

## **471 EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

District 77 recognizes the value of teacher inquiry, investigation, and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience. The District also recognizes its obligation to reach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

The purpose of this policy is to address employee use of social media in the classroom and also to provide guidance to employees on the maintenance of professional ethics and boundaries when utilizing social media in their personal and professional lives. Employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or District policies.

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. ***Public Social Media Networks*** are defined to include various forms of discussion and information sharing including social networks, blogs, video sharing, podcasts, wikis, message boards, and online forums.
- B. ***District-adopted, password protected online social media*** are interactive media within the District's electronic technologies network or which the District has approved for educational use. The district has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access with this forum.

### **III. CLASSROOM USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Teachers may elect to utilize District-adopted, password protected online social media in the classroom for purposes of instruction. Teachers may also elect to use public online social media in the classroom for purposes of instruction. Use of online social media in the classroom is subject to the following:

- A. Employees must ensure that student work, private student data and student images are not made public on public online social media sites unless written parental permission has been obtained.
- B. When utilizing either type of online social media in the classroom, employees shall ensure compliance with any applicable terms of use of the online social media site.
- C. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's posting, displays,

or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies.

- D. Before creating any official Mankato Area Public Schools social networking sites on a non-school site (such as Facebook and Twitter), contact the Director of Media and Technology for approval. If approved, the site creator must include the official district logo, a link to the District's homepage and a respective Mankato Area Public Schools email and telephone number; notify the Public Information Office of the site location so the site can be added to Mankato Area Public Schools social network monitoring tool (HootSuite).

#### **IV. PERSONAL USE OF PUBLIC ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA BY EMPLOYEES**

The decision to make personal use of public online social media is left to the discretion of each employee. District 77 does not monitor employee use of public online social media; however, it may take appropriate responsive action when it becomes aware of, or suspects, conduct or communication on a public online social media site that adversely affects the workplace or violates applicable professional codes of ethics.

Because readers of social media networks may view the employee as a representative of the schools and the District, the District requires employees to observe the following rules when referring to the District, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks.

- A. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's posting, displays, or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies.
- B. Employees must consider their role as school personnel before posting or communicating content that is obscene, profane, vulgar, harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, or defamatory or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior or sexual harassment.
- C. Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications on public social media networks for personal use.
- D. Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the District or post comments as a representative of the District, except as authorized by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.
- E. Employees may not disclose information on any public online social media site that is private, confidential or owned by the District, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy or copyright laws or District Policy 515, Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records.

- F. Employees may not use or post a District or school logo on any public online social media site without permission from the Superintendent, the school principal, or designee.
- G. The District recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create public online social media representing students or groups within the District. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the District.
- H. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times. This includes using professional judgment when necessary for the safety of students online and responding appropriately as a mandated reporter when applicable.
- I. Employees may not post images of co-workers on an social media network without the co-worker's written consent.

Employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for District 77 schools and to remember they are role models to students in the community. Employees will be held responsible for their disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or for the content of anything communicated by the employee on any online social media site. An employee who fails to comply with the guidance set forth in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action and other consequences, up to and including termination, subject to applicable collective bargaining agreements.

*Guidelines are available in a separate document – see Policy 471 Guidelines.*