POLICY NO. 1805
Adopted: 1-10-24

SOCIAL MEDIA

POLICY:

Lake Stevens School District ("the District") recognizes that social media can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication and learning. The District is committed to ensuring that all employees who use social media for professional purposes do so in a safe and responsible manner. The District strives to create professional social media environments that mirror the academically supportive environments of our schools.

This policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for employee use of social media platforms to ensure professionalism, ethical behavior, and the protection of student boundaries and privacy.

Fundraising for school district purposes on social media accounts is not allowed, unless it adheres to Policy 5315 Student Fundraising Activities and its procedures.

Employees must adhere to this policy and procedures when creating a social media presence for professional use—and are strongly encouraged to follow the best practices for personal social media use.

Cross References:
Board Policies -

1325	Public Access to District Records
1800	Electronic Resources
4035	Confidential Communication
4900	Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries
5100	Student Rights and Responsibilities
5200	Protection of the Rights and Privacy of Parents and Students
5230	Student Records
5315	Student Fundraising Activities
5500	Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited
5510	Freedom of Expression
5580	Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

Legal References:
CFR 45, Part 99 Family Education Rights and Privacy Act Washington Public Records Act (RCW 42.56)

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PROCEDURES:
Lake Stevens School District employees may create social media accounts for schools, programs, departments, athletic teams, clubs and classrooms. These accounts must be approved by the employee's principal and/or supervisor and the Executive Director of Communications & Community Services.

The following procedures apply to all district employees. All existing district policies, regulations, and laws regarding employee conduct may be applicable in the social media environment.

Definitions

- **Social media site:** any electronic, online, or Internet-based platform that allows interactive communication between persons or entities in online communities, including social networks, blogs, websites, application software, Internet forums and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- **Professional social media presence/accounts:** access and use of social media sites for a Lake Stevens School District work-related purpose.
- **Personal social media presence/accounts:** access to and use of social media sites by employees for non-work-related purposes.
- **Students:** students currently enrolled in Lake Stevens School District.
- **Employees, staff or staff member:** any Lake Stevens School District full-time employee, part-time employee, contracted employee, substitute employee; coach, or advisor.

Professional Social Media Accounts
District employees should treat professional social media accounts like a classroom and/or workplace. If a certain behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on professional social media sites.

The lines between public and private, personal and professional, may often be blurred on the Internet. District employees should ensure their conduct is consistent with district policies and procedures, and promotes inclusivity and respect.

1. **Setting up professional social media accounts**
    a. District employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities must maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. District employees may not use their personal email address for professional social media activities. The professional social media presence should utilize the @lkstevens.wednet.edu email address and should be

separate from any personal social media presence maintained by the district employee.
    i. The only exception is when a social media platform requires a professional account to be linked to a personal account. In these instances, the employee must pay extra attention to the account in which they are posting/engaging.
b. Principals and/or supervisors will be given login information and/or access to the social media account(s) established by their employee(s). This protects our schools and District as employees transition to and from their roles.
c. Professional social media accounts must include language identifying the account as a school/department/classroom/club account, and must include the district's posting guidelines.
d. District employees must use privacy settings and content moderation on their professional social media sites. Employees should be aware that there are limitations to privacy and content moderation settings, and they have a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.
e. It is the responsibility of the employee to routinely monitor their professional social media account(s) to review comments and activity, and to ensure that it adheres to district posting guidelines.
f. Everything published on the district's social media accounts are considered public records and can be requested as part of the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56).

2. Student information and privacy

a. No personally identifiable student information may be posted by district employees on professional social media sites—including student photographs—without the consent of the students' parents/guardians/caregivers.
b. District employees must check the opt-out list in Skyward to determine whether a student may be photographed/recorded/quoted. Head Office Professionals have access to this list and can provide support to employees.
c. Students who assist with professional social media sites are not permitted to post photographs featuring other students without following the guidelines above.

