

Policy: IJNDC

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES,  
INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

Because of the unique nature of social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and because of the District's desire to protect its interest with regard to its electronic records, the following rules have been established to address social media site usage by all employees:

KEEP PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTS SEPARATE

Staff members who decide to engage in professional social media activities will maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. Staff members will not use their District email address for personal social media activities. Use of District email for this purpose is prohibited and will be considered a violation of District policy that may result in disciplinary action.

CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

Although it is desired that staff members have a sincere interest in students as individuals, partiality and the appearance of impropriety must be avoided. All staff shall maintain a professional relationship with all students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Informal and/or social involvement with students is therefore prohibited.

This includes:

Listing current students as "friends" on networking sites wherein personal information is shared or available for review;

Contacting students through electronic means other than the District's email and telephone system;

Coaches/Sponsors electronically contacting a team member or members without including all members in the communication;

Giving private cell phone or home phone numbers to students without prior approval of the District;

Inappropriate contact of any kind, including via electronic media.

Nothing in this policy prohibits District staff and students from the use of education websites and/or use of social networking websites created for curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular purposes where the professional relationship is maintained with the student.

Failure to maintain a professional relationship with students, both inside and outside of a classroom setting, including interaction via social networking websites of any nature, e-mailing, texting, or other

electronic methods could result in the reporting of such conduct to the Professional Teaching Standards Board by District's administration and the imposition of disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### RULES CONCERNING DISTRICT-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

If an employee wishes to use Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements, etc. for a school-sponsored club or a school-based activity or an official school-based organization, the employee shall comply with the following procedures and rules:

##### Notify the District

Employees that have or would like to start a social media page should contact their Superintendent or designee. All District pages must have an appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. The Superintendent or designee will outline the duties of the employee responsible for the site, including how often the site must be checked for comments and who is allowed to post to the site. Superintendent or designee should be aware of the content on the site, arrange for periodic monitoring of the site, and for the receipt and addressing of any complaints about the content on the site. The Superintendent reserves the right to shut down or discontinue the site if he/she believes it is in the best overall interest of the students.

##### Have a Plan

District staff will consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as strategy for keeping information on social media sites up to date, accurate, and in the best interest of the students.

##### Protect the District Voice

Posts on District-affiliated social media sites protect the District's voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. Carefully consider the naming of pages or accounts, the selecting of pictures or icons, compliance with District policy, state, and federal laws with regard to student and employee confidentiality, and the determination of content.

The employee must also comply with the following rules:

The employee must set up the club, etc. as a group list which will be "closed and moderated".

The employee must set up mechanisms for delivering information to students that are not members of the group via non-electronic means.

Members will not be established as "friends" but as members of the group list.

Anyone who has access to the communications conveyed through the site may only gain access by the permission of the employee (e.g., teacher, administrator, or supervisor). Persons desiring to access the page may join only after the employee invites them and allows them to join.

Parents shall be permitted to access any site that their child has been invited to join. Parents shall report any communications they believe to be inappropriate by students or school personnel to District administration.

Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization, or team.

The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly.

The employee's supervisor shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose.

Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all such District-sponsored social media activity. This includes maintaining a separation between the school activity pages and employees' personal social media profiles and pages.

Postings made to the site must comply with all other District policies pertaining to District web sites, Internet usage, and technology.

#### PERSONAL SITES

The board respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-expression on their personal time. As role models for the school system's students, however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not performing their job duties as employees of the school system. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct. Further, school employees remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, board policies, administrative regulations and applicable code of ethics, even if communicating with others concerning personal and private matters. If an employee's use of social media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends or members of the public who can access the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site. Employees shall take reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to restrict students from viewing their personal information on social media web sites and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

If you identify yourself as a District employee online, it should be clear that the views expressed, posted, or published are personal views, not necessarily those of the District, its Board, employees or agents.

Opinions expressed by staff on a social networking website have the potential to be disseminated far beyond the speaker's desire or intention, and could undermine the public perception of fitness of the individual to educate students, and thus undermine teaching effectiveness. In this way, the effect of the expression and publication of such opinions could potentially lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member, up to and including termination or nonrenewal of the contract of employment.

#### POSTING TO SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Employees who use social media for personal purposes must be aware that the content they post may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents and community members. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating through social media:

1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees or school system business.
2. Employees shall not accept current students as "friends" or "followers" or otherwise connect with students on social media sites, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting.
3. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing the school system, students and other employees.
4. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment.
5. Employees shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of the system without express, written consent from the board.
6. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family without permission from the student and the student's parent or legal guardian.
7. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the board, individual board members, students or other school employees.
8. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully or intimidate other employees or students in violation of District policy.
9. Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs.
10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that violates board policy and administrative procedures or state and federal laws.

## CONSEQUENCES

School system personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the Internet using school technological resources. Additionally, the superintendent or designee may periodically conduct public Internet searches to determine if an employee has engaged in conduct that violates this policy. Any employee who has been found by the superintendent to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Employees shall not post confidential or propriety information about the District, its employees, students, agents, or others. The employee shall adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality policies adopted by the District or as provided by state or federal law.

### Do Not Use District Name, Logos, or Images

Employees shall not use the District logos, images, iconography, etc. on personal social media sites; nor shall employees use the District name to promote a product, cause or political party, or political candidate; nor shall employees use personal images of students, or names or data relating to students, absent written authority of the parent of a minor or authority of an adult or emancipated student.

Adopted: February 18, 2013