

8340 EMPLOYEE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY *New policy (Combined with 8340 - Tech Services Website Posting Guidelines)

I. PHILOSOPHY

Weber School District Board of Education recognizes the District's need to communicate with students, parents, and the community at large. Communication continues to evolve and currently consists mostly of technological means. Social media (websites/applications focused on communication) has become the primary source for interaction, collaboration, content-sharing, and community-based input. The District understands that social media facilitates necessary communication, but may also pose potential hazards and privacy violation concerns when used inadequately.

II. POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to enforce appropriate use of social media by Weber School District employees. This policy outlines the standards and expectations required of all Weber School District employees when using social media to communicate with students, parents, and the general public.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Cyber-bullying" means using the Internet, a cell phone, or another device to send or post text, video, or an image with the intent or knowledge, or with reckless disregard, that the text, video, or image will hurt, embarrass, or threaten an individual, regardless of whether the individual directed, consented to, or acquiesced in the conduct, or voluntarily accessed the electronic communication.
- B. "Digital Citizenship" means the norms of appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior related to technology use, including digital literacy, ethics, etiquette, and security.
- C. "Employee" means an individual working in the individual's official capacity as a teacher; school staff member; school administrator; district administrator; district staff member; or governing board member.
- D. "Personally Identifiable Student Data" means student data that identifies or is used by the holder to identify a student.
 - 1. "Personally identifiable student data" includes:
 - i. a student's first and last name;
 - ii. the first and last name of a student's family member;
 - iii. a student's or a student's family's home or physical address;
 - iv. a student's email address or other online contact information;

- v. a student's telephone number;
- vi. a student's social security number;
- vii. a student's biometric identifier;
- viii. a student's health or disability data;
- ix. a student's education entity student identification number;
- x. a student's social media username and password or alias;
- xi. if associated with personally identifiable student data, the student's persistent identifier, including:
 - a. a customer number held in a cookie; or
 - b. a processor serial number;
 - 1. a combination of a student's last name or photograph with other information that together permits a person to contact the student online;
 - 2. information about a student or a student's family that a person collects online and combines with other personally identifiable student data to identify the student; and
 - 3. information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty.

- E. "Social Media" means websites and applications that enable users to create/share content and/or participate in social networking activities.
- F. "Social Media Content" means and includes any materials, documents, photographs, graphics, and other information that is created, posted, distributed, or transmitted using social media Internet sites or social media tools.

IV. EMPLOYEE PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT

- A. District employees must be aware that their personal and professional presence on social media is accessible to the public and must exercise positive digital citizenship in all online interactions.
- B. When expressing personal opinions, employees must make reasonable efforts to ensure that their views are not inadvertently affiliated with Weber School District, or reflect negatively on the employee or the district. A simple statement or disclaimer that views are not affiliated with Weber School District is insufficient if the content of the

post supports a conclusion to a reasonable observer that the employee's views are affiliated with Weber School District.

- C. Personal social media profiles must allow the employee to maintain a professional, respectful association with students, colleagues, and the community, and must not undermine the reputation of the District, the school, or its administrators or employees.
- D. The following applies to employees' personal use of social media:
 - 1. Personal social media profiles may not use official school logos or appear to represent the District or any of its schools or programs.
 - 2. Employees maintaining personal social media profiles shall ensure that photos, videos, text, and all other content:
 - i. is posted in the employee's personal capacity as a private citizen and not as a public employee, pursuant to official school duties; and
 - ii. does not interfere with the District's orderly operations, affect harmony among colleagues, air personnel grievances that are not matters of public concern, or otherwise impede the employee's ability to perform job duties.
 - iii. includes content, either originally posted by the employee or re-posted by the employee, including commenting or reacting to a post that expresses animosity or hostility toward any group of individuals, of whom WSD students may be a part.
 - 3. All social media content posted or shared by an employee must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other applicable state and federal laws pertaining to student privacy, and, when utilizing District networks, is subject to the district's [Appropriate Use Policy](#).
 - 4. In addition to compliance with federal and state privacy laws, social media content shall never include any information about students, (whether or not that information is protected as an education record under FERPA), or confidential information about district employees.
 - 5. Employees shall not engage in cyberbullying activities on their personal social media accounts.
- E. Employees are discouraged from using personal social media accounts to conduct school or District business. Use of a personal social media account for work-related communications may subject the contents of the social media account, including private communications, to disclosure. The employee may be required to disclose the content in response to a subpoena, court order, discovery request, or request for records under the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), UTAH CODE ANN. § 63G-2- 101 et seq. In addition, the District may require disclosure to investigate allegations of misconduct.

- F. Use of District-owned equipment and Internet access may be monitored, and employees have no expectation of privacy in activities utilizing District-owned equipment whether the use is on or off contract time.
- G. Nothing in this policy prohibits the creation of private social media accounts by employees acting outside the scope of their employment and with personally owned equipment on their own time.