3. Monitoring and maintaining professional social media accounts

a. Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media.
b. District employees are mandated reporters and are required to abide by the same reporting responsibilities in a social media context.
c. Employees must refrain from allowing personal or political viewpoints to dictate the social media content shared.
d. Proper spelling and grammar should be used when creating social media content.
e. Social media content should be truthful, timely and relevant.
f. Principals/supervisors should monitor their employees' professional social media sites. If questionable communications or behavior are identified, administrators should contact the Executive Director of Communications & Community Services for assistance.

g. Administrators reserve the right to remove, disable and provide feedback regarding professional social media sites that do not adhere to district policy, the law, or that do not reasonably align with these procedures.
h. Professional social media accounts may "share," "repost," or "retweet" messages from other social media accounts so long as the content furthers the educational mission of the school and/or school district.
i. District employees may tag the official social media accounts of other school districts, schools, teams, clubs, educational institutions, and/or educational products so long as the employee does not receive financial or other tangible compensation for the tag.

4. Media inquiries

a. Any media inquiries received via professional social media sites should be promptly referred to the Communications & Community Services Department.

Personal social media accounts

Online activities must not interfere with your job duties. District technologies are provided for educational use. Personal use of social media during district time or on district equipment should be quick and infrequent.

Employees are encouraged to be mindful of their online behavior, which should reflect standards of honesty, respect, good judgment and consideration. Once posted, information may remain public despite efforts to delete it.

1. Communication with students

a. In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, District employees will not communicate with students who are currently enrolled in District schools on personal social media sites. This is subject to the following exceptions:
   - communication with relatives
   - pre-existing relationships

   In these instances, employees should notify their principal/administrator.

2. Guidance regarding personal social media accounts

Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Employees are encouraged not to post negative comments or remarks related to Lake Stevens School District, its schools, students or employees. If you have an issue or concern as an employee, you are encouraged to speak with your supervisor or contact the Human Resources Department. Posting concerns on the Internet or social media sites is not the most constructive way to resolve a concern. What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Exercise good judgment and err on the side of caution. When in doubt, don't post it.

a. The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media accounts is prohibited.
b. District employees may not use personal social media accounts to conduct any school district business.
c. District employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media accounts. Employees should be

aware that there are limitations to privacy settings, and they have a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.

d. District employees should not "tag" photos of other district employees without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.
e. District employees should not use their personal social media accounts to act as representatives of Lake Stevens School District.
f. District employees may not use the district's logo in any personal postings without the written permission of the Executive Director of Communications & Community Services. This does not include "sharing," "reposting," or "retweeting" posts from official district accounts.
g. District employees are mandated reporters and are required to abide by the same reporting responsibilities in a personal social media context.
h. The District does not actively monitor its employees' social media accounts. Should the district's attention be brought to an employee's personal social media content that demonstrates insubordination, immorality, cruelty, discrimination or other unlawful acts, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

These procedures provide general guidance and do not cover every potential social media situation. Should any questions arise, employees should consult the Frequently Asked Questions below, and/or contact their principal/administrator or the Executive Director of Communications.

SOCIAL MEDIA | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Why does the District have a social media policy and procedures?**
   Social media offers many educational benefits. This policy and its procedures are designed to encourage professionalism, responsibility, safety and awareness for district employees. Recommended best practices for employees who use social media for personal communications are also included.

2. **What if district employees are already using social media for either professional or personal purposes?**
   Professional social media use: District employees currently using social media for professional purposes should ensure their use aligns with this policy and procedures. Any use not consistent with these documents should be altered or amended.

   Personal social media use: District employees who use social media for personal use should take steps to remove current students, subject to the exceptions listed in the guidelines, from those accounts. Additionally, employees should review this policy and procedures to ensure they are aware of best practices.

3. **Do these guidelines apply to students?**
   These procedures do not address student-to-student communication via social media. Student Codes of Conduct/handbooks, district discipline policies, and acceptable use rules set forth expected standards of behavior regarding student communication. These documents establish the range of disciplinary options and interventions that can be used when students engage in misconduct involving social media.

4. **How should district employees respond to "friend" or "follow" requests by current students on their personal social media sites and accounts?**
   If district employees receive a request from a current district student to connect or communicate through a personal social media site, they should refuse the request. The following language is one suggested response: *"Please do not be offended if I do not accept or respond to your request. As a district employee, I cannot interact with current students through personal social media accounts."*

5. **I discovered a post about our district or schools. Can I respond from my personal social media account?**
   This is situational, and can be tricky. Please use this Guide for Responding Online to help you navigate these situations.

6. **May district employees using social media for personal use communicate with other district colleagues?**
   These procedures do not address communication between employees on personal social media accounts. District employees who use personal social media are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites, and to use good judgment about what they share online.