

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Philosophy Statement

To accommodate new communication paradigms and tools and remain at the forefront of preparing students for the future, educators and school districts must explore new and emerging technologies to supplement the range of services they currently offer. Amongst the tools available to educators and school districts are social networking sites (hereinafter referred to as “SNS”).

SNS have great potential to connect people across the globe and enhance communication; however, they are also more informal, less structured and ever evolving. These guidelines are designed to establish some basic parameters for the creation and use of SNS for the Patchogue-Medford School District and use of SNS by the District, students, staff members and community volunteers.

Definition of Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) are Web sites and/or online communities that connect people through social and other networks. SNS often include a range of communication platforms including, but not limited to, creation of profiles, blogs, discussion boards, personal websites, wikis, online forums, virtual worlds, instant messaging and file sharing (sharing of text, photos, video, etc.).

I. Establishing the District’s Social Networking Presence

- 1) The District’s Technology staff and associated hired consultants, subject to Board approval, will establish and maintain the official District SNS on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter to further the public relations/outreach/connection to the District community and the public at large and will monitor all the content on these official SNS.
- 2) Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education shall have the exclusive and final authority to determine whether District buildings/facilities/departments/activities/teams/etc. may initiate and maintain separate page(s) on the District’s SNS and/or affiliated with the District or its SNS. Protocols and procedures governing this practice are provided in the bullets below and within the regulation associated with this policy.

Applications for permission to maintain individual pages on the District’s SNS and/or affiliated with the District or its SNS must be submitted using the attached SNS – Approval Application (Exhibit 4430-E.1) prior to establishing any SNS presence affiliated with the District.

Social Networking Sites (Continued)

II. Quality Control/Content Integrity on the District's SNS

- 1) The District's official website will remain the primary source for all online content. Any and all material on the District's SNS will supplement information that exists on the District's official website.
- 2) If applicable, material/content that is entered/posted to the District's SNS (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and LinkedIn) account/page may include a link back to District's official Web site.
- 3) District personnel must acknowledge that they have no expectation of privacy in any material or content they enter/post on the District's SNS (see attached form, Exhibit 4430-E.2). The District may monitor/review anything entered/posted on the District's SNS, or any of the affiliated District SNS, at any time without prior notice to the individual who entered/posted the material or content being reviewed.
- 4) All material and content entered/posted on the District's SNS by District personnel must be school related and must comply with all other applicable District policies.
- 5) The District reserves the right to delete/remove anything posted on the District's SNS, as determined in the District's sole discretion, without prior notice to the individual who posted the material or content being deleted/removed.
- 6) The Superintendent or his/her designee, in conjunction with the Executive Director of Technology, or his/her designee, shall monitor the District SNS to ensure users contribute accurate, valuable and high-quality District related information on the District SNS. Protocols will be developed by the Superintendent or his/her designee and the Executive Director of Technology, or his/her designee, to govern the daily operation of the District SNS, including the respective rights and responsibilities of the District and site users. These protocols are subject to review and amendment by the Board of Education.
- 7) District personnel acknowledge and agree that when they create or post material on the District SNS they are in effect "content publishers" and as such are subject to a host of ethical and legal obligations, including, but not limited to, compliance with applicable copyright laws. District personnel shall not post anything on a District SNS in violation of any copyright or other applicable law.
- 8) District personnel using a District SNS shall refrain from blocking user accounts and deleting comments, in a manner which restricts the free speech rights of individuals in accordance with applicable law.

Social Networking Sites (Continued)

III. Prohibited Conduct on All SNS Sites (including non-district SNS)

- 1) District personnel may not post pictures, video, or any other material that identifies students or provides any information that would be considered confidential pursuant to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or New York State Education Law 2-d on SNS without the express consent of the parent or eligible student.
- 2) District personnel are responsible for their own conduct when communicating on SNS and should be aware that their conduct may subject them to discipline, in accordance with District policy, regulation, and any applicable collective bargaining agreements, should their communications reasonably or foreseeably result in the disruption of the District's learning atmosphere, educational program, school activities, the rights of others or are otherwise violative of the law.
- 3) District personnel should be aware that privacy settings and SNS are constantly evolving, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected or permanently removed.
- 4) District personnel should be aware that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, posted or discussed on SNS might be accessible to the public.
- 5) District personnel shall not use SNS to create or maintain personal relationships with students. For purposes of these guidelines, "personal relationships with students" shall mean any behavior or conduct that is unrelated to course work or official school matters. Email between staff and students should only be through District email accounts. District personnel should not use the District's SNS for personal communication unrelated to course work or official school matters. The District acknowledges that familial relationships may exist between students and staff members within the District. Where such relationships exist, it is strongly advisable that staff members should use sound judgement and abide by the protocols defined in the attached regulation. In no event shall the District's SNS be used for personal communication between a District employee and a student who share a familial relationship.
- 6) Access and use of personal social networking sites and/or personal use of District SNS during an employee's workday is prohibited. However, access to the District's SNS for matters related to school business and/or educational activities may be permitted as authorized by the Superintendent or his/her designee.
- 7) District personnel shall not use their District e-mail address for communications on non-District SNS.

Social Networking Sites (Continued)

IV. Disciplinary Sanctions

District personnel who violate this Policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment in accordance with applicable law, District policy and regulations, and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

V. Compliance with Other Applicable Policies and Regulations

District personnel who utilize the District's SNS, shall be subject to all applicable District policies and regulations including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Confidentiality of Computerized Information;
- 2) Code of Ethics for Board Members and All District Personnel;
- 3) Sexual Harassment of District Personnel;
- 4) Staff-Student Relations: Fraternization;
- 5) Sexual Harassment of Students; and
- 6) Staff Use of Computerized Information Resources.

Cross-ref:

Labor Law §201-i

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March 25, 2024

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September 16, 2024

Social Networking Sites Regulations

Definitions

- Social Networking Site (“SNS”) - Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) are Web sites and/or online communities that connect people through social and other networks. SNS often include a range of communication platforms including, but not limited to, creation of profiles, blogs, discussion boards, personal websites, wikis, online forums, virtual worlds, instant messaging and file sharing (sharing of text, photos, video, etc.).
- District Personnel – Any employee of the Patchogue-Medford School District
- Student – Any person attending an educational agency of the District.

Establishing a New Social Networking Site

Situations may arise where specific social networking sites need to be created. Examples include but are not limited to individual buildings, departmental, athletic, or club social networking sites. Should a need arise for such a social networking site, the requestor must:

1. Complete the Social Networking Sites Application Approval document before the creation of the social networking site
2. Complete training provided by the Technology Department
3. Fully understand the following Board of Education Policies:
 - 3802 – Personally Identifiable Information
 - 4410 – Technology Acceptable Use Policy
 - 4430 – Social Networking Sites
 - 5125 – FERPA

Managing an Approved Social Networking Site

Should a Social Networking Site be approved by the Superintendent or their designee the following guidelines must be observed:

- Students may not be given rights to manage, maintain, or post
- Refer to Board of Education Policy 3802 when posting potential personally identifiable information
- Students that have opted out of images being shared of them on social media must be respected
- All information singularly shared on a District affiliated social networking site must be sent to the Technology Department for posting on the District Website
- Whomever will be sharing content must consult with the building or departmental administrator prior to sharing content

Posting to the District Managed Social Networking Sites

- All requests for posts to the Patchogue-Medford School District Social Networking Sites must go through the District Clerk. The District Clerk will make the final decision on whether this should be shared with the community through a Social Networking Platform.

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