

() Required
(X) Local
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SOCIAL MEDIA FOR STAFF

The Board of Education recognizes that social media platforms have become important tools for communication, education, and community engagement. While these platforms offer valuable opportunities for connecting with students, families, and the broader community, they also present risks related to student safety, privacy, professional boundaries, and institutional reputation. This policy establishes clear expectations for district staff regarding the appropriate use of social media in both official and personal contexts.

Definitions

- **Social Media** means any web-based or mobile platform used for social networking, content sharing, blogging, or communication, including but not limited to Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, wikis, and emerging platforms.
- **Official District Social Media** means social media accounts created and maintained by the district or its schools for official communication purposes and approved by district administration.
- **Personal Social Media** means social media accounts created and maintained by individual staff members for personal use outside their employment responsibilities.

Official District Social Media Accounts

All official district social media accounts must receive advance written approval from the Superintendent or designee. Staff members responsible for managing official accounts must provide account credentials to their building administrator and the district technology coordinator. The district reserves the right to monitor, review, and require removal of any content posted on official accounts.

Content posted on official district social media accounts must be educational, informative, accurate, and aligned with district values and objectives. Staff must respond professionally to comments and questions, remove inappropriate comments that violate district policies or contain offensive language, and maintain a professional tone while avoiding controversial or political content.

Personal Social Media Use - General Guidelines

The Board recognizes that staff members have First Amendment rights to engage in personal expression on social media. However, staff are reminded that personal social media activity can impact their professional reputation and the district's image. Staff members are expected to exercise sound judgment and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students at all times, whether online or in person.

Staff should utilize privacy settings to control who can view personal social media content. Staff must remember that even posts designated as private can become public through sharing, screenshots, or discovery in legal proceedings. Staff are encouraged to maintain separate personal and professional social media accounts where appropriate.

Professional Boundaries with Students

To protect both students and staff and maintain appropriate professional boundaries, with the exception of household members, staff members are prohibited from:

- Initiating or accepting friend or follow requests from current or former district students who have been out of school for less than one school year on personal social media accounts;
- Engaging in private messaging, direct communication, or one-on-one exchanges with current or former district students who have been out of school for less than one school year through personal social media accounts;
- Posting, sharing, or distributing any photographs, videos, or information about current district students on personal social media accounts; and
- Discussing students, parents, colleagues, or district matters in a negative, disparaging, or unprofessional manner.

Prohibited Content and Conduct

Staff members must not post content on social media that:

- Violates student confidentiality, privacy rights, or Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protections;
- Contains obscenity or sexually explicit material;
- Promotes illegal activities, violence, discrimination, or harassment based on protected characteristics;
- Disparages students, colleagues, parents, the district, district leadership, or other school districts;
- Discloses confidential district information, proprietary materials, or matters discussed in confidential settings;
- Misrepresents the staff member's professional credentials or position;
- Could reasonably be interpreted as representing the official views or positions of the district without proper authorization; or

- Otherwise violates district policies, collective bargaining agreements, or applicable laws.

Legal Compliance

All staff must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records; New York State Education Law Section 2-d regarding student data privacy; and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Training and Professional Development

The district will provide training on this policy for all new staff members during onboarding. The district will offer periodic professional development opportunities on topics including digital citizenship, appropriate social media use, student privacy requirements, and maintaining professional boundaries online.

Reporting and Investigation of Concerns

Staff members who become aware of potential violations of this policy, inappropriate social media use involving students or colleagues, or other concerns related to social media conduct must promptly report such matters to their building principal, immediate supervisor, the Director of Human Resources, or the Superintendent. The district prohibits retaliation against any staff member who reports concerns in good faith. All reports will be investigated in accordance with applicable district policies and collective bargaining agreements.

Consequences for Policy Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, in accordance with applicable law, district policies, and collective bargaining agreements. The nature and severity of consequences will be determined based on the specific circumstances of the violation, including the nature and frequency of the conduct, any harm caused to students or the district, and the staff member's disciplinary history. Depending on the circumstances, consequences may include verbal or written warnings, mandatory training, suspension of access to district social media accounts, suspension with or without pay, termination of employment, and referral to law enforcement when appropriate.

Policy Review and Updates

The Superintendent or designee will review this policy periodically and recommend updates as needed to address emerging technologies, platforms, legal requirements, and best practices. The Board will consider such recommendations and revise this policy as appropriate.

5500, Student Records
9645, Disclosure of Wrongful Conduct

Adoption date