SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

The Pike County School District realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of the 21st century learning. To this aim, the Pike County School District has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for District employees (certified and classified), students and the district community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that schools can discipline personnel if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. The Pike County School District social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social activities. But it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by Pike County School District teachers and students is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to the district's Acceptable Use Policy. By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog, wiki and/or podcast.

Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Digital Images & Video

Personal Responsibility

- When posting to your blog be sure you say that the information is representative of Your Views and Opinions and <u>not</u> necessarily the views and opinions of the Pike County School District.

- Remember that blogs, wikis and podcasts are an extension of your classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.

- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying yourself as a Pike County School District employee online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents, and the school community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at the Pike County School District.

- When contributing online do not post confidential student information. As to what is and what is not confidential refer to the student handbook on disclosure.

Disclaimers

- Pike County School District employees are highly encouraged to include disclaimers within their **personal** blogs that the views are their **own** and do not reflect on their employer. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the Pike County School District's positions, strategies, opinions, or policies."

- This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt the Pike County School District employees from a special responsibility when blogging.

- Classroom blogs do not require a disclaimer, but teachers are encouraged to monitor content contributed by students.

Copyright and Fair Use

- Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. See <u>U.S. Copyright Office – Fair Use</u>.

- A hyperlink to outside sources is recommended. Be sure not to **plagiarize** and give credit where it is due. When using a hyperlink, be sure that the content is appropriate and adheres to the Pike County School District.

Profiles and Identity

- Remember your association and responsibility with the Pike County School District in online social environments. If you identify yourself as a Pike County School District employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues, parents, and students. How you represent yourself online should be comparable to how you represent yourself in person.
- **No** last names, school names, addresses or phone numbers should appear on blogs or wikis.
- Be cautious how you setup your profile, bio, avatar, etc.
- When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent yourself make sure you select a school appropriate image. Adhere to Employee handout book guidelines as well as your AUP. Also remember not to utilize protected images. Images should be available under Creative Commons or your own.

Use of Social Media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

- Pike County School District employees are personally responsible for all comments/information they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—Protect Your Privacy.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face, and be in accordance with the highest professional Standards.
- By posting your comments having online conversations etc. on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world, be aware that even with the strictest privacy

settings what you 'say' online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.

- Comments related to the school should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even on the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the Public Domain.

- Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject where possible. This is especially the case where photographs of students and professional colleagues are concerned.

- Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect on your professionalism.

- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use may be deemed inappropriate. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality, and by that token an extension of your professional life and your classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall – is it really correct to put it online?

- Microblogging (Twitter etc.) comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings as witnessed by the high profile cases in the UK with sports stars being disciplined for tweets expressing personal views. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and again refrain from any comment that could be deemed unprofessional.

- Pike County School District discourages teachers, administration or other staff members from 'friending' active students on personal accounts. The Pike County School District does ask staff to consider creating a fan page in Facebook or a separate classroom/club twitter account instead of using your personal account.

Social Bookmarking

- Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark.

- Be aware of words used to *tag* or describe the bookmark.
- Be aware of URL shortening services. Verify the landing site to which they point before submitting a link as a bookmark. It would be best to utilize the original URL if not constrained by the number of characters as in microblogs – i.e. Twitter.
- Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as you do not control what appears on landing pages in the future.

Instant Messaging

- Pike County School District employees are required to get authorization to have instant messaging programs downloaded on their school computers.
- Pike County School District employees also recognize this same authorization is required for access to instant messaging programs that are available through web interfaces with no download.
- Avatar images and profile information should follow the same guidelines as the above *Profiles and Identity* section.

Requests for Social Media Sites

The Pike County School District understands that 21st century learning is constantly changing technology and that many sites that are currently "blocked" by the Pike County School District's internet filter may have pedagogical significance for personnel and student use.

- If you would like to request that another online site be accessible to use for teaching and learning, please fill out the **Social Media Request Form** and email it to tech support.
- Requests will be reviewed and the district social media guidelines will be updated periodically throughout the school year.

- A description should be provided of the intended use of the site and what tools on the site match your needed criteria.

Disparaging or Derogatory Content

Employees should not, whether on duty or off duty, post on any Internet site, including, but not limited to, any Social Media Sites, any information that is disparaging or derogatory to district employees, students, or parents.

Content of Postings

Users are personally responsible for all content they post on social networking sites. Remember that it is difficult to delete content once posted to a site and that Internet archives make it possible to search many outdated or deleted postings. Make sure you are honest and accurate when posting information and, if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Never post any information or rumor that you know to be false about district personnel or others and never post privileged information or other information relating to district students or parents.

Your postings should always be fair and courteous to fellow district employees and others. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, defamatory, threatening, or intimidating, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law or district policy.

If a user has a question about the propriety of any posting, he or she should consult his or her immediate supervisor or the school district's legal counsel.