

## **STAFF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The purpose of this policy is to provide all staff, students, volunteers, interns, and community members with information about the expectations of Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) regarding the use of social media by staff.

PSESD respects personal individual expression via social media outside of the workplace. However, PSESD also recognizes the potential for confusion where personal use by staff of social media includes contacts with existing students of PSESD or students of other districts being serviced by PSESD personnel. Social media technologies (including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Google +, on-line gaming, texting, email) are not only rapidly growing in use, but are also so easy to use that they have become attractive and constant channels for communication. With the ease of use of these technologies, the possibility for unintended consequences, miscommunication, or abuse during social media interaction with students is increased.

As a result, and taking into account the evolving nature of social media and technology, the Superintendent or designee will create and maintain directives for staff on PSESD expectations for professional use and supervision of staff interaction with students via social media, including the need to maintain professional boundaries.

### **Directives for Staff Use of Social Media**

Staff members are expected to comply with these directives in their interactions with students via social media technologies (including but not limited to Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, Google +, on-line gaming, texting, email). These directives are intended to apply only to interactions with current students of the Puget Sound ESD or students at School Districts being serviced by PSESD personnel.

When a staff member utilizes social media, whether personal or within the context of their work with PSESD, he/she should not post confidential or proprietary information about the agency, its students, alumni, or fellow employees. Staff use of digital images of students or school operations outside of their professional role (i.e. PSESD websites or approved educational activities) is prohibited. Good judgment should be used and PSESD policies on maintaining professional boundaries and boundary invasion should be followed. Additionally, federal privacy requirements such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and, if applicable, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) should be followed at all times. Staff should use and maintain appropriate privacy settings in their social media unless they intend viewing by the general public.

Unprofessional behavior online could impact a staff member's standing both at the PSESD and any related professional certifications or licenses. Appropriate professional boundaries should be maintained at all times. Due to these concerns and the possibility for miscommunication, personal contact with a student via social media outside of the school context or approved use is

inappropriate. Absent a pre-existing personal relationship independent of one's professional role as a staff member (i.e. parent of the student, family member of the student, longtime family friend to the student and his/her parents, etc.), personal social media contacts with students should be avoided. This is intended to include simultaneous contacts via a personal Facebook page populated with multiple students.

Staff members wishing to utilize social media with students within the context of PSESD operations and its educational mission should:

- Secure approval by the Superintendent or designee(s) in advance;
- Reasonably apprise student parents or guardians of its use; and
- Recognize that such use should always remain under PSESD supervision and be subject to agency monitoring.

Within this framework, social media is an appropriate educational tool and is encouraged.

If, through use of social media, postings or commentaries by staff members present a reasonable possibility of substantially disrupting PSESD operations, or create professional concern regarding compliance with agency policy or maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, the postings or commentaries should be reported to the program director for follow-up. This expectation is not intended to pre-empt or impact personal freedom of expression in private use of social media but to address any concerns that may arise impacting the student environment.

If a parent of a student or student reports a concern related to a staff member and his/her individual posts or communication to students, such matters must be reported to the Superintendent or his/her designee(s) so that PSESD can follow up and, as appropriate, offer support, clarification, or direction.

*Note: Reporting under this policy does not alter any other independent reporting obligations under ESD policy or law (mandatory reporting).*

Adopted: June 18, 2012

Revised: November 2013

Relevant PSESD Board Governance Policies: EL 3, Treatment of Stakeholders  
EL 4, Treatment of Staff

Cross References:                    Operating Policy No. 5290, Acceptable Use  
   Operating Policy No. 5291, Email/Internet Use  
   Operating Policy No. 5293, Staff & Student Internet Safety