

Social Media Policy

2016

No. 3440

A. Introduction/Purpose

1. Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing the District's students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors.
2. The Board of Education (the "Board") is committed to ensuring that both school personnel and students utilize social media technology in a safe and responsible manner.

B. Definition of Social Media

For purposes of this policy, the term *social media* means any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including but not limited to: social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, and Flickr.

1. *Professional social media* means work-related social media activity.
2. *Personal social media* means non work-related social media activity.

C. Applicability

This policy applies to District officers and employees, to authorized school volunteers, and to employees of contractors who provide an institutional service or function to or for the District (hereinafter collectively referred to as "school staff") who utilize social media in connection with providing instruction and/or other services to or for the District.

D. E-mail Communications

1. District Provided E-mail Accounts/Addresses to be Utilized for School District Matters

School staff who utilize e-mail to engage in *professional social media* activities are required to maintain and utilize their District-provided e-mail for all such activities. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of e-mail to "friend", "follow", "comment", and/or to "post messages" using social media sites.

School staff are prohibited from using their personal e-mail accounts and/or addresses for *professional social media* activities.

2. Guidance Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

School staff are required to limit their use of *professional social media* sites for the purpose of reasonably and appropriately supporting and/or enhancing instruction and/or for other reasonable and legitimate educational program or extra-curricular program objectives. In addition, school staff are required to familiarize themselves with and to comply with this policy, including the following specific guidelines:

- a. School staff are expected to treat *professional social media* spaces and communications like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. This means that the same standards expected in the District's other professional settings are expected on *professional social media* sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or in a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on a *professional social media* site. Accordingly, when utilized, *professional social media* must be utilized in compliance with District policies, procedures, administrative guidelines and regulations, and in conformity with applicable laws, rules and regulations, including but not limited to, prohibitions on the disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language.
- b. School staff should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using *professional social media*.
- c. School staff shall obtain the approval of authorized District Office ("DO") personnel, or their designee(s), using an approved registration form, before setting up a *professional social media* presence.
- d. When approving *professional social media* sites, authorized DO administrators, or their designees, shall consider the intended audience for the site and shall consider the level of privacy assigned to the site, specifically, whether the site should be a *private network* (e.g., one that is limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school) or a *public network* (e.g., one that is accessible within the school or District by an expanded group of participants or one in which individuals outside the District can participate). Regardless of whether a *professional social media* site is deemed to be a *private network* or *public network*, the confidentiality of information pertaining to students and staff must be maintained in accordance with applicable law and District policies. This means, among other things, that *personally identifiable information* about students can only be made available, via *professional social media*, if at all, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable District policies and procedures, including but not limited to: District Policies No. 7370 and No. 8460, and the District's annual Directory Information Notice and opt out provisions, as published on page 6 of the Annual School District

Calendar, available online under the “Quick Links” section of the District’s homepage at: <http://www.wfsd.k12.ny.us/>

- e. School staff shall be required, upon request by DO administrators and/or their designees, to give them access to *professional social media* sites and/or accounts established by school staff.
- f. *Professional social media* sites shall include language identifying the sites as *professional social media* sites of the William Floyd Union Free School District, so as to differentiate them from personal sites.
- g. School staff shall use privacy settings to control access to their *professional social media* sites, with the objective that *professional social media* site contents and communications only reach the intended audience. However, school staff should be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communications published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, school staff have the obligation to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.
- h. District students who participate in *professional social media* sites may not be permitted to post photographs or videos featuring other students without the approval of the teacher or other school staff for the site. Moreover, no *personally identifiable information* about students, as defined by the FERPA regulations, may be posted by school staff on *professional social media* sites that afford other unauthorized persons access to such *personally identifiable information*, unless written consent, signed and dated, is obtained from each such student’s parents (or in the case of “eligible students” [i.e., age 18 and older] from the eligible student himself or herself) beforehand, explicitly authorizing the nature and scope of disclosure.

4. Monitoring/Disabling and/or Removing Objectionable Material from *Professional Social Media* Sites

- a. School staff who utilize *professional social media* have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media. DO administrators and other District administrators and supervisors, or their respective designees, reserve the right to:(i) access and inspect *professional social media* sites utilized by school staff, and (ii) to direct school staff to remove postings and/or to disable or all part of any *professional social media* site that does not conform with applicable laws, this policy and/or other applicable District policies, procedures and/or administrative guidelines or regulations.

E. Personal Social Media Interactions

1. Communication with District Students

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- a. In order to maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students, school staff who provide an institutional service or function to or for the District, are prohibited from utilizing *personal social media* to interact and/or communicate with students who are currently enrolled in the District.