teachers who post websites are responsible for adhering to the AUP policies of the Niagara Falls City School District regarding the proper use of Internet, many of which are covered in this guide. The teacher is solely responsible for the content of the website.

- The teacher must ensure that the content on the website is correct and up-to-date.
- The teacher must take care to insure that all copyright laws and regulations have been observed. This includes information and pictures.
- The teacher must insure all material has been carefully edited and free from grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors.
- The teacher is the only person authorized to post files and information on the site.
- The teacher must obtain the training necessary for creating, troubleshooting, and maintaining the web page. (Training is available from the TEMPs.)

What Purposes Can My Website Serve?

A well-designed class web page can serve a variety of purposes:

- It can provide a general description of the classroom or the course.
- It can provide a general outline and timeline of units and topics covered.
- It can provide specific information about individual units, projects or assignments.
- It can provide links to the appropriate NFCSD Curriculum Matrices.
- It can provide links to online academic resources.

- It can provide online resources with information valuable to parents.

How Do I Start Creating an Effective Web Page?

There are many factors to consider before beginning a website. Answering these questions is an important first step.

- What is the main purpose of the website?
- What information will the website provide to student, parents and the community?
- What is the best design for the audience? (It might be good to preview some current NFCSD teacher websites.)
- What do you wish to convey regarding you and your class?
- How often will you update the web site? (If you not update frequently, do not include time-sensitive items like assignments and calendars.)
- Is there a plan for simple navigation so users can find what they need easily ?

What Should I Put on My Website?

There are many things that teachers can choose to put on their websites. These are some:

<p style="text-align: center;">Contact Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Information • Your staff email address • Your school phone number • Contact preferences and hours with dates and time of availability • How to arrange a parent conference • A link to the Parent Portal of Power Teacher 	<p style="text-align: center;">Classroom information*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to the Curriculum Matrices • Schedules • Calendars • Academic expectations • Conduct code • Class assignments • Homework Assignments • Project/Activity Guides • Attachments (Handouts) • Grading policy • Archive of documents, files, etc. <p style="text-align: center;">*(Please remember that no pictures of students are permitted on the website.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online resources for students • Resources for parents • Online activities for students • Academic resources • Links to useful pages on the district website 	<p style="text-align: center;">News and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming events • Newsletters • Parent notifications • Forms

Please carefully follow all AUP guidelines before posting student project or art work.

Web Site Content Guidelines:

- **What Should Be on the First Page of the Site.**
 - The teacher or class name
 - Any necessary contact information for the teacher
 - A disclaimer to advise users that once they leave the teacher page, you have no control over the website and server. It might be something like this: **“Due to the nature of the Internet, we cannot assure the appropriateness of the programming that is available beyond this web site. We have attempted to provide only quality links. Web pages do change, however, so we ask you to please make us aware of any inappropriate material on links we may give you.”**

- **Web Sites Should Be Kept Current.**
 - Pages should be checked regularly to ensure that links are working and meet district standards.
 - Expired or date related pages should be removed.
 - Unneeded files should be removed.
 - Check the date of the last update.
 - Test all pages for accuracy and completeness.

- **Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation**
 - All pages should use correct Standard English and use proper grammar and punctuation.
 - Avoid the use of “texting language.”
 - Carefully check for correct spelling.
 - When acronyms are used, the meaning should be given the first time it is used. Do not assume the reader knows the meaning of the acronym.

- **Copyrights**
 - All web site authors must follow all applicable and existing copyright laws and intellectual property rights laws pertaining to the use of text, images, sounds, and videos they place on their websites.
 - Websites must comply with NFCSD AUP guidelines, as well as all state, federal and international laws concerning the use of networks and the Internet.
 - Websites must include a proper citation when using copyrighted materials and indicate that permission has been obtained to use these materials.
 - Websites cannot be used for commercial purposes and teacher websites may not contain advertisements unless specifically approved by the Board.
 - Never use text from another author’s page unless the author has stated it may be copied or you have obtained permission to use it.
 - When copying or paraphrasing from another page, always cite the page and author.
 - Before linking to a personal website, obtain the author’s permission, if possible.
 - Use great care when copying images on the Internet. While there are many sites with free images, some require links or a citation when using their images.

- **Use of Student Information**

(Great care must be taken when using student material. The NFCSD AUP specifically outlines the use of student names, pictures, work, and other information. Please refer to this document. If you still have questions, please ask.) Here is a list of some of the more important points.

- It is recommended that each teacher obtains a signed Parent/Guardian Photo Permission Form for each of his or her students at the beginning of each school year. This form is available on the Technology and Information Services web page.
- You may not place photos or images of students on web pages, even with the Permission Form in place.
- Do not place student contact information (mailing address, phone number, E-mail or biographical information) on any web.
- Any personally identifiable or confidential information must not be published on a website.
- No student attendance, grade or discipline information may be posted. However, you may place a link to the Parent Portal.
- Don't use last names. If you need to refer to students, use only first names.

- **Linking to Other Sites**

- All pages and links on teacher webpages should be to instructional, curriculum-related, or school-oriented sites for educational purposes.
- Inappropriate links may include commercial, political, social, religious or philosophical sites. If such a site is deemed educationally necessary, it would be best to check for permission.
- Meaningful descriptions should accompany all hyperlinks; in this way the student or parent will have some understanding of the site they will go to.

- **Technical Guidelines and Tips**

- Use a consistent style and organization for your entire site. Your site should seem like a single place.
- Use consistent controls, image sizes, and colors.
- Follow the "3-click" rule. Every page and item should be available with no more than 3 clicks from the home page.
- Select easy to read colors if you choose to color the text. Use font color conservatively. It is best not to use a full page of red or green. Avoid white because it is difficult to print and won't show on many backgrounds.
- Avoid underlining words on your pages. It looks like hyperlinking and might be confusing.
- Use consistent font sizes and type.
- Use graphics sparingly and reuse the graphics when appropriate.
- Make sure all images are relevant and meaningful and not just placed for "flash."
- Smaller images (50 k or less) load faster and make your page work better.
- JPEG and GIF are most used formats. Others may not work in your website.
- Avoid moving pictures or animated GIFS. They become annoying very quickly.

- Follow all copyright laws and regulations regarding images found on the Internet. If a site requires a link in order to use an image, please make sure to use one.
- View your site on several different computers with different screen resolutions. Use several web browsers also to make sure that your site is easily viewed under all conditions.
- Do not use the words “UNDER CONSTRUCTION.” If a page is not ready to be viewed, don’t post it.
- Use the PDF format when posting forms and attachments. This will ensure that your documents can be read by most viewers and cannot be altered.
- Use lower-case letters for the name of documents and graphics.
- Label file names and attachments clearly so viewers know what they are opening.
- Video files are generally large and may not upload to your website properly. Check the size of the file before uploading. If it is larger than 50mb, it probably will not upload. Video files also are slow to download and some viewers may not have the proper programs to view them.

Assistance is available. If you need help in creating or updating your website, check the Teacher Resource Center list of upcoming events. Many cybercafés and study groups are offered throughout the year and you might be able to get TRC credit for the class. You may also email any of the TEMPs and request assistance. They can often answer quick questions or visit your classroom to help solve a problem.