

Employee Social Media Policy - G-170

Scope:

This policy is adopted in addition to, and not as a substitute for, the School District's Technology Responsible Use Policy, which governs the use of the school district's technological resources, and the District's Staff Ethics/Conflict of Interest and Staff Conduct policies.

Purpose:

The Public Schools of Northborough and Southborough recognizes the increasing importance of electronic communication and social media for social interaction and education. However, due to the nature of social networking sites, there exists a risk that the lines between one's professional life and personal life will be blurred. District staff should always be mindful of how they present themselves to the world, online and otherwise.

Employees should be cognizant that any electronic communication regarding school or school business, whether relayed on one's own resources or district resources, may be subpoenaed and/or subject to discovery in a court or administrative proceeding. Additionally, state law requires public employees who send, receive or maintain records in their capacity as public employees, to retain, disclose and dispose of such records in compliance with strict provisions of the public records law. When staff members communicate through school-based resources, such as staff email or school-sponsored web pages, such records are retained and archived through the school's information technology department. The burden falls on the individual employee to comply with the public records laws when using personal email or social network accounts to communicate with students and/or parents and guardians.

Definitions:

Social Media: Any electronic media that allows individuals and/or organizations to create, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures or videos. This includes web-based and mobile-based technologies that support interactive communication between organizations, communities, and individuals that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Electronic Communication: Any communication or interaction which occurs through electronic means.

Expectations:

The Committees recognize that social media and electronic communication have valuable functionality both in and outside of the classroom. This policy does not limit any staff member's legal right to speak publicly as a citizen on matters of public concern or to communicate with fellow association members on workplace issues.

Notwithstanding, when staff members speak through social media on matters concerning their work, they can be perceived as speaking in their capacity as district employees. A clear line between one's professional life and one's personal life should be drawn at all times.

1. In staff online communications, readers may perceive staff to be "speaking for the school district." Please note: Staff shall not use personal social media to "act on behalf" of the district. Only approved messages and specific people are authorized to speak on behalf of the district.
2. District employees should not connect with currently enrolled students as a "friend" or contact them using a personal social media account. However, a teacher and/or classroom account for the purpose of education is acceptable. It is understood that even with the strictest privacy settings in place, any information willingly put out via social media should be considered public, and therefore can be viewed by anyone.
3. At all times, and in the use of any form of communications, staff members will always adhere to student privacy rights and the rights of employees to have their personnel and medical

information kept confidential. Information that is protected by law from disclosure to third parties will not be communicated online in a way that unreasonably exposes such information to retrieval by third parties.

4. District employees are expected to communicate with students and parents on educational matters only, and only through school-based resources, such as school-provided email or web portal accounts. Use of one's personal email account or personal social networking account to discuss school business with students and parents is not allowed. Staff shall not provide their personal email addresses to students.
5. Staff communications with students, even if staff does not use school resources for such communications, are within the jurisdiction of the school district to monitor when they arise out of your position as an educator.
6. In the use of social media, staff may not, without express permission from the superintendent of schools, use the school's logo, likeness or any school photographs or other property that belongs to the school.
7. Use of photographs in social media shall be in accordance with the district's Internet and media Publication Permission Form.
8. The district provided user accounts shall be utilized when accessing social media for educational purposes.
9. Staff are encouraged to report any inappropriate use of social media by fellow staff members and shall report any improper use of social media by the students to their district administrator immediately.

Cellular Phones and Text Messaging:

Staff employed by The Public Schools of Northborough and Southborough are charged with, among many other things, maintaining a safe educational environment for students. Staff members should not provide their personal contact information such as cellular and home telephone numbers. There are limited instances described herein where it is appropriate to give out this information. All Staff who lead school-sponsored trips or organize events that require travel shall maintain a line of communication with students and parents by providing their personal cell phone number to all student participants and their parents. Students may also provide their personal cell phone numbers to staff who lead school-sponsored trips or organize events that require travel to facilitate communication during travel. The purpose of this limited exchange of personal information is to ensure student safety during travel and in the event of an emergency.

1. Staff members shall communicate to students and their parents that the staff member's personal cell phone number is being provided for educational, informational, or safety purposes only.
2. Staff members shall only contact students via their personal cell phones for specific purposes (i.e., the student has not returned to a bus on a field trip).
3. Staff communication with students is to be directed through district provided email addresses.
4. Staff members who provide students with personal contact information shall explain the limited reason it is being provided and shall report any unauthorized use of this information by students to the principal or his/her designee immediately.

Web-Based Communication, Instructional, and Collaboration Tools:

1. Staff may use District approved communication and collaboration tools for instructional purposes.
2. Staff shall create said websites using only District provided web tools.
3. Staff shall not identify students by their last names on District approved and provided web tools unless permission is granted by the parent or guardian.
4. The District will provide students with alternative means of obtaining information provided via social media tools if home access is not available.
5. Staff shall cite all sources of content they provide on these pages and comply with applicable copyright laws and other applicable intellectual property laws.

Public Records Law and Copyright Protection

State law defines "public record" as all "documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any officer or employee of" any governmental entity. M.G.L. c 4, § 7(26); 950 CMR 32.03. Public records are subject to the retention and disclosure requirements of the public records law.

1. Staff shall save all direct messages and communications conveyed through district accounts on social media sites.
2. Staff shall save all communications conveyed through district email addresses.
3. Staff shall comply with applicable copyright laws when posting information produced by another person or entity and shall cite all third-party sources of information posted or shared.

Statement to Staff:

The Superintendent and Administration retain the right to monitor all school-related activity on district owned equipment and all activity on the district's network for the purpose of maintaining the safety of students and staff and to ensure that this policy is followed by all staff members.

Any violation of this policy or applicable city, state and federal laws will be subject to investigation and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and referral to state or federal law enforcement authorities in the appropriate cases.

Adopted:	March 20, 2019
----------	----------------