Board Information: November 8, 2021 [NEW]
Board Approved: November 22, 2021

Contact Person: Executive Director of Community Relations

POLICY 458   EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

  I.   PURPOSE

         To address the use of social media by District personnel both personally and
         professionally.

  II.   GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

         A.   Bloomington Public Schools recognizes the importance of using social media as a
                tool to promote and enhance its education, communication and community
                engagement goals.

         B.   The District acknowledges that many existing laws and policies apply to social
                media use by staff, students and the public. This includes, but is not limited to
                laws and policies in the areas of civility, privacy, public records retention and
                disclosure, copyright, ballot measures, access to District resources, and First
                Amendment rights. The District will comply with these laws and update its
                existing policies and procedures to these areas to address social media.

         C.   All staff are expected to serve as appropriate role models for students and
                positive ambassadors for the District. Professional conduct should be
                demonstrated at all times. How staff conduct themselves on social media not
                only reflects on them personally, but also on the District.

         D.   The line between professional and personal relationships can be blurred by social
                media. It is vital that staff maintain professionalism online.

  III.   DEFINITIONS

         A.   Social media – Includes but is not limited to blogs, podcasts, discussion forums,
                online collaborative information and publishing systems that are accessible to
                internal and external audiences, RSS feeds, video sharing, and social networks
                like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok and
                emerging or future social media platforms.

B.   District-approved social media – Interactive media 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 within this forum.

C.   Blog/Vlog – A regularly updated website or web page where an individual or group posts content and/or videos with online audiences.

D.   Podcast – Digital audio files distributed over the internet, often using syndication feeds, for public download or playback on mobile devices and personal computers.

IV.   PROVISIONS

A.   Using Social Media

Staff are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the District and to remember they are role models to students. Staff are seen as representatives of the school they work for and the District. Staff must adhere to the following rules when referring to the District, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media network.

B.   Classroom Use of Online Social Media

1.   Staff may not post material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to another person or entity when posting to Bloomington Public Schools hosted or approved websites or social media.

2.   Bloomington Public Schools-hosted blogs, podcasts or social media sites must focus on subjects related to the organization.

3.   Staff may not post content or conduct any activity that fails to conform to any and all applicable state and federal laws. For the District and its employees' protection, it is critical that copyright laws are obeyed by ensuring that employees have permission to use or reproduce any copyrighted text, photos, graphics, video or other material owned by others. Employees must also abide by any applicable District policies.

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4.   Staff may not post images on any social media network of students who are on the District's directory information opt-out list.

5.   Staff must follow District social media guidelines for [Facebook](), [Twitter](), and [Instagram]() accounts affiliated with Bloomington Public Schools that they manage.

C.   Personal Use of Public Online Social Media by Employees

1.   This policy applies to employee social media use on their personal account(s), on a personal or school- owned device, both inside and outside of work.

2.   Staff who participate in social media both inside and outside of work are expected to understand and follow the [staff social media guidelines]().

3.   Staff 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. When authorized as a spokesperson for the District, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the District.

4.   Staff may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information of or about the District, its students, or employees that is protected by data privacy laws.

5.   Staff should not use their District email address for personal communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the District.

6.   The District recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media sites representing students or groups within the District. When staff, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the District.

D.   Official School or District Public Online Social Media Sites

1.   The District and individual schools, programs and departments may choose to establish an official presence on public social media sites with

prior administrative approval. Staff must be designated as the site manager and the page must be shared with the Community Relations Office prior to its launch. The page manager is responsible for regular updates and monitoring content in accordance with the District social media manager guidelines.

2.   Staff responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in Policy and Regulations may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Staff will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or the content of anything posted on any social media network. Staff violating these expectations and guidelines are subject to disciplinary action (reference HR).

V.   APPENDICES
- Social Media Guidelines
- Rules of Engagement on Bloomington Public Schools Social Media Sites

School Board
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 271
Bloomington, MN

Social Media Guidelines

These guidelines are for the personal use of social media while employed by Bloomington Public Schools or serving as a member of the School Board. If you are an employee contributing to blogs or social media both inside and outside of work, these guidelines pertain to you. We expect all staff and board members who use social media to understand and follow these guidelines.

Transparency

How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. 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.

Always a School Employee

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. Even when you have a disclaimer or use a different username, you will always be considered to be a district employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as working for and sometimes representing the school in what you do and say online.

If asked by a member of the media to comment on school-related issues, refer them to the Community Relations Office or your principal or superintendent.

