

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES

Social media and social networking sites (SNS) have great potential to connect people around the globe and enhance communication; however, they are also informal, less structured, and subject to constant change. These guidelines establish some basic parameters on the creation and use of SNS and other social media for the District and its personnel.

"Public social media networks or Social Networking sites (SNS)" are defined to include: websites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers and which do not fall within the District's electronic technology network (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, blog sites, etc.). "District approved password-protected social media tools" are those that fall within the District's electronic technology network or which the District has approved for educational use. Within these internal forums, the District has greater authority and ability to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within these internal forums.

Official District Use

"Official District use" is defined as the use of social media by an employee, on behalf of his or her department, program or school that has been authorized for the express purpose of communicating the District's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests. The authorization may be granted by the Superintendent or designee. There are also many official uses of social media that are not public, such as the use of internal blogs or wikis for collaboration among grade-level or project teams. Employees are prohibited from setting up public SNS for any official District use related to their division, building, or service unless they have obtained prior approval in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

Establishing a Social Networking Site for Official District Use

- 1) Following approval from the appropriate building principal or athletic director, the technology staff will work with the department, building, or service to properly set up an appropriate SNS.
- 2) The Superintendent or designee will have the exclusive and final authority to determine whether individual buildings or facilities may initiate and maintain separate page(s) on the SNS.

Quality Control/Content Integrity

- 1) The District will provide general training for all applicable personnel, including training on ethical and legal considerations, and compliance with all applicable policies and regulations.
- 2) The official District website will remain the primary source for all content.

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- 4) Photos should only be posted on the District website and the SNS if appropriate permission is given.
- 5) Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the District, its students, alumni, or employees. Use good judgment and follow District policies and laws or regulations related to student privacy.
- 6) Thoroughly check your content for spelling and grammar before posting.

Professional or Classroom Use

"Professional use" is defined as an employee's use of social media for the purpose of furthering his or her specific job responsibilities or professional duties through an externally focused site or a District sponsored site. While use for professional interests is beneficial to the work of the District because it enables employee to stay informed on important issues or to collaborate with their peers, the social media tool or site the employee is using is not maintained or monitored by the District itself. Employees' who have been given access to participate in external social media for professional use, using district technology, equipment, and email addresses or during the school day do not require prior approval.

"Classroom use" is defined as use of SNS in a classroom for instructional purposes. Students can interact with their peers and their teacher to discuss a current class topic, sharing what they have discovered on the internet and voicing their opinions. Teachers can upload homework, post school notices, moderate discussions, and share materials. This online portal develops writing skills, encourages research skills, and promotes intellectual discussion. Staff must also obtain prior approval for classroom use of these internal forums.

Establishing Access

- 1) If you are participating in a SNS and/or blog for District-related professional use, it must be done with the approval of your supervisor.

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- 2) Use of outside SNS (such as Facebook) for classroom or instructional purposes is discouraged. The District does not permit any communication or contact between staff and students on non-district based SNS (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Teachers are encouraged to use existing District or RIC established web tools such as teacher web pages within the District website to communicate with students, to assign and collect student work, or to provide online feedback to students.
- 3) The District may establish an Alumni page within its District SNS. Teachers and staff may interact with former students within this forum on the district site. Staff interaction with former students outside of the district controlled environment is prohibited. Use caution when "friending" former students. Realize that many former students have online connections with current students. Information shared between school staff and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.
- 4) If you would like to request that a "blocked" online site be accessible to use for teaching and learning, submit a request to the technology department for review. Requests should be made using the established ticket system. A description should be provided of the intended use of the site and what tools on the site match your needed criteria. A link to the privacy policy for these sites should also be included.

Quality Control/Content Integrity

- 1) When using social media for professional purposes, always identify yourself and your position with the District. Use your actual name - never create an alias or post as anonymous. Misidentifying yourself or providing false information may result in disciplinary action. The District email address attached to your name implies that you are acting on behalf of the District.
- 2) 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 the federal Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES (Cont'd.)**Personal Use and Responsibility**

"Personal use" is defined as use that is not related to an employee's job duties for the District or his or her professional interests. An employee checking his or her personal Facebook page, sending out a personal Tweet, or watching the latest viral YouTube video are examples of personal use of social media during the work day.

- 1) The District discourages the personal use of social media during work hours and on District owned hardware. However, limited personal use of social media during the work day and when not supervising students may be permitted.
- 2) District employees are personally responsible for all comments and information they publish online.
- 3) Social media sites require an email address to register and begin use. District employees should not use their work email address for registering or logging in to any SNS.
- 4) Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that are used in face-to-face contact, and be in accordance with the highest professional standards. Online activities or communications which are improper, unethical, illegal, or which cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents, or other members of the school community should be avoided.
- 5) Posting comments and having online conversations on social media sites makes those comments public and available to anyone who has any online access. Please be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what is said online should be within the bounds of professional discretion.
- 6) Comments related to the District should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, employees should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain. Remember that posted information could be interpreted as an extension of your office or classroom. What is inappropriate in your office or classroom is also inappropriate online. If posting comments or viewpoints on topics related to the District using any online medium be sure you state that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the District.
- 7) Before posting personal photographs or avatars that represent you, consider how the images reflect on your reputation and professionalism. Also, remember not to use copyrighted images.
- 8) District personnel should not use personal SNS to create or maintain personal relationships with students. For purposes of these guidelines, "personal relationships with students" means any behavior or conduct that is unrelated to course work or official school matters.

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Teachers and staff should not "friend" current students or any student currently enrolled in any school within the District Pre-K through 12, and or should refrain from friending their parents. It is too easy for genuinely-intentioned and innocent comments and situations to be misinterpreted, resulting in potentially damaging consequences for everyone involved. If your position within the District calls for communication with students or parents and is educationally justifiable, the use of the District network, email, teacher web pages within the District website, and school-provided or owned equipment are suggested for use when communicating online.

- 9) While mindful of employees' First Amendment free speech rights, District personnel who participate in social networking websites, including the District SNS, will not post any material which may result in the disruption of classroom or District activities. The District is entitled to make this determination based on the facts surrounding the material as the District reasonably believes them to be.

Pertaining to personal SNS employees are encouraged to seek permission from the subject before posting photographs and videos of fellow employees taken on school property or at school sponsored events. Due to the sensitive nature and potentially damaging consequences, posting photographs or information about currently enrolled students in any capacity is prohibited.

School Logos

Within your personal social mediums, do not use any District or school logo without written permission from District officials. For official pages, the District will provide you with a profile image to use.

Reporting Requirements

District personnel will be required to report known or suspected violations of the District SNS Guidelines to their building principal or immediate supervisor.

Disciplinary Sanctions

District personnel who violate any provision of the SNS guidelines will be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment in accordance with legal guidelines, District policy and regulations, and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.