

## **426.00 STAFF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **POLICY PURPOSE**

Saint Paul Public Schools (District) recognizes that social media can be a powerful tool for enhancing learning and communication. The purpose of this policy is to address professional and personal use of social media by District employees. The District recognizes that its employees have certain constitutional, statutory, and/or contractual rights regarding speech and neither this policy nor the accompanying guidelines are designed to violate those rights.

### **GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. When engaging with social media, whether for professional or personal use, District employees are advised to be respectful and maintain the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct.
- B. When referring to the District, its schools, students, employees, communities, programs, and activities on any social media networks, employees shall not use obscene or profane language or images in communications or conduct that is threatening, harassing, libelous, or defamatory, or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or inappropriate use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, harassment, or bullying. Employees must adhere to District *Guidelines for Social Media Use*.
- C. An employee is responsible for any content communicated by them on social media.
- D. When employees engage in social media sites that represent students, families, or groups within the District, they do so as employees of the district. Employees are advised to maintain appropriate boundaries at all times and must follow the requirements for mandated reporting.

### **DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

- A. Social media: Includes, but is not limited to, online media such as: websites, blogs/vlogs, online forums, podcasts, and social networks.
- B. Employees: Any staff person of the District, as well as any agent, independent contractor, or other person engaging in work for the District
- C. Work time: Includes any time for which the employee is being compensated by the District, excluding vacations, sick days, personal leave, and paid holidays.

## WORK-RELATED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to establish public online social media accounts on behalf of the District, its departments, schools, official activities or programs for the purposes of informing the public generally and specifically regarding District messages.
- B. Only those public online social media accounts approved by the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee may use the District name, or name of any of its schools or departments, its mascots or team names, or otherwise present an image in words or visual images that purports to identify the social media account with Saint Paul Public Schools, its schools, departments, activities, or programs. **District staff are ultimately responsible for any such accounts, including those that are primarily managed by students-run accounts.** The district reserves the right to report accounts that have not been authorized or are found to be in violation of content standards.
- C. The Superintendent, or Superintendent's designee, may authorize establishment and use of public online social media accounts by teachers for educational uses for their classes.
- D. If a staff member has permission to manage an official district social media account, student names and images can only be published if a staff member has verified the student(s) have an approved media release.

## PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Employees may not use social media for personal use during work time or on district devices.
- B. The decision of whether or not to use social media for personal use, outside of work hours, is left to the discretion of the individual District employee.
  - a. Employees should not post images, names or other identifying information about students on personal social media accounts. To ensure the safety and privacy of the school community, employees must adhere to the following standards:
    - i. Confidentiality: Employees must maintain strict confidentiality and shall not disclose private student data protected by law, such as FERPA or the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, on personal platforms. This includes images, names and other identifying information about students or district employees.
    - ii. Harassment Prevention: Personal content must not include language or images that are threatening, harassing, libelous, or defamatory, or that encourage bullying or inappropriate behavior toward students or staff.

- iii. Distinction Between Content: Employees are advised to maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional content to ensure that personal activity does not impede their professional duties or the District's mission.
- C. The District may take appropriate action when it becomes aware of, or reasonably suspects, conduct or communication on social media that adversely affects the workplace, impedes their ability to do their job, or violates professional codes of ethics or other laws.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- A. While the District does not affirmatively monitor employee use of social media, it may view and monitor an employee's social media activity at any time and without prior consent.
- B. Employees who violate provisions of this policy are subject to consequences, including termination.

### ***Legal References:***

47 U.S.C. §254 (Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA)) 47 C.F.R. § 54.520 (FCC rules implementing CIPA)  
 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA)  
 Minn. Stat. Chapter 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act) Minn. Rule 8710.2100 (Code of Ethics for Minnesota Teachers) Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S.410(2006)  
 Connick v. Myers, 461 U. S. 138 (1983)  
 Pickering v. Board of Ed. of Township High School Dist. 205, 391 U. S. 563 (1968)

### ***Cross References:***

102.00, Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination  
 304.00 Records Data Management  
 415.00, Harassment, Violence and Other Offensive Behavior  
 418.00 Gender Inclusion - Staff  
 419.00 Professional and Respectful Workplace  
 500.00, Gender Inclusion  
 501.00, Hazing Prohibition  
 505.00, Bullying Prohibition  
 520.00, Technology Usage and Safety