Student Safety

When employees, especially coaches/advisors, choose to participate in social media sites, they do so as an employee of the District and have responsibility for monitoring content and addressing appropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

School Values

Represent District values, expressing ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Building trust and responsibility in relationships extends to online communications. Do not denigrate or insult others including students, staff, administrators, parents, or other districts. Do not use ethnic slurs or obscenity. Even though you are of legal age, consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. School districts and other businesses and organizations are able to take disciplinary action on staff who make posts relative to alcohol and sexual activities.

Building Community

Represent the District and the students and parents you serve with respect. Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues, nor the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber-bullying and may warrant disciplinary consequences. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Do not comment on or forward unsupported information. You are responsible for what you post; be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. If you are about to publish something that makes you hesitate, review the guidelines and talk to a colleague or supervisor before publishing.

Share your Expertise
Write what you know and be accurate. Add value to the discussion. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. A district'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.

Respect and Responsibility
Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful of the opinions of others in your posts or comments.

Language and Tone
Be polite and use appropriate language. Do not use abusive, profane, threatening, or offensive language. Statements that are harassing, discriminatory or defamatory could subject board members, and possibly the school district, to a legal action.

Own and Correct Mistakes
If you make a mistake, admit the mistake and correct it quickly. Clearly state if you've edited a previous post.

Confidential Information
Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and will be online for a long time. It can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks. Do not write about a colleague or student without their permission.

Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism
How you respond to a negative comment or criticism says more about you and your character than what you post. Deleting negative posts discourages open communication. When publicly criticized or receiving a negative comment, first, stay cool and do not reply in haste. Express your view in a clear, logical way. Do not get personal and if you make a mistake, admit it and move ahead. It is not uncommon for a negative response to be answered by a third party who supports your view. When in doubt, it is best to ignore a negative comment and not give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response publicly. Social media sites are not the place for a private conversation. Sometimes, suggesting a face-to-face meeting is more appropriate.

Spell Check and Abbreviations
Blog and other social media posts should be well written. What you post will be online for the world to read. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Consider your audience. Be cautious about using common abbreviations and educational jargon that could be unfamiliar to your readers.

Copyright and Fair Use
Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Share what others have said by linking to the source and using embedded content. Be sure to cite your source when quoting. When using a hyperlink, confirm that the link goes where it should and that the content is appropriate. It is recommended that all online content be licensed under a <u>Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Share Alike 3.0 United States License</u>.

Promotional Content
Employees are prohibited from accepting remuneration for endorsing or promoting any product or service as a representative of the school district, and social media posts should not be promotional in nature with regard to outside companies, organizations and products. Employees must clearly and conspicuously disclose any relationship they have with a brand or product, i.e. brand ambassadors or influencers.

Personal Information
Be careful about sharing personal information. Make full use of privacy settings and know how to disable anonymous postings and use moderating tools. Astute criminals can piece together information you provide on different sites and then use it to impersonate you or someone you know, or even reset your passwords.

Staff-Student Relations
Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional or inappropriate in any way. If inappropriate use of computers and websites are discovered, school and district officials will investigate employees and if warranted will be disciplined up to and including termination, depending upon the severity of the offense. Certified personnel may have their case forwarded to the appropriate state department for review and possible further sanctions.

Email
The District requires that through acceptable use policies all electronic or any other communications by employees to students or parents at any time from any email system shall be expected to be professional, acceptable in content to any reasonable person, and limited to information that is school-related or is acceptable to both student and parent. Email between employees and students and parents shall be done through the school-provided email application and must conform to school email policies.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 271
Bloomington, MN

Bloomington Public Schools Social Media Sites

The goal of Bloomington Public Schools social media sites ([Facebook](), [Twitter](), [Instagram](), and [YouTube]()) is to share news, photos, and videos about our district, students, schools, staff and upcoming events and to engage with our stakeholders in an open and respectful dialogue.

We invite staff, students, families, and the community to join the conversation by liking, commenting and sharing the BPS news and photos on any of our pages. We ask that users abide by the following guidelines:

- Comments and posts must be appropriate for an educational environment and for community members of all ages.
- Personal attacks or comments that are deemed offensive to any member of the school district or community will not be tolerated. Inappropriate remarks and profanity will be removed, and the poster may be blocked from our sites.
- These platforms are not intended to circumvent regular communication channels for sharing personal issues and concerns. While the district makes every effort to respond to direct questions in a timely manner, comments regarding a personal issue with the district, a school or staff member may be removed. If you have a personal issue or concern and wish to share it with district staff, please email commrelations@isd271.org, and we will do our best to address it.
- Stay on topic. Keep comments and posts related to the news and stories shared by the district.
- Posts regarding product sales or promotions of any sort are not allowed and will be removed.

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