**If you are ready for a “professionalism checkup” as a teacher, here are some areas of reflection to think about:**

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| 1. **Social Media:** This is probably the number one area to focus. Social media accounts are rarely completely private, and posting questionable photos or even negative comments is out of line for a teacher. We are looked to as examples for our students and need to act as such at all times. Even though we have a right to our own life outside the school building, when we share that life online, we are creating a record of who we are. We must make sure that “who we are” is someone that we can all be proud of.  2. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** This area of concern has exploded over the |
| past few years for many reasons. Because so much of what we use as teachers is cloud-based, it is important for professionals to recognize and proceed with caution. Student information should not be shared on any source that isn’t secure or password protected, and teachers should protect the privacy of all students in their class (especially health records, IEP information and grades). Some occurrences—such as custody situations that require teachers to be diligent about releasing information only to people who are on an approved list—didn’t exist a few years ago, so it is key to always consider how we are protecting our students.  3. **Positive Communication:** When it comes to electronic communication, we all seem to be using it more and more. It is much more efficient than making phone calls, and I have found parents are less likely to answer a phone call right away as opposed to an email. It also creates a documented record of communication, which can come in handy later. If we are going to email parents about situations at school, we must ensure that it is very positive. It is important to be clear and honest, but at the same time, we have to do so with a positive slant to attempt to make sure we don’t appear unprofessional. Always reread every email to check for typos and misspellings, but also read it with the eyes of a parent. Ask yourself, “What would I think I if I received this from the teacher?” This litmus test will improve communication with parents. |
| 4. **Diligence in School Safety:** In today’s classroom, part of teacher professionalism is knowing and following all security procedures. Beyond grabbing the crisis bag on the way out the door for a fire drill, teachers need to know the ins and out of lockdown drills, protecting students in emergencies, intruder alerts, and how to correctly greet a stranger in the hallway. Even if a guest has signed in at the office, staff still must screen individuals to make sure they are where they’re supposed to be. |

Being a professional might mean questioning a parent who didn’t check in at the front office—this wasn’t an expectation 25 years ago, but with numerous school safety issues over the past few years, it is now part of our job.

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| 5. **Making a Great Impression:** Because we never know when we are being recorded, it is critical to always put our best foot forward—the social media comments mentioned above factor in here. Sometimes the photo shared online isn’t one that we even knew was taken, so it is critical to be aware that as a professional, our dress, language, comments, and behaviors factor into the image others have of who we are. Teachers should always |
| try to err on the side of caution. |

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6.

**Am I demonstrating professional dress?**

Just like judging a doctor by how they look the part, teachers are judged in the same manner. Dressing down for a jeans day or spirit day is fine because parents and students see that as a “uniform.” On other days— especially those that include interaction with parents—teachers should dress professionally. This includes professional development, conferences, workshops and professional meetings.

7. **Do I always demonstrate outstanding communication skills?** Communicating as a professional is crucial for teachers. When meeting with parents in person or speaking with them on the phone, teachers must sound professional and use correct grammar. The same is true when writing to parents via email. It is even important to provide good oral and written feedback to students when grading. We must model good communication and demonstrate its importance to our students.

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| 8. **Am I reliable for my students, colleagues, parents, and principal?** |
| One of the areas of greatest need for employees to “show up and show up on time.” As a teacher, this should be a no-brainer, but it is still important to remember. Even showing up on time to meetings, IEPs, and professional development is important. We aren’t just professionals for a few hours a day—we are professionals at all times. |

9. **Do I use sarcasm to joke with my students?**For some teachers, this would probably be a surprising addition to the list. A sense of humor with students is an important trait for teachers to have, but using sarcasm in the classroom is inappropriate. At times it can be very biting and almost mean-spirited. But even if not, it is hard for many students to understand—especially those who struggle with context clues and reading between the lines. Sarcasm can be confusing, and therefore not funny, for many students. There is almost always a better way to joke with students then using sarcasm.

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| 10. **Do I keep up on my knowledge of profession?** |
| Being current on best practices, content and current research is critical as a professional. Actively engaging in planning with team members, professional learning communities and colleagues in your building, across the district and across the state is vital to your success. You want to be able to bring ideas, suggestions and critical thought to these settings. |

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