

Social Media

The district is committed to ensuring that all staff and students who utilize social media technology 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.

Social media technology is a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors.

The district establishes practices for professional social media communication between district employees, as well as social media communication between district employees and students.

In recognition of the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era the lines between professional and personal endeavors are sometimes blurred, these standards address practices for use of personal social media by district staff.¹

1. Definition of Social Media

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Flickr, Google+, Instagram, Linked In, Twitter, and YouTube.²

1.1 Professional social media is an authorized work-related media activity that is either school-based, such as principals establishing a Facebook page for their school or teachers establishing an educational blog to serve legitimate educational purposes for their class, or non-school-based, such as the district office establishing a Facebook page to facilitate communication.

1.2 Personal social media use is a non-work-related social media activity, such as an employee establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for his/her own personal use.

2. Applicability

These standards apply to all district employees. The district will take steps to ensure that all other district staff, vendors, volunteers, and independent contractors are informed of these standards.

3. Professional Social Media Use

3.1 Maintenance of Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts

District employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities will maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. District employees will not use their personal email address for professional social media activities. The

¹ These standards do not address student-to-student communication via social media. Student discipline policies, student code of conduct, and acceptable use rules establish the range of disciplinary options and guidance intervention that can be used when students engage in misconduct involving social media.

² These standards do not address the professional use of third-party collaboration tools for purposes other than social media.

professional social media presence utilizes a professional (district) email address and is completely separate from any personal social media presence maintained by the district employee.

3.2 Communication with Students

District employees who work with students and communicate³ with students through professional social media sites⁴ will follow these standards:

3.2.1 Professional social media sites that are school-based will be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational or extra-curricular program matters.⁵

3.2.2 Professional social media sites that are non-school based will have a reasonable relationship to the mission and function of the district office creating the site.

3.2.3 Each school year, student's parents⁶ will be notified in writing about the professional social media activities in which their children will be invited to participate. Parents will be informed of the purpose and nature of each professional social media account their children will access and will instruct parents to contact the school with any questions or concerns.

3.2.4 To the maximum extent possible, based on the social media site being used, district supervisors or their designees will be given administrator rights or access to the professional social media accounts established by district employees.

3.2.5 District employees will obtain authorization from their supervisor and the Technology Director before setting up a professional media presence.

3.2.6 The employee's immediate supervisors or their designees are responsible for maintaining a list of all professional social media accounts within their particular school or office.

3.2.7 Professional social media sites will include language identifying the sites as professional social media sites. For example, the professional sites can identify the district and the particular school, department or particular grade that is utilizing the site.

3.3 Guidance Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

3.3.1 All district employees will treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in district professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site.

3.3.2 All district employees will exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using professional social media sites.

3.3.3 All district employees will use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites to ensure that professional media communications only reach the employees' intended audience. However, employees must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy

³ The term "communicates," as used here, refers to activity including, but not limited to, "friending," "following," "commenting," "liking," and "posting messages" using social media sites.

⁴ The term "site" and "sites" refer to an online social media account or usage.

⁵ On school-based professional social media sites that involve students, district employees will use the sites for professional purposes. District employees are not to review any personal social media accounts created by their students.

⁶ The term "parent" means the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), or any person in a parental or custodial relationship to the student. This includes birth or adoptive parent, step-parent, legally appointed guardian, and foster parent.

settings and other functions. As a result, employees have an individualized responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.

3.3.4 Professional social media communication will be in compliance with existing district operational procedures and applicable federal and state laws including, but not limited to, prohibitions on the disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language.

3.3.5 No personally identifiable student information may be posted by district employees on professional social media sites, including student photographs, unless the appropriate permission has been obtained according to district procedure.

3.3.6 Students who participate in professional social media sites are not permitted to post photographs featuring other students.

3.4 Monitoring of Professional Social Media Sites

3.4.1 Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media. The district will regularly monitor professional social media sites to protect the school community.

3.4.2 Supervisors or their designees, such as webmasters, are responsible for monitoring their employees' professional social media sites. Monitoring responsibilities include reviewing professional social media sites on a regular basis. If supervisors discover questionable communications or behavior on professional social media sites, the supervisors are required to contact the appropriate authorities for assistance. With administrative approval and supervision, district employees may create a professional social media site. If staff are notified of questionable communications or behavior on their site, they are required to contact the appropriate authorities of the district, as well as their supervisor, for assistance.⁷

3.4.3 District supervisors reserve the right to remove, disable, and provide feedback regarding professional social media sites that do not adhere to district procedures, the law, or that do not reasonably align with these standards.

