

## **471 EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

As a regional leader in using technology as an accelerator of learning, Alexandria Public Schools recognizes the value of inquiry, investigation and innovation using new technology tools and resources to enhance the learning experience and to share information. The district also recognizes its obligation to teach, model and ensure responsible, safe use of such technology tools.

This policy addresses employees' use of publicly available social media networks including personal websites, blogs, wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds and any other social media. The district takes no position on employees' decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use on personal time. However, use of these media for personal use during district time or on district equipment is prohibited.

In addition, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or district policies.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

The district recognizes the importance of social media networks and platforms as communication and e-learning tools. To that end, the district provides password-protected social media tools and district-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages use of these tools for collaboration by employees, as appropriate for employees' roles within the district. Public social media, outside of accounts sponsored by the district, and/or those that do not comply with federal Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) guidelines, may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorization of the Superintendent or designee, and parental consent for student participation on social networks. The district may use these tools and other communication technologies in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with its various audiences, including the general public. However, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or district policies. The line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within a social media context. When employees choose to join or engage with district students, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside those approved by the district, they are advised to maintain their professionalism as district employees and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks, including requirements for mandated reporting.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

A. Public social media networks 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 technologies network (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Snapchat, blog sites, etc.).

- B. District approved password-protected social media tools are those that fall within the district's electronic technologies network or which the district has approved for educational use. The district has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum.

#### **IV. REQUIREMENTS**

As set forth in the district's Code of Conduct (Respect, Honesty, Kindness, Responsibility and Fairness), all employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in this community. Because readers of social media networks may view the employee as a representative of the schools and the district, the district requires employees to observe the following rules when referring to the district, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks:

- A. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's postings, displays or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable district policies. Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means). Employees shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media network or engage in communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous or defamatory or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment or bullying.

Employees should not use their district e-mail address for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the district. Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the district. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the district or post comments as a representative of the district, except as authorized by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee. When authorized as a spokesperson for the district, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the district. Employees may not disclose information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the district, its students or employees or that is protected by data privacy laws.

- 1. Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.

2. Employees may not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent, except for images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances.
  3. Employees may not post any nonpublic images of the district premises and property, including floor plans.
- B. The district recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media representing students or groups within the district. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the district. Employees have a responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have a responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online. Employees shall annually disclose to the district the existence of and their participation in such networks.
- C. Employees who participate in social media networks may decide to include information about their work with the district as part of their personal profile, as it would relate to a typical social conversation. This may include:
1. Work information included in a personal profile, to include district name, job title and job duties.
  2. Status updates regarding an employee's own job promotion.
  3. Personal participation in district-sponsored events, including volunteer activities.
- D. An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party or the content of anything posted on any social media network.
- E. Anything posted on an employee's web site or web log or other Internet content for which the employee is responsible will be subject to all district policies, rules, regulations and guidelines. The district is free to view and monitor an employee's website or web log at any time without consent or previous approval. Where applicable, employees may be asked to disclose to the district the existence of and to provide the district with access to an employee's web site or web log or other personal social media network as part of an employment selection, promotion or disciplinary process.

**Legal References:**

Minnesota Administrative Rule 8700.7500 Code of Ethics for Minnesota Teachers  
Children's Internet Protection Act

**Cross References:**

Policy 413 (Harassment and Violence)

Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)

Policy 524/453 (Internet, Technology and Cell Phone Acceptable Use and Safety)

Policy 606 (Textbooks and Instructional Materials)

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Alexandria Public Schools – No. 206

Alexandria, Minnesota