

Personnel

SUBJECT: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Policy of the Board of Education is to promote acceptable use of social media by students and staff, as additional communication tools to improve the District operations and student learning, in a context that discourages uses that are unacceptable or incompatible with the Board's educational mission.

This policy applies to both public social media networks and District-approved password-protected social media tools. For purposes of this policy, public social media networks (also known as social networking sites) include but are not limited to: websites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, text messaging apps, video sites and any other social media generally available to the School District community which do not fall within the District's electronic technology network (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, Flickr, Instagram, SnapChat, YouTube, GroupMe, Slack, blog sites, etc.). For purposes of this policy, District approved password-protected social media tools are those that fall within the District's electronic technology network or which the District has approved for educational use. With regard to District approved password-protected social media tools, the District has greater authority and ability to restrict minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access.

Standards of Professional Conduct

Communication resources and devices, whether social media or traditional media, while of unquestionable value, are not without risk both personally and professionally. This policy is intended to set expectations and requirements for staff and protect students by identifying acceptable and non-acceptable uses of these evolving communication tools. This policy is not intended to limit or curtail students' or District employees' right to free speech, or employees' collective association or ability to engage in union activities, but to balance such rights with those of the District, its students, and its educational mission. The District recommends keeping professional and personal accounts separate. Students and staff are required to follow the District Code of Conduct at all times when there is a nexus to school or school activities, including online activity.

The Board requires that all District employees maintain a professional, ethical relationship with students that is conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. The District recognizes that staff will have direct contact and instructional conversations via electronic means (e.g., email, District-approved applications). Such communications must comply with all Board policies and the Code of Conduct. Employees' communications via social media and other media platforms when a part of their job duties are not considered protected free speech. Staff members' communications with students and parents via social media must be professional, transparent, and delivered in an appropriate manner. Employees do not have a right to privacy in their school related communications with students and parents. Staff who manage social media accounts which operate on behalf of the District, which represent a school, team, or club, etc., or that requires student use of social media, are required to provide account access and the password to the Data Protection Officer.

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Personal use of social media must be avoided during the workday and should not interfere with work responsibilities. In addition, if a staff member identifies him/herself as an employee of the Spencerport Central School District when using personal social media sites, he/she has associated him/herself with the District, his/her colleagues, and his/her school community. Like staff, students when in some positions also represent the District. In all of these circumstances in which students and staff are associated with the District and/or there is a nexus to the District, the content of all their communications must comply with the District's policies, regulations, Code of Conduct and the same standards of professionalism, respect and integrity as traditional media and face-to-face communications.

Staff members act as role models in the community for students at all times, whether on or off school property, both during and outside of school hours, and must exercise caution when using communication tools including, but not limited to, email, texts, phone calls, publicly accessible websites, blogs, and/or social networking sites. Staff must establish appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that could reasonably lead to even the appearance of impropriety. A staff member's ability to perform his/her job may be impaired by posting messages or pictures that reflect on his/her professionalism or negatively impact the ability to earn the respect of students, parents, and/or employees.

Staff members should further exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between their personal and public online behavior, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public even without their knowledge or consent. All staff members should carefully review the privacy settings on social networking sites they use and exercise care and good judgment when posting content and information on such sites.

The use of personal social media accounts must comply with all applicable laws and District policies and regulations, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (which prohibits disclosures of personally identifiable information from student education records without prior consent), the Dignity for All students Act, (DASA) (governing the response to harassment, discrimination, bullying and cyberbullying) and laws and policies regarding harassment, fraternization, etc. Employees and students are responsible for each of their posts to social media sites.

When using social networking sites, employees:

1. Should not make statements that would violate any of the District's policies, including its policies concerning discrimination or harassment;
2. Must avoid making defamatory statements about fellow employees, pupils, or their families;
3. May not disclose confidential information about the District or confidential information obtained during the course of his/her employment about any individual(s) or organization(s), including pupils and their families.

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4. Should refrain from interacting with students via social networking and text messaging, other than for official school-related business. Employees should not communicate with current students through their personal e-mail accounts or on personal social media sites;
5. Should not post personal updates to their status on any social networking sites during working time, including posting of statements or comments on the social networking sites of others, unless necessary for work.
6. Who learn that a student, parent, employee, or other individual has posted threats against any school employee, student, or the District on any Internet page or in any electronic forum, shall immediately report the matter to a building administrator or supervisor for investigation.
7. Shall not make threats of violence or harm nor encourage other to do so.

Employees who use social media in violation of the Code of Conduct, State or Federal law, District policy or regulation, which disrupts district operations or instruction, or that interferes with an employee's ability to perform their duties, may be subject to disciplinary action.