3.4.4 To assist in monitoring, as a recommended practice to the extent possible, the default setting for comments on professional social media sites will be turned off. If the default setting for comments is turned on, the comments on the site must be monitored on a daily basis.

3.4.5 When establishing professional social media sites, supervisors and employees will consider the intended audience for the site and consider the level of privacy assigned to the site; specifically, the employee must judge whether the site is a private network; for example, limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school, or a public network; for example, anyone within the school or a larger group within the district community can participate. It is a recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.

3.4.6 District supervisors will maintain a detailed log of all reported non-compliant communications, as well as any violations that are otherwise brought to the supervisor's attention. There may also exist an individual mandatory reporting obligation for involved professional school personnel.

⁷ Existing district reporting requirements must be followed. Depending on the circumstances, the appropriate authorities may include, but are not limited to, the school principal, the district administrative office, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Office of Professional Practices (OPP), Child Protective Services (CPS), and/or the Yakima County Sheriff.

3.5 Press Inquiries

Any press inquiries received via professional social media sites will be promptly referred to the district administrative office.

4. Personal Social Media Use

4.1 Communication with Students

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, district employees will not communicate⁸ with students who are currently enrolled in district schools on personal social media sites. This provision is subject to the following exceptions:

4.1.1 communication with relatives; and

4.1.2 an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case the district employee will notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.

4.2 Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

District employees will exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

4.2.1 As a recommended practice, district employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, the employee must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees have an individualized responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.

4.2.2 District employees will not “tag” photos of other district employees, district volunteers, district contractors or district vendors without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.

4.2.3 Personal social media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption at school and/or the workplace; it can be in violation of district procedures and federal and/or state law.

4.2.4 The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites in violation of these standards is prohibited.

4.2.5 District employees will not use the district’s logo in any personal postings and will not link to the district’s website or post district material on any personal social media sites without the written permission of a district administrator (with the exception of the district Facebook pages).

5. Applicability of District Procedures and Other Laws

5.1 These standards provide guidance intended to supplement, not supersede, existing district procedures and state and federal laws. Users of professional social media sites are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state and local laws including, but not limited to, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and intellectual property laws.

5.2 These standards are not designed to serve as a code of conduct for social media use. However, all existing district procedures, regulations and laws that cover employee conduct may be applicable in the social media environment.

⁸ Examples of such communications include, but are not limited to, “friending,” “following,” “commenting,” “liking,” and posting messages.

- 5.3** District employees who are mandated reporters⁹ are required to abide by the same reporting responsibilities in social media context.

6. Additional Inquiries

This procedure is meant to provide general guidance and does not cover every potential social media situation. Should any questions arise, contact your supervisor. As these standards address rapidly changing technology, the district will regularly revisit these standards and will update them as needed.

Cross References: 2020 – Course Design Selection and Adoption of Instructional Materials
 2025 – Copyright Compliance
 4060 - Distribution of Materials
 2340 – Religious-Related Activities and Practices
 3210 – Nondiscrimination
 3207 – Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying
 3205 – Sexual Harassment
 3220 – Freedom of Expression

Legal References: RCW 28A.600.010 Government of schools, pupils, employees, rules and regulations for –Due process guarantees—Enforcement.

Advanced Network & Services, Inc. (ANS) *Acceptable Use Policy*
National Science Foundation Internet Backbone (NFS net), Backbone Services
Acceptable Use Policy of the NSF net.
Legal Reference: PL 107-110, Section 111i(a)

Management Resources:
Policy News, October 2008 Family Involvement Policy
Policy News, June 2005 Title I Parental Involvement Policy
Policy News, August 2003 No Child Left Behind Update

Adoption Date: **6.20.17**
Classification: Discretionary
Revised Dates:

⁹ Various district operational procedures and state and federal law impose reporting requirements on district employees for issues such as child abuse, child maltreatment, school-related incidents and crimes, corporal punishment, verbal abuse, unlawful discrimination or harassment by district employees, student-to-student sexual harassment, and student-to-student bias-based harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying. Please note that all previous reporting requirements continue to be in force and will apply to behavior occurring within a social media context.