

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social networking media can be a powerful tool for education, research, and communication. Many of us now share "virtual" spaces that did not exist a few years ago. In order for our school district learning community to benefit from myriad opportunities that social media offers for working together productively in and beyond the classroom, it is important to establish a clear policy. Social networking tools offer the potential of vast, diverse, and unique resources to both students and staff. Our goal in providing these resources to staff and students is to promote educational excellence in schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

Social networking tools will be made available to students and staff for the express purpose of supporting the educational program, to conduct research for that purpose, and to communicate with others for educational purposes. Use of district Internet network accounts will be for class assignments or research for school-related activities or courses. Access to social networking tools is not to be used for private business or personal, non-work-related communications.

All users of social networking media in school must acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of this policy as a condition of using it. Access to social media network is a privilege and not a right and the privilege of access entails responsibility.

Students will not be permitted access to social media tools unless they have attended a session in which they are presented with the rules and responsibilities for the use of social networking that are aligned with the Code of Conduct.

~~Employees~~ Every member of the district, employees and school board members who opt to use social media platforms for class/club/team use are responsible for providing guidance/instruction to students regarding the appropriate social media use and commenting. ~~Employees~~ Every member of the district, employees and school board members will explain appropriate standards for use of social networking tools to students and will inform students that if they misuse any social networking, they may lose their use privileges and be subject to disciplinary action as prescribed in the School District's Code of Conduct.

Use of social networking will be governed by all Board policies as well all federal and state laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), New York State Education Law Section 2-d, as well as intellectual property, copyright and fair use statutes. ~~District Employees~~ Every member of the district, employees, school board members, and officers with access to personally identifiable student information will be provided with data privacy and security training on an annual basis in accordance with applicable law.

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## Social Media Use for Board of Education Members

Board Trustees of the district hold a unique position in our community, one that potentially draws added attention to, and scrutiny of their public and private writings, conduct and utterances.

Trustees must:

1. Clearly differentiate between official and personal communications:
  - a. Use of Official Media Channels when, and only when, communicating on behalf of the District, about District business, or concerning their official duties and responsibilities as a Trustee;
  - b. Use Personal Social Media Channels when voicing personal opinions that are not related to the District, to the District's business or activities and/or to performing official duties and responsibilities as a Trustee;
  - c. It should also be noted that a personal post can become public by someone other than the board trustee.
2. Respect the District's procedures for communications, in which the Board of Trustees makes decisions collaboratively through discussion and votes taken in public meetings, and communicates those decisions with a single unified voice, via the Board Officers and District administration.
3. Uphold the District's commitment to culture of respect, in which empathy, diversity, and respect for all is valued and practiced.
4. Honor their responsibilities concerning maintaining confidentiality (e.g. on matters relating to employment, contract negotiations, legal matters or student records);
5. Understand that even clearly identified personal opinions of Trustees could potentially violate law or District policy, and lead to legal action against themselves or the District.
6. New board members, upon induction, will sign a policy verification form in relation to conduct of board members and then annually at the start of each school year.

## Use of Social Networking Sites

South Orangetown Central School District respects the right of ~~employees every member of the district, employees and school board members~~, to use social media and networking sites, as well as personal websites and blogs, but it is important that ~~employees' every member of the district, employees and school board members~~, personal use of these sites does not negatively reflect upon the District's reputation, its employees, or its students or their families. ~~Employees Every member of the district, employees and school board members~~, should exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between their personal and public online behavior, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public, even without their knowledge or consent. The District strongly encourages all employees every member of the district, employees and school board members to carefully review the privacy settings on any social media and networking sites they use and exercise care

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and good judgment when posting content and information on such sites. District employees, particularly certificated faculty members, are role models to the District's students. To that end, ~~District employees every member of the district, employees and school board members~~ must be mindful of the nature and content of their social media communications, even when using their own private accounts. As role models to our students, to the extent that private communications create a public perception of incompetence concerning a District employee, then such communications could give rise to disciplinary consequences pursuant to applicable law.

~~When using a social media site, an employee may not include current student's as "friends," "followers", or any other similar terminology used by various sites.~~ If an employee maintains or participates in a South Orangetown sponsored online community that extends to persons who are **students**, parents, alumni, or other constituents, they must exercise good judgment about any content that is shared on the site. Additionally, **every member of the district, employees and school board members** should adhere to the following guidelines, which are consistent with the District's policies regarding harassment, student relationships, conduct, professional communication, and confidentiality:

~~An employee~~ **Every member of the district, employees and school board members**, should not make statements that would violate any of the District's policies, including its policies concerning discrimination or harassment;

~~The employee~~ **Every member of the district, employees and school board members** must uphold the District's value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about the District, its employees, its students, or their families;

~~An employee~~ **Every member of the district, employees and school board members**, may not disclose any confidential information of the District or confidential information obtained during the course of his/her employment, about any individuals or organizations, including students and/or their families.

If the District believes that ~~an employee's~~ **any member of the district, employees and school board members** activity on a social networking site, blog, or personal website may violate the District's policies, the District may request that the employee cease such activity. Depending on the severity of the incident, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Class Use**

Use of social media tools can provide opportunities for students to develop their communication and collaboration skills and to share their knowledge, questions or opinions in a clear, meaningful manner. In addition, these tools can provide opportunities for employees to give relevant and timely feedback that may help students develop a better understanding of their own learning needs and what they may have to do next.

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When using a social media platform with students, the platform must allow for direct oversight and administration by the employee. All students must be able to access the platform.

### **Creation and Use of Social Media Accounts**

When creating a social media account for school use (e.g., for a class, club/extracurricular or athletics team), the account must be public and owned, overseen by an employee or administrator and identified in the description as a class/club/team in the South Orangetown Central School District. The personal security of the employee responsible for overseeing the account should be set so students cannot view personal information about the employee.

The employee or administrator is responsible for monitoring content and moderating comments on the account, deleting any posts or comments that violate the commenting guidelines and/or Code of Conduct. Failure to follow this policy may result in consideration of disciplinary proceedings.

### **SOCSD Commenting Guidelines**

South Orangetown Central School District shares information with students, parents, educators, community members, alumni and the general public via its social media feeds. We welcome your comments, but reserve the right to remove postings/comments that:

- Violate the law or urge others to do so
- Contain profanity or vulgar language
- Violate the privacy of students, staff or community members
- Easily identify students/staff in defamatory, abusive or generally negative terms
- Contain remarks that are slanderous, racist, homophobic, sexist or likely to offend
- Are political in nature
- Advertise products or services

The District's social media account administrators reserve the right to not post or remove any comments at any time, for any reason. Social media accounts are only monitored during regular business hours. Responses to posts made outside of business hours may be delayed.

Ref: *Matter of Jerry*, 50 A.D.2d 149 (1975)

Cross Ref.: Policy 1130, Media Relations and Communications

**Policy 2160 School District Officer Board Members and Employee Code of Ethics**

Policy 5300, Code of Conduct

Policy 5695, Student and Personal Electronic Devices

Date of Adoption: February 21, 2013

Policy Revised & Readopted: November 5, 2024 2226