

## 4282 STAFF USE OF INTERNET SOCIAL NETWORKS, OTHER FORMS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, AND THE INTERNET

### Use of Social Networking Sites

The Board of Education has a strong commitment to quality education and the well-being of all pupils, as well as the preservation of the school district's reputation. The Board believes staff members must establish and maintain public trust and confidence and be committed to protecting all pupils attending the school district. In support of the Board's strong commitment to the public's trust and confidence, the Board holds all staff members to the highest level of professional responsibility.

The Commissioner of Education has determined inappropriate conduct outside a staff member's professional responsibilities may determine them as unfit to discharge the duties and functions of their position. Staff members should be advised communications, publications, photographs, and other information appearing on social networking sites deemed inappropriate by the Board could be cause for dismissal of a non-tenured staff member or to certify tenure charges against a tenured staff member to the Commissioner of Education.

Staff members are advised to be concerned and aware such conduct deemed inappropriate may include, but is not limited to, communications and/or publications using e-mails, text-messaging, social networking sites, or any other form of electronic communication that is directed and/or available to pupils or for public display or publication.

While the Board respects the right of staff members to use social networking sites, staff members should recognize they are held to a higher standard than the general public with regard to standards of conduct and ethics. It is important that a staff member's use of these sites does not damage the reputation of the school district, employees, pupils, or their families. Staff members who utilize, post or publish images, photographs, or comments on social networking sites, blogs, or other forms of electronic communication outside their professional responsibilities shall ensure their use, postings, or publications are done with an appropriate level of professionalism and are appropriate conduct for a school staff member. Staff 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 school district strongly encourages all staff members to carefully review the privacy settings on social networking sites they use and exercise care and good judgment when posting content and information on such sites. Staff members should adhere to the following guidelines, which are consistent with the district's workplace standards on harassment, pupil relationships, conduct, professional communication, and confidentiality.



When using personal social networking sites, school staff members:

1. Should not make statements that would violate any of the district's policies, including its policies concerning discrimination or harassment;
2. Must uphold the district's value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about the school district, employees, pupils, or their families;
3. May not disclose any confidential information about the school district or confidential information obtained during the course of his/her employment, about any individual(s) or organization, including pupils and/or their families;
4. Shall not use social networking sites to post any materials of a sexually graphic nature;
5. Shall not use social networking sites to post any materials which promote violence;
6. Shall not use social networking sites which would be detrimental to the mission and function of the district;
7. Are prohibited from using their school district title as well as adding references to the district in any correspondence including, but not limited to, e-mails, postings, blogs, and social networking sites unless the communication is of an official nature and is serving the mission of the district. This prohibition also includes signature lines and personal e-mail accounts;
8. Shall not post updates to their status on any social networking sites during normal working hours including posting of statements or comments on the social networking sites of others during school time unless it involves a school project. Employees must seek approval from the Superintendent of Schools or designee for such use; and
9. Shall not post or publish any information the Commissioner of Education would deem to be inappropriate conduct by a school staff member.



The Policy of this district is to maintain a level of professionalism both during and after the school day. Any publication through any means of electronic communication which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, or efficiency of the district, will be deemed a violation of this Policy. If the Board or Superintendent believes that a staff member's activity on any social networking site violates the district's policies, the Board or Superintendent or designee may request that the employee cease such activity. Depending on the severity of the incident, the staff member may be subject to disciplinary action.

This Policy has been developed and adopted by this Board to provide guidance and direction to staff members on how to avoid actual and/or the appearance of inappropriate conduct toward pupils and/or the community while using social networking sites.

The Superintendent and the school principals will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. The orientation and reminders will give special emphasis to:

- a. Improper fraternization with students using social networking websites on the internet.
  1. Teachers may not list current students as "friends" on networking sites, unless for educational purposes and consistent with Board Policy and Regulation 8330.
  2. All contacts with students must be for educational purposes.
  3. Inappropriate contact via e-mail, phone, or other electronic means is prohibited.
- b. Inappropriateness of posting items with sexual content or vulgar language.
- c. Inappropriateness of posting items with images, texts or messages that may be gang-related.
- d. Inappropriateness of posting items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs, alcohol, weapons or tobacco or illegal activities.
- e. Examples of inappropriate behavior from other districts, as behavior to avoid.



- f. Monitoring and penalties for improper use of district computers and technology.
- g. The possibility of penalties, including dismissal from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in on-line conduct or the use of technological resources.

### Use of Internet-Based Resources

Teachers are encouraged to use multiple and varied resources to complement instruction of Board-approved curricula. In using internet-based resources, as in using any media, teachers are expected to use good judgment and to ascertain in advance that the resources are appropriate to the Board-approved curricula and the developmental level of pupils, and that they cannot be interpreted by a reasonable person as obscene, vulgar, racist, sexist, promoting illegal or unethical activity, or violating the district's affirmative action policy.

### Use of Cell Phones and Text Messages

School district personnel shall limit cell phone and text interaction with students to contact that pertains to educational purposes. Educational purposes include but are not limited, to the following:

- a. Answering academic inquiries regarding homework, other classroom work or assignments;
- b. Scheduling appointments for school related conferences and/or extra help;
- c. Clarifying classroom expectations and/or assignments;
- d. Notifications related to classroom, club or sports schedules, events, trips, assignments; deadlines.

Cell phone and text message contact with students shall be as brief and direct as possible. When brief contact is not sufficient and/or feasible to resolve the matter, teachers shall schedule face to face conferences during regular classroom and extra-help periods to confer with the student.

Staff shall not send messages that contain material that may be defined by a reasonable person as profane or obscene; messages that are racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity; or messages:

- a. That violate the district's affirmative action policy;



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- b. That are personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
- c. That can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
- d. That contains confidential information to persons not authorized to receive that information.

## Use of Computer Communication

School district personnel shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via internal or external E-mail:

- a. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business.
- b. Personnel shall not reveal passwords to others. If a staff member believes that a password has been lost or stolen, or that E-mail has been accessed by someone without authorization, he/she should contact the IT Department immediately. E-mail windows should not be left open on the screen when the computer is unattended.
- c. Staff shall not send messages that contain material that may be defined by a reasonable person as obscene or vulgar; messages that are racist, sexist or promote illegal or unethical activity; or messages
  - 1. That violate the district's affirmative action policy;
  - 2. That are personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
  - 3. That contain confidential information to persons not authorized to receive that information.
- d. Personnel shall become familiar with the district's policies and regulation on staff and student access to networked information resources before initiating E-mail use.

## Implementation

This policy shall be posted and distributed annually to all staff members.

Adopted: 27 June 2011

Revised: 24 September 2012