V. SOCIAL MEDIA EMPLOYEE-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

- A. Section V of this policy shall be used in conjunction with [Policy 7120 - Code of Conduct between Employees and Students](#) and [Policy 7500 - Professional Interactions with Students](#). The following applies to all communication between district employees and students.
 - 1. Employees are encouraged to actively and appropriately communicate with students to advance learning and academic success. Generally, communications should be transparent and, wherever possible, conducted in open forums. Employees shall avoid in-person communications conducted in confined or isolated environments out of sight of others. Further, the content of conversations shall remain professional in accordance with state laws, regulations ([Utah Administrative Rule R277-217](#)), and District policies related to educator standards, particularly those standards articulating boundary violations.
 - 2. Employees shall not communicate privately with, nor allow private communications from, students currently enrolled in WSD via any personal social media account. Employees are strongly discouraged from following or otherwise connecting with any student currently enrolled in WSD or allowing students to follow or connect to the employee.
 - 3. Consistent with Policy 7120, employees are prohibited from texting students through any personal application or program that is not a district-approved and controlled communication application or program.
 - 4. Telephonic or electronic communications (e.g. via email, texting, and direct messaging on social media sites) pose particular challenges related to professionalism because such conversations often create expectations of some level of privacy or confidentiality. Employees shall have no such expectations when using devices or networks owned by the District, and depending on the circumstances, all communications with students may be discoverable regardless of the devices or networks used.
 - 5. Consistent with state laws and regulations and with District policies, employees shall not solicit personal or sensitive information from students without parents/guardians' knowledge and consent unless a student's health and/or safety are at risk. Personal or sensitive information that is offered freely or spontaneously by students shall be managed professionally in accordance with statutes,

regulations, and policies. In particular, information involving criminal conduct, abuse, or neglect shall be appropriately disclosed to law enforcement, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), parents, administrators, counselors, social workers, and/or school psychologists.

6. Employees shall not attempt to restrict protected student communication related to the curriculum, school-sponsored activities, or student communication that occurs during discretionary time. Protected student communications are generally expressions of personal belief or opinion but do not include communications that unreasonably interfere with order or discipline, threaten the well-being of persons or property, or violate concepts of civility or propriety appropriate to a school setting.
7. Regardless of means or intentions, taking photographs or video of students for noneducational purposes, excessive contact, prolonged discussions of personal or intimate issues, harassing or discriminatory communication, abusive communication, profanity, crude or off-colored humor, communications regarding sex or sexuality outside of approved curriculum, any form of pornography or indecent content, grooming of any kind, or other similar communications with, toward, or about any student is prohibited.

VI. SOCIAL MEDIA USE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF EMPLOYMENT

- A. Within the scope of employment, the use of social media is only permitted for educational purposes. Employee participation in social media is completely voluntary.
 1. An employee electing to create and maintain a social media account for educational purposes within the scope of employment must receive approval from the building administrator, department director or supervisor, and the Technical Services Department prior to creating an account. Once approvals have been received the employee may create an account that will be considered a school-sponsored account.
 2. WSD reserves the right to deny or revoke approval in its sole discretion.
 3. An employee who creates a school-sponsored account agrees to abide by this policy.
- B. Rules for Social Media Use for School-Sponsored Accounts
 1. School-sponsored accounts shall only be used to share information about school-sponsored events and activities.
 2. Photos, videos, and materials featuring students are considered directory information and may be posted to a school-sponsored account without parent permission. However, a parent shall be given the opportunity to opt out of online postings through the annual FERPA Notice and Opt-Out Form distributed at the beginning of each school year. If an employee chooses to maintain a

school-sponsored account, it is the employee's responsibility to find out which students' parents submitted a FERPA Opt-Out Form.

3. At any time throughout the school year, parents may request that images of their child/children be taken down from a school-sponsored account and the District will comply.
4. All social media content posted or shared on a school-sponsored account must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other applicable state and federal laws and is subject to the district's [Appropriate Use Policy](#).
5. Content on school-sponsored accounts shall never include confidential information about students or district employees.
6. Employees who create school-sponsored accounts are responsible for ensuring that posts on the account's sites are regularly monitored. Employees may allow students to help manage school-sponsored accounts, but ultimately, the employee is responsible for content on the site. Posts/comments which violate laws or policies shall be removed within a reasonable time frame and reported to administration.
7. Prohibited Content/Items for School-Sponsored Social Media include:
 - i. Personal communications or information about staff and parent volunteers, non-district email addresses, non-district mailing addresses, and non-district phone numbers except as approved by the building principal and the parent volunteer whose information is intended to be public. Example: PTA/PTA/Booster Organization officer requests to have their personal email address listed in the appropriate area on the schools' page(s) and the principal approves the request.
 - ii. Links to staff's, volunteers' or students' "personal" home pages that are on remote, non-district web servers (not hosted on Weber School District School's equipment).
 - iii. Student personal contact information of any kind.
 - iv. Links to "non-official" Weber School District-related sites that are hosted on remote, non-district web servers. Examples: athletic booster pages, PTA pages, etc. This prohibition includes teacher-created classroom pages or online services that may inform parents and visitors of the school district's site or classroom activities. The school system will provide hosting services for school-related web postings of booster club organizations, PTA groups, teachers, etc. following the same protocol and guidelines presented in this document.
 - v. Tracking information on the use of a school's social media and individual sections can be obtained from the Director of Online Learning.

8. Maintaining or posting material to a social media account that threatens a likelihood of substantial disruption in school, including harming or interfering with the right of other students to participate fully in school or extracurricular activities is a violation of the [Appropriate Use Policy](#) and can subject the student, staff, or employee member to appropriate penalties and disciplinary action.
9. Social media accounts created for posting information regarding Weber School District will not be used for financial gain or advertising.
10. If students participate in the creation and/or maintenance of social media, they MUST be logged onto the network with their own USER IDs and PASSWORDS. Under NO circumstances are students to be given another student's or employee's login information.

VII. COPYRIGHT

- A. Unauthorized use of copyrighted material is prohibited. All copyrighted material must be properly cited using standard citation information, giving credit (web address or active link) to a company or individual (celebrity, for instance) that has created text, a graphic, etc., assuming the site is not blocked by the web filtering hardware and software.