

Reviewed: 6/13/2022

440 SOCIAL MEDIA USE

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the guidelines for acceptable use of Social Media by school staff and current school board members.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Crosslake Community School recognizes the importance of using social media as a communication and learning tool. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist our staff and board in navigating the appropriate use of social media tools in their professional and personal lives. It also seeks to assist staff and board members in protecting themselves from false accusations or poor judgment. Social media includes websites and applications where users share and create content and includes blogs, wikis, podcasts, virtual worlds, and social networks.

All staff and board members are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the charter school and appropriate role models for students. It is vital that staff and board maintain professionalism in their interactions with students, parents, and the community. Failure to do so could put you in violation of existing charter school policy and at risk of disciplinary action.

1. You are Always a School representative

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 username, you will always be considered to be a charter school representative. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be publicly identified as working for and sometimes representing the charter 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 charter school.
- 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 staff. What you post will be seen by others and can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks.
- Disagreeing with school, state, or federal policies or procedures in a public forum should be avoided.

2. Be Professional

Represent the charter school values of respect, responsibility, integrity, citizenship, honesty, and teamwork. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner, and consider carefully what you post through comments and photos.

- Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Be sure to cite your source when quoting and use Creative Commons* licensing when possible.
- Do not use any school logo or image without permission from the charter school's executive director.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it quickly. Clearly state if you've corrected a previous post, and apologize if appropriate. Even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it.

- Be cautious about posting personal video. Video is an especially rich form of communication that often tells more about you than you might realize. Assume the video you post is public and 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 charter school in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber-bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offense.

- You are responsible for what you post publicly, so be certain it is accurate and supports, or remains neutral of, the charter school. If you are about to publish something that makes you hesitate, wait a day, and talk to a colleague or supervisor. Once posted, someone will have seen it, and you can't take it back.
- 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.
- Permission should be sought when posting photos or movies of fellow employees when possible.
- The charter school asks parental permission each year for students. Staff should ensure that they do not use student images if parents have stated "no media."
- The main place that student photos or videos should be posted are through the charter school's official Facebook, Instagram, or website. Staff members can share to their personal page items that have been posted on the official pages and should avoid posting other items from their personal pages.

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.

- No school staff member should friend or follow students on any social media platform until students have graduated from high school, turn 18 (if student drops out of school), or turn 21 (if still enrolled in school past age 18). Exceptions to this can be students who are the staff members' immediate family members (children, parents, siblings, and the children of same).
- Online staff should use their school issued phones or their school account Google Voice for texting and phone calls. Students should not have staff personal email addresses or cell phone numbers. Staff must avoid using social networking private messaging as a means to contact students.
- Unprofessional relationships include writing personal letters, email, or text messages; calling students on personal 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; engaging in sexualized dialogue in any form.
- Students should know at all times that you are a mandated reporter and that you will need to report information they share with you to a supervisor as well as county officials if required by law.
- Inappropriate or offensive content posted to social networks by employees and viewed by students, parents or other staff may be investigated by charter school 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. Help Build our Community

Write what you know, be accurate, and add value to the discussion. A charter school's most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school.

- Speak in the first person with your own voice and perspective.
- Online posts should be well-written. Write for your immediate purpose, but also for a worldwide audience by following writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Consider sending what you want to post to the social media coordinator who may choose to post it on the official school avenues which you can then share on your personal page.

6. Personal Use

The line between professional and personal relationships can be blurred within a social media context. Employees should exercise good judgement and common sense while maintaining their professionalism as a charter school employee. You are always an employee of a public school regardless of where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing.

- Do not use charter school contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) when using social media for personal use.
- Do not connect with students via personal social media. Doing so puts you in a potentially compromising teacher-student relationship.

7. Classroom Use

Social media networks are powerful teaching and communication tools that can add great value to classroom instruction.

- Most social media networks restrict students under the age of 13 to have accounts with them.
- Whenever possible, use technology that already is provided within the school setting for these uses such as Google Classroom or Canvas (online program).
- Make a request to one of the Directors when you desire to create social networks for classroom use (outside of what is provided) obtain permission from one of the Directors prior to setting up these networks, and request parent permission and ensure that they are aware of the use and educational purpose.
- Use charter school contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) for creating and maintaining accounts, including student accounts.
- Abide by the user guidelines set by the social media site including account age requirements. Any deviation from this could lead to disciplinary action.
- Treat the social media network like a classroom. Monitor closely the interactions between students and deal with inappropriate use immediately.

8. Other Uses - Coaches, Advisors, Fundraisers, Programs

Social media networks can be helpful for groups in interacting and sharing information.

- Notify the social media coordinator of all networks that you set up.
- Limit membership to these groups to parents and approved adult volunteers who have been through the required background check.
- Groups for students should be administered through Google Classroom or Canvas (online program).
- Use charter school 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 including account age requirements.
- Treat the social media network like a classroom. Monitor closely the interactions between students and deal with inappropriate use immediately.
- Consult with one of the Directors if further guidance is needed.

References

This policy was modified from the Bloomington (MN) Public School District Policy
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
Creative Commons Information - <http://creativecommons.org/>

Policy 440 Social Media Use Policy is also found in the Staff Handbook.