

3282 USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The Board of Education has a strong commitment to quality education and the well-being of all students, 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 students 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 render 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, that violate Board policies, including Board Policy 3283 and the Board Policies specified therein, or other standards of conduct for teaching staff members or non-certified school employees established by the Commissioner of Education, or which are substantially disruptive to the district, could be cause for discipline or dismissal of a non-tenured staff member or grounds for discipline up to and including certifying tenure charges against a tenured staff member to the Commissioner of Education.

Staff members are advised to be concerned and aware that conduct violating Board policies or other standards of conduct established by the Commissioner of Education for professional and non-professional employees, or which is substantially disruptive to the district, may include, but is not limited to, communications and/or publications using e-mails, text-messaging, postings to social networking sites, or any other form of electronic communication that is directed and/or available to students, staff, 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 when their use touches upon or concerns their employment in the school district. It is important that a staff member's use of these sites does not damage the reputation of the school district, employees, students, 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 that their use, postings, or publications do not violate Board policies or other standards of conduct for certified or non-certified school employees, as applicable, and are not substantially disruptive to the district. 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, student 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, intimidation and bullying;
2. Must uphold the district's value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about the school district, employees, students, 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 students 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 in a manner which would violate Board policies or other standards of conduct for certified or non-certified school employees established by the Commissioner of Education, or be substantially disruptive to 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 for such use; and
9. Shall not post or publish any information that violates Board policies or other standards of conduct for certified or non-certified school employees, as applicable, established by the Commissioner of Education, or is substantially disruptive to the district.
10. Employees (except in the case of an employee who is a family member of a student) shall not communicate on any public social networking sites with students currently enrolled in the district. This includes becoming "friends" or allowing students to access an employee's personal page to communicate.

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 substantially disruptive to the functioning 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 Superintendent may request that the employee cease such activity. Depending on the severity of the incident, the staff member may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

This Policy has been developed and adopted by this Board to provide guidance and direction to staff members on how to avoid conduct, while using social networking sites, that violates Board policies or other standards of conduct for certified or non-certified employees established by the Commissioner of Education, or which is substantially disruptive to the district.

Adopted: