

Employee Use of Social Media Technology and Electronic Communication

Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology, when used appropriately, can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors. The purpose of social media policy and procedures is to help employees participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects the employee's reputation, and the reputation of Lakeland Joint School District, and that respects the relationship between teachers and students. Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, MySpace, Flickr, etc. Due to the unique nature of social media and the District's desire to protect its interest with regard to its electronic records, the following rules have been established to address social media site usage by all employees.

Protect Confidential and Proprietary Information

Safety is the overriding concern with regard to information posted online. Employees will respect the privacy and confidentiality of student and staff information. Employees shall not post confidential or proprietary information about the District, its employees, students, agents, or others. The employee shall adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality policies adopted by the District or as provided by state or federal law. Employees shall not use images of students, or names or data relating to students, absent written authority of the parent of a minor or authority of an adult or emancipated student.

Use of the District's Name, Logos, or Images

Employees shall not use the District logos, images, iconography, etc. on personal social media sites. Nor shall employees use the District name or link to the District to promote a product, cause, political party, or political candidate.

Respect District Time and Property

Employees may use email and social media sparingly for personal purposes only during non-student contact times, such as during lunch or before or after school. Any use must occur during times and places where the use will not interfere with job duties, negatively impact job performance, or otherwise be disruptive to the school environment or its operation.

Keep Personal and Professional Accounts Separate

Employees will maintain a clear distinction between their personal social media use and any district-related professional social media use. Staff members will not use their district email address for personal social media activities. Individuals identifying themselves as district employees must state that the views expressed, posted, or published are personal views, not necessarily those of the District, its Board, employees, or agents.

All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the district and appropriate role models for students. Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. It is vital that staff maintain professionalism in their interactions with students and the community. Failure to do so could put an employee in violation of existing district policy and at risk of disciplinary action.

Contact with Students

Although it is desired that employees have a sincere interest in students as individuals, partiality and the appearance of impropriety must be avoided. Pursuant to the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators, individuals shall maintain a professional relationship with all students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Adhere to each of the following:

1. Employees should not have online interactions with students of the District (with the exception of relatives) on social networking sites outside of approved forums dedicated to academic use. Listing current students as “friends” on networking sites wherein personal information is shared or available for review which results in the certificated professional employee not maintaining the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators is prohibited. District employees’ social networking profiles and personal blogs should not be linked to District students’ online profiles in any manner.
2. Employees should only communicate electronically with individual students of the District, other than the District’s email or approved academic forum (e.g. District Google platforms), when such communication includes the parent/guardian or prior written permission has been granted by parent/guardian. When an employee is acting in his/her role as a “parent” (versus teacher) and communicating with students in their role as a “child” (versus a student), other communication methods may be used. Student cell phone numbers may be utilized in an employee’s capacity as a parent (i.e. babysitting, birthday parties, personal trips, etc.). All communication must still maintain standards outlined in the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators.
3. Athletic or academic coaches, advisors or other student group leaders, or designee approved by the building administrator (i.e. team parent volunteer) should only communicate electronically with individual student team members when such communication includes at

least one other team member, another applicable adult (i.e. Assistant Coach), the parent/guardian or prior written permission has been granted by parent/guardian.

4. Employees shall not have inappropriate contact of any kind with students including via electronic media.

Nothing in this policy prohibits District staff and students from the use of educational websites or use of social networking websites created for curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular purposes where the professional relationship is maintained with all students.

Failure to maintain a professional relationship with students, both inside and outside of a classroom setting, including interaction via social networking websites of any nature, emailing, texting, or any other electronic methods will result in the required reporting of such conduct to the Professional Standards Commission by the District's Administration.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

If an employee wishes to use social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements etc., for a school-based club, activity or organization, the employee must also comply with the following rules:

1. The employee must set up the class, club, activity, etc. as a group list that will be "closed and moderated"; your building administrator may approve open public access sites for school-wide social media activities;
2. The employee must establish mechanisms for delivery of information to students that are not members of the group via non-electronic means;
3. Members will not be established as "friends" or similar designation, but as members of the group list;
4. Access to the communications conveyed through the site may only be gained with the permission of the employee maintaining the site;
5. Parents shall be granted access to any site that their child has been invited to join. Parents shall report any communications by students or school personnel they believe to be inappropriate to Building Administration;

6. Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization, or team;
7. The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly;
8. The employee's supervisor shall be granted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose;
9. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all District-sponsored social media activity.
10. Postings made to the site must comply with this policy in its entirety; and
11. The Superintendent, or designee, reserves the right to shut down or discontinue the group if he or she believes it is in the best overall interest of the students.

Cross Reference: Policy 5330 Employee Electronic Mail and On-Line Services Usage
 Policy 5335 Employee Use of Electronic Communications Devices

Legal Reference: Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators

Policy History:

Adopted on: February 13, 2013

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