

Revised: _____

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447.1 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this administrative procedure is to set forth guidelines for employee use of publicly available social media networks, including but not limited to personal websites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, and virtual worlds.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

These are the guidelines for social media in the Rothsay Public Schools. Employees contributing to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media — both on and off the district network — are expected to understand and follow these guidelines. Failure to do so could put employees at risk.

III. GUIDELINES

- A. The line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within a social media context. Educational employees have a responsibility to maintain appropriate employee-student relationships, whether on or off duty. Both case law and public expectations hold educational employees to a higher standard of conduct than the general public.
- B. Employees should make sure that their online activities do not interfere with their work assignment. District social media technologies are provided for educational use. Use of social media for personal use during district time or on district equipment is prohibited. Social media entries are typically published with a date and time stamp. Social media published times during work day reflect negatively on the publisher and may result in disciplinary action.
- C. Employees are responsible for what they write. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Do not denigrate or insult others, including other schools or competitors. Our communities reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenities, or other offensive language. Be sensitive to privacy and topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. If uncertain about content, an employee should review these guidelines or consider discussing it with his or her supervisor. Trademark, copyright, and fair use requirements must be respected.
- D. Employees are expected to ensure the safety of students. When employees, including coaches and co-curricular advisors, choose to join or engage with these social

networking groups, they do so as an employee of the district and have responsibility for monitoring content and reporting inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. Employees are responsible to protect the safety of minors. State and Federal mandated reporting laws apply to school district employees participating in the social media context.

- E. Employees must be transparent. Employees posting about their work, must use their real names and identify their employment relationship with the district. If employees have a vested interest in something they are discussing, they are responsible for pointing that out. An employee who publishes to a personal site outside the district's network, should use a disclaimer to state in clear terms that the views expressed are the employee's alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of Rothsay Public Schools.
- F. Employees must protect confidential information. Students, parents, and colleagues should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network or publishing a conversation that was meant to be private. Student photos require parental consent.^[SEP:SEP] It is acceptable to discuss general details about projects, lessons, or events and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for an individual (e.g., Teacher A) so long as the information provided does not make it easy for someone to identify the individual or violate any privacy laws. Furthermore, public social networking sites are not the place to conduct school business with students or parents.

Employees who are identified as district employees are creating perceptions about their expertise and about the district by community members, parents, students, the public, and colleagues and managers. Employees who chose to join or engage with district students and families in a social media context, must do so in a professional manner, ever mindful that in the minds of students, families, colleagues and the public, you are a district employee. Employees must ensure all content associated with them is consistent with their work and with the district's beliefs and professional standards.

One of the aims of social media is to create dialogue, and people will not always agree on an issue. When confronted with a difference of opinion, employees should remain calm. Sometimes, it's best to ignore a comment and not give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response. In the case of an error, be up front about the mistake and correct it quickly. Employees should express their points in a clear, logical way. An online forum is not a venue to be antagonistic.

Be careful with personal information. Understand the full use of social media sites' privacy settings. Employees should know how to disable anonymous postings and use moderating tools on their social media site(s). Criminals can piece together information provided on different web sites and use it to impersonate you or someone you know, or even re-set your passwords.

Source: Adapted from Minnetonka School District Employee Guidelines for Social Media.