



**Staff Communication & Social Media Policy
Template for Educators**

NOTE for schools developing a social media policy:

This document is designed to help schools develop their own social media policy setting forth the rules and expectations for staff and educator use of social media and digital communication regardless of whether using a school network.

Social media policies are not “one size fits all.” What works for one district may not work for another. Differences in school culture, priorities and expectations as well as the level of integration of technology in the classroom will influence your social media policy.

It is important to involve the school community in the crafting of the social media policy for your school. This can include having student, teacher and staff representation on a committee to develop the policy or allowing time for meaningful input from each of those groups before implementation.

<Name of School District>

APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This social media policy (the “Policy”) sets forth the rules and expectations for staff and educator use of social media and digital communication regardless of whether using a school network.

The Policy applies to all District employees (full time and part time) who choose to utilize social media and/or digital technologies to communicate with any members of the school community (such as staff, students, parents, educators, school board members and vendors).

This Policy applies to all digital communication and both professional and personal social media accounts, as defined below.

These Guidelines do not address student-to-student communication via social media. Those communications are covered by the District’s Acceptable Use Policy <or Responsible Use Policy>.

The District reserves the right to require certain volunteers (such as those with direct access to students) to sign this Policy. *(Note: some Districts require all volunteers to sign a social media policy. For those districts, this paragraph can be eliminated and “volunteers” can be added to the second paragraph of this section. At a minimum, it is recommended that any volunteers who*

have regular access to students and/or lead after school activities, such as assistant coaches, sign this Policy).

THE PURPOSE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY and THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS

This Policy is designed to help District staff and educators teach, model and promote the responsible and safe use of social media and digital communication.

The District recognizes that social media and digital communication can provide educational and professional benefits; serving as a powerful tool to facilitate timely communication and enhance the overall learning experience.

However, it is important to remember that the speed, convenience and availability of social media and digital communication has the potential to allow for less thoughtful communication and can blur professional and personal relationships.

DEFINITIONS

Social Media includes any form of online publication or presence that allows an individual to post texts, photos or other content as well as engage in interactive communication. Examples include social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, Edmodo and LMS), video or photo sharing websites or apps (such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Flickr and Snapchat), blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, virtual worlds and wikis.

Professional Social Media is (a) work-related social media activity that has been approved by the District. Examples include a classroom Twitter account or school Facebook page used to communicate with members of the school community; and (b) any social media activity regardless of whether it is work-related that is accessed through the District's network.

Personal Social Media is social media activity that has not been approved by the District and which is not accessed through the school network (e.g., an educator's personal Facebook page or YouTube account for his/her personal use and accessed through a home network that is independent of the District's network).

Digital Communication is the electronic transmission of information that has been encoded digitally (for storage and processing by computers). Examples include texts, emails, instant messages, photos, videos and social media posts.

District Approved Digital Technology is any technology – including hardware (such as computers, laptops, tablets and cell phones) and software (such as email accounts, online services, applications and wiki pages) – provided by the District or approved for use by the District. Please see *<site to*

the District's regulation and/or contact information> for the process for getting District Approval.

Personal Digital Technology is any technology – including hardware (such as computers, laptops, tablets and cell phones) and software (such as email accounts, online services, applications and wiki pages) – owned by District employees *<consider adding “volunteers” if consistent with District policy>* that does not use District Approved Digital Technology.

USE OF DISTRICT APPROVED DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY OR PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS.

- I understand that all communication with students shall only take place on District Approved Digital Technologies and/or through Professional Social Media Accounts.¹
- I understand that all school-related communications with parents, staff and other members of the school community shall only take place on District Approved Digital Technologies and/or through Professional Social Media Accounts.
- I understand that all communication with members of the school community shall comply with the District's Acceptable Use Policy *<or Responsible Use Policy and provide a link here>* regardless of whether on a Professional or Personal Social Media account.
- I understand that the District will maintain a list of all District Approved Digital Technologies used in the District or by each school. *<while maintenance of this list is recommended, for those District's who do not require this, the word “will” can be replaced with a “may”>*
- I understand that District supervisors or their designees shall be given separate administrator rights to access all District Approved Digital Technologies used in the District.
- I understand that if I use Personal Digital Technology on school grounds or otherwise in violation of this policy, I waive any objection to reasonable inspection of my Personal Digital Technology for the purpose of investigating such misconduct or to protect the safety of District students and/or staff.

GENERAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- I understand that I should treat my Professional Social Media activity and all Digital Communication with the school community like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in District professional settings are expected in the digital environment. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site.

¹ An exception to this Policy exists to allow District employees to use personal social media accounts to communicate (1) with a student who is a relative; (2) in an emergency situation requiring such communication, in which case the District employee should notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible; and (3) if specific authorization has been given to the District employee from the Superintendent or his/her designee.

RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

On Professional AND Personal Social Media Accounts and on all Digital Communication:

- I will not post any information or engage in communications that violate state or federal laws (including, but not limited to, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and intellectual property laws) or District policies.
- I understand that my role as a mandated reporter applies to any conduct or content that I observe in any environment (online and offline) including in social media or via digital communication.
- I will be professional in all communications (by word, image or other means) directed towards or which could be viewed by members of the school community.
- I will not engage in communications that could cause a substantial disruption to the school environment such as communication that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, or defamatory or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, or bullying.
- I will not use my District e-mail address or other employment-related identity for communications on social media networks that have not been approved by the District.
- When expressing a point of view on any Professional Social Media account, I will make it clear that my views do not necessarily reflect the views of the District.

RIGHTS OF DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

- I understand that I have a right to be free of harassment or other offensive behavior when on my professional and/or personal social media account.
- I understand that if I am contacted by a student on an account or device that was not a District Approved Digital Technology or if I receive any inappropriate contact from any member of the school community on any personal or professional social media account or via digital communication, I should immediately report the behavior to _____ *<insert procedure/name for reporting behavior>*.
- I understand that to ensure information remains private, I should regularly check my privacy settings.
- I understand that I should conduct occasional Internet searches to determine whether information is being posted about me without my knowledge. If I find any such information, I should immediately report it to _____ *<insert procedure/name for reporting behavior>*.

MONITORING OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- I understand that the District has the authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and communication and, as result, may monitor all communication that takes place on the District's network or through the District Approved Digital Technologies and Professional Social Media Accounts.
- District supervisors, or their designees, are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback regarding their employees' Professional social media sites. The monitoring responsibilities include reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis. If supervisors discover questionable communications or behavior on professional social media sites, they are required to follow the procedures for reporting the behavior.
- I understand that the District may view and monitor District Approved Technology and Professional Social Media Accounts without consent or previous approval. In addition, employees may be asked to disclose to the District the existence of and to provide the District with access to an employee's personal social media account for the purpose of investigating misconduct or to protect the safety of District students and/or staff.²

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- I will not disclose information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the District, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy laws
- I will not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent, except for images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances. *<for some Districts, a signed parental consent is required for any image released with an identifiable student face. In those Districts, the language "except for images. . . performances." can be deleted.>*
- I will not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-worker's consent.
- If I have a question about what constitutes confidential information or personally identifiable student information that should not be posted or disclosed; I will contact *<position responsible for student data privacy>*.
- I will follow trademark and copyright law and fair use requirements in all of my digital communications and social media accounts.
- I will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, that violates the privacy of any one in the school community.
- On my Personal Social Media Account, I may post the following information about my work with the District: (1) District name, job title, and job duties; (2) Status updates regarding

2 Note: Depending on your state and district, this language may need to instead imply that the district may discover personal social media as part of the investigative process.

my own job promotion; and (3) Personal participation in District-sponsored events, including volunteer activities.

- I understand that the District encourages all employees to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. I am aware, however, that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. I understand that it is my responsibility to periodically review the privacy policies and settings of my Personal Digital Technology and to ensure that they conform to the requirements and objectives of the District's Social Media Policy.

I understand that failure to comply with any aspect of this Policy may subject me to discipline, up to and including termination.

SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE _____

Title _____

Date _____

NOTE: After adoption (1) ensure the document has life beyond a filing cabinet by introducing the policy to parents, staff, school board members; and (2) set a time for reviewing the policy (annually or biannually) to ensure it continues to reflect the school norms and practices. Ensure all members of the school community get notification of any changes.

CREDIT:

- <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BCF47CED-604B-4FDD-B752-DC2D81504478/0/DOESocialMediaGuidelines20120430.pdf>
- <http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/policies/470.pdf>

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