

# DISCONNECTED: Teachers use tech to keep pupils up to date

Continued from 1A

are tasked with policing the line between necessary communication and inappropriate behavior.

Based off recommended language from the Oregon School Board Association, the Pendleton and Hermiston school districts' social media policy for staff is virtually the same.

Both school districts ban any sort of electronic communication during school hours, which is punishable up to dismissal.

But while texting or communicating through social media between students and teachers after-hours is highly discouraged, neither district prohibits it completely. Certainly, exchanges of sexual images is prohibited at all times by state and federal law.

Wade Smith, the deputy superintendent of the Hermiston School District, said the school district's legal counsel said completely banning social media contact between students and teachers would run afoul of teachers' rights as private citizens.

"We cannot say 'Thou shall not text students outside work hours,'" he said.

In some cases, using electronic communication is unavoidable, like when coaches need to update students on practice times. In those instances, Smith said the district encourages coaches to text or email students in groups as much as possible and avoid non-school topics.

Pendleton School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney said principals and other building supervisors are included in many communications between educators and students as a way to ward off inappropriate situations.

Both Smith and Mooney said their districts' policies on social media often require revisiting, especially considering the ever-shifting forms of communication technology and the comfort both staff and students have in using them.

"This is obviously a generational challenge," Smith said.

Much of that challenge rests with teachers, who must balance the need to integrate technology into their lesson plans while safeguarding against inappropriate behavior. Heidi Paullus, an instructional strategies specialist for the InterMountain Education Service District, has not only navigated this gray area for her job, she's made into a career.

Before joining the IMESD in 2011, Paullus spent the previous 13 years as a teacher at Sunset Elementary School

in Hermiston and Sunridge Middle School in Pendleton.

Already fascinated by how technology could make tasks like grading essays easier, Paullus got a master's degree in educational technology.

Paullus translated that degree into her current job with the IMESD, which has her help teachers from local districts integrate technology into their classrooms.

Although she isn't in favor of a completely computerized classroom, Paullus said digital devices and software is an important tool for educators.

Paullus said some teachers are wary of incorporating technology into their curriculum because their students are more adept at using it, or the potential ethical quandaries digital communication can present.

Despite some educators' precautions, other teachers have come to embrace using technology in their classroom.

Christina Van Nice, a language arts teacher at Sunridge Middle School, uses Google Chromebooks on a daily basis in her classroom.

Installed in the Chromebooks is a suite of apps called Google Classroom, which Van Nice uses for assignments and in-class communication.

Van Nice said the digital assignments require Internet research and more critical thinking. If a student abuses the chat function, Van Nice can mute them, although she's rarely had to use that function. For after-school communication, Van Nice uses an app called Remind, which uses an automated phone number for assignments or tests.

Van Nice said the app is ideal because it can only be sent one way and automatically logs every message sent.

Paullus said Remind not only creates a level of privacy between student and teacher, it offers a more efficient method of communicating with students and parents instead of the traditional written note, which often tends to be lost or forgotten between school and home.

Although it's not in her official description, Van Nice said making sure her students are responsible digital citizens is a part of her job.

With many children growing up with technology as an entertainment device, lessons are as much about using the Internet properly as it is about math and English.

Along with academics, Paullus said digital lessons also tackle modern issues like cyber bullying and how students present themselves online.

# DISCOVER

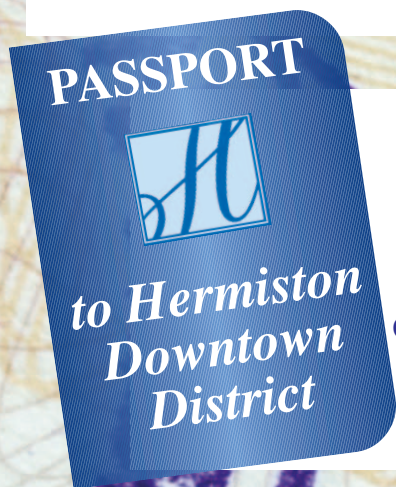
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# SHOOTING: Accounts conflict

Continued from 1A

reported, but added there are conflicting accounts of the vehicle involved.

Milton-Freewater police arrested Diaz on April 1 for two counts of felony attempt to elude police, two misdemeanor counts of attempt to elude, reckless driving and unauthorized use of motor vehicle. Umatilla County Circuit Court records show Diaz was serving 18 months probation after pleading guilty on April 17 to one count of misdemeanor attempting to elude. Records also show he violated that probation in July

and was facing an arraignment for that next week.

Diaz's Facebook pages showed he cared about the issue of immigration from Mexico, was an avid angler and enjoyed time with friends and relatives.

Boedigheimer stated the investigation is ongoing and when "pertinent hard facts become known" he would release more information.

This is the second deadly shooting this year in Umatilla County. Alonso Madrigal, 23, died March 4 in the parking lot of the 11th Street Market, Hermiston. That case remains unsolved.

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