

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TEACHER-STUDENT: TO UNFRIEND OR NOT TO UNFRIEND?

by:

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The social media world has been bashed when the Department of Education issued Department Order No. 49 last November 2, 2022, which instructed DepEd personnel to “avoid relationships, interaction, communication, including following social media with learners outside of the school setting, except if they are relatives.”

The honorable Vice President Sarah Duterte who is also our education chief explained that this is to avoid biases among teachers and to prevent “criminal” incidents from ever happening, emphasizing that “As a teacher, there must be a line between him or her and the learner. They should not have friendly relations with their learners outside of the learning institution setting because people develop biases when they become friends with someone,” (Philippine Star, 2022).

The question now is: Should we start unfriending our students on social media? As what the millennials are saying, is it already FO (Friendship Over) between teachers and students? While there are deep groundings in the said order, with the sincere intent to protect both teachers and students, the order should not be misconstrued as limiting our personal freedoms. The order is clear: “avoid relationships, interaction, and communication including following social media with learners” when outside the school setting. Beyond the classroom, teachers and students can and should maintain “connections” that are mentoring, courteous, and respectful. As teachers, we are really expected to practice the highest level of professionalism as public servants, especially to the young minds who are modeling their behaviors from us and are looking up to us as mentors and role models.

So, before you click that unfriend button, take note that your pupils need you, especially during their trying times. Our public school teachers are 24/7 workers. This is our reality. We want to make ourselves available to our students as much as possible, especially on things related to their learning. Beyond the classroom, we are their friends, their counselor, their confidant, and their supporter. Let us make sure that we are part of the noblest profession and that unfriending our students on social media will just be counterproductive. So fellow teachers, keep that social media connection active and strong!

References:

Philippine Star. (04, November 2022). DepEd tells teachers to avoid interactions with students outside schools. Retrieved on December 4, 2022, via <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/11/04/2221533/deped-tells-teachers-avoid-interactions-students-outside-schools>