

SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

I. PURPOSE

- A. Social media has become a communications, entertainment and learning tool. The District recognizes that employees, students and Board of Education members utilize social media for a wide variety of communications and social interaction endeavors.
- B. The District encourages the proper, appropriate use of electronic devices and social media by District employees, students and members of the Board of Education. Simultaneously, it seeks to prevent use of social media in a manner which disrupts the educational environment of the school or jeopardizes the safety, health and well-being of employees and students.
- C. This policy is aimed at fostering these goals and establishing guidelines for social media use by District employees, students and Board of Education members. This policy is to be read in conjunction with applicable law (statutory and case law) and existing District policies and regulations including but not limited to the Acceptable Use Policy Internet Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy. This policy supplements but does not supplant existing policies.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. The definitions set forth below shall apply throughout this policy. Additionally, recognizing social media changes regularly, the Superintendent is hereby authorized to provide further definitions in regulation with respect to terms applicable to social media use.
- B. The following definitions are to be read in conjunction with applicable definitions in other Board policies including but not limited to the Acceptable Use Policy, Internet Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy.
 - 1. **“Blog”** is a website or portion of a website where individuals may provide comment, description or opinion on a matter related to (or not) subject matter otherwise found on that site.
 - 2. **“DISTRICT”** shall mean the Watertown City School District including all “school property”.

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3. **“Employee”** shall mean any person employed by the District in a full or part time capacity and shall include temporary workers in the District.
4. **“Electronic Communications Device”** shall mean and include cellular telephones, pagers, computers and other devices meant to transmit audio, video and/or text from one or more electronic medium to one or more other electronic medium.
5. **“District Representative”** shall mean the Superintendent or someone appointed or designated by the Superintendent.
6. **“Sexting”** refers to the act or process of a person taking a sexually-explicit pornographic digital photograph of himself or herself or of someone else and transmitting it as an MMS and SMS via an electronic communications device. These images can then be posted on the Internet or forwarded electronically to other people. Sexting may also include transmission of images and text which are sexually explicit. Such materials may include, but are not limited to, digital photographs, language text, and links to such content.
7. **“Social Media”** refers to content generally created by individuals using accessible and scalable technologies through the Internet. Popular examples of social media include (but are not limited to): Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Wiki, YouTube, Snap Chat, LinkedIn and blogs. These examples are not all inclusive and this policy is intended to cover all social media platform options even those not specifically listed.
8. **“Student”** means any elementary or secondary student of the District including any out-of-district student being educated in the District.
9. **“Text Message,”** a colloquial term, refers to brief written messages, typically limited to 140 characters, between mobile phones over wireless networks.
10. **“Tweet”** is a term coined from the Twitter website (www.twitter.com). A tweet is a blog post of sorts, traditionally limited to 140 characters. Sending a tweet is tweeting.
11. **“Wiki”** is effectively a web-based encyclopedia which any person may be able to add an entry or edit without authorization of the site administrator. www.Wikipedia.org is one of the most popular Wikis.
12. **E-mail** policies apply when used as social media.

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- A. **Privilege:** The District determines that social media is a privilege, not a right and requires responsibility. Failure to adhere to this policy or the regulations promulgated hereunder may result in discipline which may include prohibition of social media.
- B. **Applicability of Policy:**
1. This policy applies to social media activity which takes place in the school building(s), on District grounds or at District events.
 2. This policy applies to social media use accessed through school resources.
 3. Recognizing certain legal limitations with respect to application of this policy to off-campus, private activity of District employees and staff, the Board encourages and expects appropriate use of social media at all times, including off school grounds.
 4. This policy applies to District employees, students and Board of Education members.
- C. **General Rules:** District employees, students and Board of Education members shall:
1. Use social media in an educationally responsible and appropriate manner;
 2. Use social media in a manner which does not create a risk of substantial disruption or threat of violence within the school environment; and,
 3. Use social media in a manner which avoids invasion of the privacy of rights of students, employees and members of the District community.
- D. **Anti-Harassment or Discrimination:**
1. Under no circumstances may any voicemail, email, or other electronic communication or posting originating at the District, created on District equipment, created by District Representatives, or intentionally received at the District be in violation of the District's policies concerning equal employment opportunity, discrimination, harassment or be of a nature that may create a hostile or inappropriate work environment or be in violation of anti-fraternization rules. District Representatives who encounter such material on District computers or elsewhere should immediately report it to the District's Title IX Officer or the Superintendent or his/her designee.

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2. Electronic communication systems, personal electronic devices, including cell phones and PDAs, and social/business networks should not be used to transmit material likely to embarrass, harass or offend other persons, either inside or outside of the District, as set forth in the District policy on harassment and/or bullying.
3. The District strictly prohibits the use of its systems/equipment or public networks to communicate sexually explicit or offensive material, comments or anything which might offend or disparage another on the basis of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, national origin, religion, political belief, or other characteristic protected by law.

