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# South Washington County Schools

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**District Service Center**  
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## Social Media Guidelines for Staff

South Washington County Schools recognizes the importance of using social media as a communication and learning tool. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist District 833 employees in navigating the appropriate use of social media tools in their professional and personal lives. A district's most valuable asset is its staff, and what you publish may reflect on the school or district.

Social media includes any form of online publication where end users post or engage in conversation and include websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, virtual worlds and social networks.

All staff are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the district and appropriate role models for students. It is vital that staff maintain professionalism in their interactions with students and the community. Failure to do so could put you in violation of existing District policy and at risk of disciplinary action. If you see colleagues acting in a way that you think is not in accordance with these guidelines, discuss it with your supervisor.

Questions about these guidelines should be addressed to the district's Communications Department.

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### 1. You are Always a School District Employee

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are sometimes blurred in the digital world. Even when you have a disclaimer or use a different user name, you will always be considered to be a district employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be publicly identified as working for and sometimes representing the school in what you do and say online.

- Always write in the first person and make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the district.
- Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity.
- Be honest about who you are, where you work and what you do.
- Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks.

### 2. Be Professional

Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner and consider carefully what you post through comments, photos, videos, links and articles.

- Respect copyright and fair use guidelines.
- Do not use any school or district logo or image without permission.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it quickly. Clearly state if you've corrected a previous post and apologize if appropriate.
- Be cautious about posting personal photos and videos. Assume the photo or video you post is public and can/will be viewed by everyone in your personal and professional worlds.

### 3. Respect Others and Ensure the Safety of Students

Respect the privacy and the feelings of others and do not, under any circumstance, post offensive comments about students, colleagues, or the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber-bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offence.

- You are responsible for what you post publicly, so be certain it is accurate and supports, or remains neutral of your organization.
- Employees who join or engage in social networks that include students have the responsibility for monitoring content and addressing appropriate behavior or activity, including the protection and safety of minors.
- Do not post photos or videos of fellow employees without their permission.
- Do not post photos or videos that contain students to public sites without checking to see if the student has a Photography Opt-Out form on file with the district. This can be done through Infinite Campus.

#### **4. Manage Staff/Student Relationships Carefully**

Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Do not fraternize with students as though they are your peers or friends.

- Unprofessional relationships include writing personal letters, email or text messages; calling students on cell phones or allowing students to make personal calls to you unrelated to class work or school activities; sending inappropriate pictures to students; discussing or revealing personal matters about your private life or inviting students to do the same; engaging in sexualized dialogue in any form.
- Inappropriate or offensive content posted to social networks by employees and viewed by students, parents or other staff may be investigated by school and district officials and, if warranted, may result in disciplinary action.
- School email is not private. All communications by employees to students or parents at any time from any email system shall be expected to be professional. Email between employees and students and parents shall be done through the school provided email application and must conform to school email policies.

#### **5. Personal Use**

The line between professional and personal relationships can be blurred within a social media context. Employees should exercise good judgment and common sense while maintaining their professionalism as a district employee.

- Do not use district contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) when using social media for personal use.
- Do not connect with students via personal social media. Doing would be an example of an unprofessional relationship described above.
- Do not use district equipment or the district network as primary tools for maintaining personal accounts.
- Never post photos or videos of students to personal social media accounts.

#### **6. Classroom Use and use by Coaches, Advisors, Fundraisers and Programs**

Social media networks are powerful teaching and communication tools that can add great value to classroom instruction and can be helpful for groups in interacting and sharing information. Teachers are encouraged to use social media tools where appropriate in addressing an educational goal of the classroom.

- Inform your supervisor when creating social networks for any school-related use.
- Use district contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) for creating and maintaining accounts.
- Be proactive by stating clearly that the network you create is school related.
- Abide by the user guidelines set by the social media site.
- Treat the social media network like a classroom. Monitor closely the interactions between students and deal with inappropriate use immediately.

#### **References**

- Social Media Guidelines for Schools Wiki - <http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com>
- Intel Social Media Guidelines - [http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en\\_US/social-media.htm](http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en_US/social-media.htm)
- Bloomington Public Schools' Social Media Guidelines: <http://www.bloomington.k12.mn.us/staff/technology/policy/social-media-guidelines>