District Policy: Staff Online Activities and Social Media Use

Purpose

The Board of Education recognizes that online communication tools and social media platforms can support communication, instruction, and school engagement when used appropriately. This policy establishes expectations for employee use of technology, online communication platforms, and social media in order to protect students, maintain professional boundaries, and ensure compliance with Kansas law and district policy.

Definitions

● Social Media Platform

Any online website or application that allows users to create accounts or profiles for the purpose of creating, sharing, or interacting with publicly viewable content.

Examples include:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- X (Twitter)

The term does not generally include:

- District email
- District learning management systems
- Educational platforms
- Board-approved communication systems with monitoring capability

● Official School Purposes

Public, one-way communication related to school functions, activities, programs, or events.

Official school purposes do not include:

- Private messaging
- Direct communication

- Two-way individualized conversations with students

General Policy Statement

District employees may use district-approved online platforms and communication tools to:

- Support instruction
- Share school information
- Promote activities and programs
- Communicate with parents and the community

All online activity connected to district responsibilities must:

- Be professional and appropriate for students
- Comply with board policy and applicable law
- Protect student confidentiality and privacy

Employees are prohibited from privately or directly communicating with students through social media platforms unless specifically authorized by district policy or law.

Approval Procedures for Online Platforms

Before creating or using a social media account for school-related purposes, employees must:
● Obtain approval from the superintendent or designee
● Follow district technology procedures and directives
● Provide administrative access to designated district personnel if requested
● Obtain approval for any expenditures of district funds related to the platform

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Approved Uses of Social Media Platforms

Board-approved social media platforms may be used only for:

- Public announcements
- Sharing schedules or reminders
- Promoting school programs, clubs, or activities
- Posting general instructional resources
- Broadcasting school information

Examples include:

- Activity updates
- Team schedules
- School event reminders
- Public classroom announcements

Prohibited Uses of Social Media Platforms

Employees shall not:

- Privately message students through social media
- Engage in one-on-one social media conversations with students
- Use social media comment sections for individualized student conversations
- Require students to use social media platforms for assignments or extracurricular participation

This prohibition applies during and outside the school day.

Examples of prohibited communication include:

- Snapchat messages
- Instagram direct messages
- Facebook Messenger conversations
- Private TikTok or X messaging

Other Approved Communication Platforms

Employees may communicate with students through district-approved systems that are not classified as social media platforms, including:

- District email accounts
- District learning management systems
- Approved communication or notification platforms

All approved systems must allow for:

- Administrative monitoring
- Record retention
- Appropriate parent or guardian access

Employee Responsibilities

Employees using district-approved online platforms are responsible for:

- Monitoring content and interactions
- Maintaining professional conduct
- Following district policy and legal requirements
- Protecting confidential student information
- Promoting safe and appropriate online behavior

Personal Social Media Accounts

Employees are strongly discouraged from connecting with current or prospective students through personal social media accounts.

Employees who choose to do so assume personal responsibility and remain subject to all district policies regarding professional conduct and student interactions.

Virtual School Exception

Certain social media communication restrictions established by Kansas law do not apply to virtual schools as defined by Kansas law.

Training and Compliance

The district may provide training regarding:

- Appropriate online communication
- Student privacy requirements
- Technology and social media expectations
- Legal requirements for employee communication with students

Staff Responsibilities (Staff Handbook Only)

● Employees will:

- Follow district procedures for online communication
- Use only approved communication systems for school-related purposes
- Maintain professional boundaries with students
- Report concerns regarding inappropriate online interactions

● Administrators will:

- Approve and monitor district-related online platforms
- Provide guidance regarding acceptable use
- Address policy violations consistently

Disciplinary Actions

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Examples of conduct that may result in discipline include:

- Inappropriate communication with students
- Misuse of district technology or social media
- Disclosure of confidential student information
- Failure to comply with district procedures or legal requirements

Employees are expected to conduct themselves in ways that protect:

- Student safety
- Student privacy
- Professional boundaries
- The integrity of the educational environment

Implementation Timeline

● This policy will take effect at the start of the 2026–2027 school year.
● Training and communication regarding implementation expectations will be provided to staff prior to implementation.

Board Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued compliance with Kansas law and district operational needs.