

Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	Employee Use of Social Networks
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Purpose

The district recognizes the ubiquity of social networking in personal and professional communications. This policy is intended to assist the employee in making good decisions when communicating and obtaining information online, while blogging and using social networking sites in accordance with district policy. Employees are reminded that they are professionals and are representatives of the district and the community in all aspects of their lives and should conduct themselves publicly in accordance with the responsibilities of public service.

Guidelines

Interaction With Students Through Blogs and Social Networking

Employees are discouraged from following or “friending” students on personal social networking sites. If an employee finds it necessary to communicate with students using personal or district sites, s/he must maintain professional interaction at all times in accordance with the PA State Code of Conduct.

Student/Employee Interactions via social media shall be limited to “official” educational forums only. **Official forums** means electronic resources provided by the District and/or personal employee social media accounts that are created and used solely for educational purposes, and where a professional atmosphere is maintained at all times.

Employees shall avoid private 1:1 communication with students via social media or through chat features. Private one-to-one communication with a student shall be limited to electronic resources provided by the District such as email or classroom management applications.

Anonymity

The employee should be honest about his/her identity when utilizing social networking. Employees should not pretend to be another person. Tracking tools enable anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. Employees who write about political, social, cultural, or education related matters should include a disclaimer on their site that provides as follows: “The views expressed [in the social media format] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Kutztown Area School District.”

For personal social media accounts, employees shall set privacy settings to ensure a professional atmosphere is maintained between the employee and students and parents, and to limit the unnecessary disclosure of personal information.

Liability

All social media users are liable for what they post online including on their own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers and social media users have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, or obscene (as defined by law). Employees should also be aware that the district may conduct web searches in order to determine if it is being referenced in an inappropriate or illegal manner. As a representative of the district, please be aware that your postings may be viewed by students and parents/guardians and, if inappropriate, may subject the employee to discipline as appropriate. Images, posts, and comments posted on social networking sites reflect on you and the district.

All information published by the employee on his/her blog or social networking sites must comply with the district's acceptable use and personal conduct policies. Further, the employee must comply with confidentiality obligations imposed by law, including HIPAA and FERPA. Employees must respect all copyright laws and must reference or cite all sources as required by law. Under no circumstances may the employee use district logos, mascots, or images without express written consent. Employees must be aware of their responsibilities to maintain confidentiality of the personally identifiable information of students, including names and pictures, and shall refrain from disclosing any such confidential information through social media. Information posted shall not violate the annual media release and opt-out procedures.[1][2][3]

Under no circumstances should employees discuss situations involving employee or student discipline on their blog or social networking site. As a general guideline, employees should not post anything that they would not want to read in a newspaper or on a billboard.

Political Speech

Employees should not use the district's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political party or candidate.

Protect Your Identity

While employees should be honest about their identity, they should not provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Do not list your home address or telephone number or work telephone or email address. It is a good idea to create a separate email address that is used only with your social media site.

Monitor Comments

Comments are a major part of the social networking environment, but employees should review and approve all comments before they appear. This allows the employee to delete any spam comments, block inappropriate posts, and delete any offensive or frivolous comments.

Employees should not permit students to comment on their personal social networking page or on their blog.

Conduct in the Use of Social Networking

Under no circumstances shall the use of social networking activities interfere with the employee's work obligations.

Employees should be aware that even privacy settings are not foolproof. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after they have been published to the Internet. Sites such as Google constantly crawl the web and archive websites, allowing them to continue to be viewed even after the information has been removed or the site terminated. Employees should not post when they feel angry or passionate about a subject and should wait until they calm down if they are going to reply or post on any blog or social networking page.

Employees should use care in the photos of themselves that they post. Only pictures that they would be comfortable sharing with the parents/guardians of district students or their employer should be posted. Employees should check pictures posted by their friends to ensure that a search for the employee's name does not bring up images of the employee that they themselves did not post.

Discipline

Employees are reminded that social media posts demonstrating insubordination, immorality, cruelty, unlawful discrimination, or other unlawful acts may result in disciplinary action.

Violation of this policy will result in discipline as appropriate, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable district disciplinary policies and procedures.[1]

Legal

1. Pol. 317

2. Pol. 814

3. Pol. 815