

Lower Merion School District

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

Policy No.: 901
Section: COMMUNITY
Title: COMMUNITY RELATIONS OBJECTIVES
Date Adopted: 6/11/12
Date Last Revised: 2/7/2020; 12/6/19; 2/8/13

R901 COMMUNITY RELATIONS OBJECTIVES

The Lower Merion School District’s use of social media is a strategic and carefully monitored communications mechanism used to further the exchange of educational ideas and information. The Superintendent recognizes the need to establish regulations for District community relations objectives.

Social Media – forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

District-sponsored Social Media – Social Media sites, including but not limited to, the District website, the District Twitter page, the District Facebook page and the District Instagram page, created and maintained by the District for purposes of promoting the District’s public relations objectives.

Page Administrator(s) – The District employee(s) responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and upkeep of District-sponsored Social Media.

The Superintendent will designate Page Administrator(s), responsible for maintaining and monitoring the District-sponsored Social Media. The Page Administrator(s) will develop style and content guidelines in accordance with the District’s policies. The Page Administrator(s) will also develop procedures for the placement and removal of such material. All official District and school material posted on District-sponsored Social Media must be approved through a process established by the Page Administrator(s). The District’s procedures may require approval of District-sponsored Social Media material at either the District or school level.

I. General Guidelines

1. Page Administrator(s) reserve the right to not post or remove any comments at any time, for any reason. The District reserves the right to remove postings that:
 - a. are abusive, defamatory, or obscene;
 - b. are fraudulent, deceptive or misleading;
 - c. target, disparage, or discriminate on the basis of handicap/disability, race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity or national origin;
 - d. contain spam, advertising, solicitations or include links to other sites;

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- e. contain confidential information;
 - f. are in violation of any intellectual property right of another;
 - g. are in violation of any law or regulation;
 - h. violate any Lower Merion School District policy; or
 - i. are otherwise offensive, graphically or in tone.
2. To the extent possible, the main page of every District-sponsored Social Media site should indicate it is the "Official page of the Lower Merion School District."
 3. Student photographs, awards and accomplishments - Written parental release is required before posting of elementary and middle school student photographs, awards and accomplishments in District-sponsored Social Media. High school students who are 18 years or older and parents of all other high school students will periodically be given the opportunity to opt out of having the student's photographs, awards and accomplishments posted in District-sponsored Social Media. Posting of photographs or videos of students in violation of any law or regulation is not permitted. Obscene images and videos will not be posted. Release by verified email address with phone or other oral confirmation is acceptable. The parental release requirement does not apply to photographs taken at events open to the public provided the student's name is not used.
 4. To the extent possible, the content posted on District-sponsored Social Media pages are preserved and archived using policies and procedures that are consistent with the District's records retention and disposal policies.
 5. All District-sponsored Social Media shall comply with the content and quality guidelines set forth in Sections A and B of the "Guidelines" section of Administrative Regulation No. 816, *Web Content Development and Hosting*.
 6. The Superintendent shall designate an individual or individuals responsible for ensuring that all persons posting content to District-sponsored Social Media receive proper training in the use of District-sponsored Social Media and the requirements of this regulation.

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A. Best Practices

1. **Promote transparency:** Trust is the basis for any good relationship, and the same goes for the relationships the District’s fosters with the community through Social Media. When using Social Media, the District should use full name and professional title whenever possible, attribute aggregated links to their sources, and clearly distinguish facts from opinion.
2. **Have a plan:** Before launching an official Social Media presence, the District should consider its messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for staffing and keeping information on Social Media sites up-to-date. This could include a content plan for the types of posts it will make in the first weeks or months after the site is launched. It could also plan in advance to what extent it will allow comments from other users on its site (this will depend on the goals it has set for its Social Media efforts) and how it will respond if users make critical or objectionable posts or comments.
3. **Be vigilant:** Exercise caution to avoid “phishing” attempts, which aim to gain control of a personal or institutional Social Media site by deceiving a user into revealing the account’s user name and password. It should monitor its Social Media sites to ensure it notices quickly if an unauthorized person gains access to the District-sponsored site.
4. **Safeguard privacy:** Most information relating to individual students (and their parents) is classified as private data under state and federal law and cannot be released without express written permission. The District should use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public accounts, while being aware of the limited protection this provides. Even “private” messages can be accidentally released through errors or changes in practice on the part of the Social Media platform provider.

B. Posting Recommendations

1. **Be respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a Social Media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the District.

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2. **Remember your audience:** Consider the wide range of audience before making a post to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any groups.
3. **Strive for accuracy:** Information on social networks needs to be verified like any other information. Work to verify the authenticity of people and organizations before attributing facts or quotes to them.
4. **Maintain credibility:** District-sponsored Social Media accounts— whether on Facebook, the District website, Twitter, or elsewhere — reflect upon the reputation and credibility of the District and its schools. The District must be ever mindful of preserving its reputation. Every comment or link should be considered public information, regardless of privacy settings. If something should not be said at a conference or to a member of the media, consider whether it should be posted online.
5. **Use jokes and other forms of humor with caution:** Avoid posting any kind of message that could be misinterpreted as factual.
6. **Do not make endorsements:** Do not use the District’s name to promote or endorse any commercial product, political party or candidate or any cause not expressly authorized by the Superintendent.

II. Special Guidelines Governing the District’s Use of Twitter

1. The District’s Twitter feed will be used to keep parents, students, employees, and partners informed of special events, key initiatives and emergency notifications.
2. The nature of Twitter is that users regularly follow others they do not know personally. It is more likely on Twitter than any other Social Media site that the District will have unknown followers. This should be considered when using any proprietary or potentially sensitive information in tweets.
3. The District should make a reasonable effort to block commenters who are deemed inappropriate if they can be seen by others. .
4. The District should only follow other Twitter feeds and/or send direct messages to other Twitter accounts with objectives that are consistent with the educational mission of the District.

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5. If the District believes that another’s post will have value to the District’s followers, the Page Administrator can “retweet” the post. Any post that is “retweeted” on the District’s feed will be subject the District’s guidelines of acceptable content.
6. The District’s Twitter feed will be used for broadcasting purposes only. The District will not respond to a tweet via a “reply.”

III. Special Guidelines Governing the District’s Use of Facebook

1. The District’s Facebook page should be set up as a “fan” page where fans are permitted to post comments. The Page Administrator(s) is authorized to block/remove fans and postings from the District’s Facebook page where the posts and comments do not support the educational mission of the District.
2. All content on the District’s Facebook page must relate to education, curriculum, instruction, school-authorized activities and athletics, school or district news or general information relating to work, activities and accomplishments of the District and its staff, as representatives of the District.
3. Privacy Settings: The privacy settings of the District’s Facebook page are managed by the Page Administrator(s). All posting of comments on the District’s Facebook page are at the discretion of the page administrator(s). The Page Administrator(s) reserve the right to not post or remove any comments at any time, for any reason.
4. The District should only associate with other Facebook groups with objectives that are consistent with the educational mission of the District.
5. The District’s Facebook page is a means to connect to the public. Accordingly, the District will not use Facebook to send direct private messages to individuals.
6. The District’s Facebook page should contain the following disclaimer: “The comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinions and position of the Lower Merion School District or its employees.”

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Cross References:

LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulation 006 (Civility)
LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulation 246 (Harassment, Bullying & Hazing)
LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulation 346/446/546 (Prohibited Harassment by and of
Employees and Other Members of School Community)
LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulations 350/450/550 (Staff Access to Networked Information
Resources)
LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulation 800 (Records Management)
LMSD Policy & Administrative Regulation 816 (Web Content Development and Hosting)