

SUBJECT: SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES POLICY

Philosophy Statement

To accommodate new communication paradigms and tools and remain at the forefront of preparing students for the future, educators and school districts must explore new and emerging technologies to supplement the range of services they currently offer. Among the newest tools available to educators and school districts are social networking sites (hereinafter referred to as “SNS”).

SNS have great potential to connect people across the globe and enhance communication; however, they are also more informal, less structured and still emerging. These guidelines are designed to establish some basic parameters for the creation and use of SNS for the William Floyd Union Free School District and use of SNS by the District, students, staff, employees and others.

Definition of Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) are Web sites or online communities that connect people through social and other networks. SNS often include a range of communication platforms including, but not limited to, creation of profiles, blogs, discussion boards, personal Web sites, wikis, online forums, virtual worlds, instant messaging and file sharing (sharing of text, photos, video, etc).

I. Establishing the District's Social Networking Site

1) The District's Technology staff, subject to Board approval, has established and maintain the official District SNS on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter to further the public relations/outreach/connection to the District community and the public at large and will monitor all of the content on these official SNS.

2) Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education shall have the exclusive and final authority to determine whether individual District buildings/facilities/departments/activities/teams/etc. may initiate and maintain separate page(s) on the District's SNS.

3) Applications for permission to maintain individual pages on the District's SNS must be made in writing to the Superintendent or his/her designee, stating why such a separate page is desired and the potential benefit such a separate page may provide the District.

II. Quality Control/Content Integrity on the District's SNS

1) The District's official Web site will remain the primary source for all online content. Any and all material on the District's SNS will supplement information that exists on the District's official Web site.

2) If applicable, material/content that is entered/posted to the District's SNS (*e.g.*, Facebook) account/page may include a link back to District's official Web site.

3) District personnel acknowledge that they have no expectation of privacy in any material or content they enter/post on the District's SNS. The District may monitor/review anything entered/posted on the District's SNS at any time without prior notice to the individual who entered/posted the material or content being reviewed.

4) All material and content entered/posted on the District's SNS by District personnel must be school related and must comply with all other applicable District policies.

5) The District reserves the right to delete/remove anything posted on the District's SNS, as determined in the District's sole discretion, without prior notice to the individual who posted the material or content being deleted/removed.

6) The Superintendent or his/her designee, in conjunction with the Coordinator of Technology, shall monitor the District SNS to ensure users contribute accurate, valuable and high-quality school related information on the District SNS. Protocols will be developed by the Superintendent or his/her designee and the Coordinator of Technology to govern the daily operation of the District SNS, including the respective rights and responsibilities of the District and site users. These protocols are subject to review and amendment by the Board of Education.

7) District personnel acknowledge and agree that when they create or post material on the District SNS they are in effect "content publishers" and as such are subject to a host of ethical and legal obligations including, but not limited to, compliance with applicable copyright laws. District personnel shall not post anything on a District SNS in violation of any copyright or other applicable law.

8) The District SNS will remain blocked on the School Network for all students/staff attached to the District Network.

III. Prohibited Conduct on All SNS Sites (including non-District SNS)

1) District personnel shall conduct themselves in the “virtual” or online world of SNS just as they would in all face-to-face human interactions, namely District personnel shall treat others with dignity and respect and observe all other District policies and/or established standards of professional conduct.

2) District personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on SNS to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the District for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among co-workers, or negatively affect the operations of the District.

3) District personnel may not use or post the District logo, image or any other proprietary information on any SNS without permission from the Superintendent, or his/her designee.

4) District personnel may not post pictures, video, etc., of any students on SNS without prior written permission from the student’s parents. In addition, the posting of any material that identifies students or provides any information that would be considered confidential pursuant to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), or that otherwise discloses confidential information concerning the District, is strictly prohibited.

5) When posting anything on SNS, District personnel must make clear that any views expressed are the employee’s alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District. Employees may not act as spokespersons for the District or post comments as representatives of the District, except as authorized by the Board, Superintendent or his/her designee.

6) All District personnel are cautioned that speech, on or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties—that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities—is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the District. District personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on SNS will reflect upon their office and this District.

7) While mindful of employees’ First Amendment free speech rights, District personnel who participate in SNS, including the District’s SNS, shall not post any material which may reasonably or foreseeably result in the disruption of classroom or District activities. The District is entitled to make such a determination based on the facts surrounding the material as the District reasonably believes them to be.

8) When using SNS, District personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the District’s code of conduct, and any other applicable District policy, is required when using SNS. In particular, District personnel are prohibited from the following:

a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.

b. Speech involving themselves or other District personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless, irresponsible or lacking good moral character.

c. Speech that would violate the District's Confidentiality or Anti-Harassment policies.

9) District personnel should be aware that privacy settings and SNS are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected. There should be no expectation of privacy on any posting.

10) District personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, posted to or discussed on the District's SNS or in a public forum on any SNS may be accessed by the District at any time without prior notice.

11) District personnel shall not use SNS to create or maintain personal relationships with students. For purposes of these guidelines, "personal relationships with students" shall mean any behavior or conduct that is unrelated to course work or official school matters. Such behavior may erode the professional authority and traditional roles of teacher and student within the School District and may violate District policies and/or regulations.

12) Access to social networking sites for personal use during an employee's workday is prohibited. However, access to the District's SNS for matters related to school business and/or educational activities may be permitted as authorized by the employee's supervisor(s) and Coordinator of Technology.

13) District personnel shall not use their District e-mail address for communications on non-District SNS.

IV. Reporting Requirements

District personnel shall report known or suspected violations of this Policy to their Building Principal or Supervisor.

V. Disciplinary Sanctions

District personnel who violate any provision of this Policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment in accordance with applicable law, District policy and regulations, and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

VI. Compliance with Other Applicable Policies and Regulations

District personnel who utilize SNS, including but not limited to the District's SNS, shall be subject to all applicable District policies and regulations including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Confidentiality of Computerized Information;
- 2) Code of Ethics for Board Members and All District Personnel;
- 3) Sexual Harassment of District Personnel;
- 4) Staff-Student Relations: Fraternization;
- 5) Sexual Harassment of Students; and
- 6) Staff Use of Computerized Information Resources.