

Second and Final Reading of New Board Policy

200.04 BOARD MEMBER SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Background:

The spring Policy Primer from the Iowa Association of School Boards contains updates and adjustments to policies that are designed to provide greater clarity for districts on legal requirements and best practices.

This spring's Primer features a new sample policy on board member social media engagement. While the policy language provides the legal framework of considerations for board members, IASB's resource on **School Board Members & Social Media** provides in depth considerations and analysis of the many legal issues related to this topic.

The *School Board Members & Social Media* publication from IASB accompanies this page and this proposed new policy.

Boards are encouraged to use this resource as a discussion guide at the board table during the adoption process of this sample policy. To request a facilitated board workshop related to school board member social media use, contact Siobhan Schneider or IASB's Board Development Directors Lou Ann Gvist and Tammi Drawbaugh or call (515) 288-1991.

Recommended Action:

I recommend the board approve the second and final reading of the new policy 200.04 Board Member Social Media Engagement.

BOARD MEMBER SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The board sees the value in promoting the excellent work and accomplishments of the district’s students and staff. Social media is one of many effective communication tools that the district may utilize. Board members have been publicly elected to govern the district and accept a fiduciary responsibility. That responsibility means board members agree to always act in the best interests of the district. For this reason, the board shall expect that individual communications and social media posts made by board members will reflect the values and decorum expected of elected officials in the school community.

All board members enjoy rights to freedom of speech under both the U.S. and Iowa Constitutions. As such, the district will not limit protected speech of any board members. Certain categories of speech are not protected and may be subject to regulation. Additionally, board members should be aware that protected speech can still subject individuals to legal liability. If using social media to discuss district related matters, board members should be aware that they may be prohibited from blocking individual communications and posters based upon the content of their posts.

The board as a whole and individual board members in their governance role have legal obligations to safeguard the privacy of information related to student and employee matters. Board members will refrain from posting or communicating on social media in a way that violates the district’s obligation to protect the privacy of its students and employees.

Board members are uniquely positioned in the school community to be both accessible and responsive to community concerns about the effective governance of the district. As a result, the board will remember their obligations to safeguard student and employee privacy when responding to any social media posts or communications, even if the response is intended to correct information for the rest of the school community. Board members will direct concerned individuals to the appropriate district staff to address their inquiry or complaint in accordance with board policy.

NOTE: This policy is discretionary and reflects best practices for board members. While it is intended to provide a basic legal structure, boards are encouraged to comprehensively discuss this topic at the board table so the board as a whole can develop understanding and consensus behind this policy. Contact IASB for additional resources on board table discussions related to this topic.

Legal Reference: 18 U.S.C. § 921
Iowa Code §§ 279.8; 280.21B; 483A.27(11), 724
281 I.A.C. 12.3(6)

Cross Reference: 502 Student Rights and Responsibilities
503 Student Discipline

Date of Adoption: 06-15-2023 Reviewed: _____ Revised: _____