E. Personal Use:

1. The incidental personal use of electronic communication tools comes with the express understanding that the District reserves the right to restrict access to sites, and/or to review all use of, and to inspect all material created by, stored or transmitted on, electronic communication tools, and with the express understanding that such use may not interfere with job performance/duties.
2. Certain networks may be blocked by the District, such as “Facebook” and “YouTube.” No District business may be conducted or shared on personal “Hotmail”, “Facebook”, “Twitter” or like accounts, unless it is within the job duties of the person(s) posting on such sites.
3. Only official District accounts may be used by authorized District Representatives, as defined in this policy, to conduct communications via social networks such as “Facebook”, “Snap Chat”, “Twitter”, or any others.
4. Consistent with this policy, personal conduct and postings on social networks must remain professionally appropriate when the District is referenced, identified or identifiable.
5. School portable devices are to be used per Acceptable Use Policy on and off campus.

F. Electronic Mail Use:

1. Electronic mail is not private. It is expected that email communications should be written with proper grammar and decorum. E-mail should also be drafted in the same manner as would for the sending of hard copy communications.

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2. It is important for all District employees and Board of Education members to remember that although e-mail is convenient, e-mail is not a mechanism for communicating to staff unless such communication is for professional, work related reasons. Employees should refrain from sending all staff or large group e-mails without express permission from the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. It is understood and accepted that staff may send emails providing notice of meetings such as union meetings.
3. Personnel matters should never be discussed in public Internet spaces, social media or through group e-mails. Any concerns about personnel matters should be addressed to the administration only.
4. E-mail may never be used for solicitation purposes, except for school-related fundraisers.

G. Monitoring Use:

1. The District's electronic resources are the property of the District. The District may periodically monitor use of its electronic equipment.
2. The use of District's tools constitutes permission by the user – employees and students – for the District to monitor/access files including personal use.
3. The District may from time to time monitor social media prepared by or referring to the District, employees, students or Board of Education members. The fact that a District employee, student or Board of Education member may be permitted to choose his/her own password does not imply they have any justifiable privacy expectations in the material protected by password. District, employees, students or Board of Education members do not have a privacy right to personal information transmitted or stored on the District's equipment.
4. District employee, student and Board of Education member use of the District's tools constitutes permission for the District to monitor communications and to access files/postings/data made on or with these tools, whether or not made/posted during your regular hours of work.
5. Posting on social media sites of any content that reveals information and/or identity of students that breaches confidentiality is strictly prohibited.

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6. Electioneering, lobbying and campaigning on websites, or social media sites through District electronic communication devices or on school time shall be prohibited.

H. **Unacceptable Uses:** The Internet, including social media, may not be used on school computers or resources for any of the following purposes:

1. Sexting - Sexting is prohibited by employees, students and Board members. Those determined to have engaged in sexting shall be subject to discipline and possible criminal prosecution in accordance with all applicable laws;
2. To carry defamatory, discriminatory or obscene material;
3. In connection with any infringement of another person's intellectual property rights (e.g., copyrights);
4. In a manner that violates the terms of any applicable telecommunications license or any laws governing the trans-border dataflow (e.g., laws dealing with data collection, protection, privacy, confidentiality and security);
5. In connection with any attempt to penetrate computer or network security of any computer or other system or to gain unauthorized access (or attempted access) to any other person's computer, e-mail or voice-mail accounts or equipment; or
6. In connection with the violation or attempted violation of any other law, rule, or regulation.

IV. **SUPERINTENDENT RULES**

The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to establish rules governing the specific use of social media by employees and staff. Such rules shall be consistent with this policy and the guidelines of use herein.

V. **CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE**

- A. All users of social media shall comply with this policy and superintendent rules. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension.
- B. An employee's failure to adhere to this policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Such action shall be consistent with collective bargaining agreements, Education and Civil Service Laws as applicable.

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- C. A student who fails to adhere to this policy and superintendent rules risks discipline consistent with the District Code of Conduct and any such further discipline consistent with Board of Education policies and law.
- D. Members of the Board are subject to the terms of this policy and expected to adhere to it. Failure to adhere to the policy could lead to action, consistent with existing law, against any particular Board member.

VI. EMPLOYEE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS USE

- A. In addition to and consistent with this policy, to maximize efficiency and ensure against unwanted disruption and distraction, District employees may communicate with one another during school hours so long as such communication is to further the educational mission of the District and is not in any manner disruptive to the learning environment. Employees shall not engage in use of electronic communication devices during class except when such use is pursuant to a lesson or part of the instructional program.
- B. Employees shall be cautious about divulging confidential information and shall seek prior authorization before posting any content that is in the District’s name, states the District’s opinion or could be reasonably attributable to the District.
- C. The Board prohibits employees from using electronic communication devices to communicate with students except for educational purposes or those directly related to instruction and learning. For purposes of this policy, the Board includes as permissible communications between employees and students participating in extracurricular activities as such communication is necessary for training, scheduling and practice.

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Watertown City School District
 Adopted: 07/07/15
 Revised: 07/02/18