

**Policy Title: Employee Use of Social Media Sites,
Including Personal Sites**

Policy No: 401.35

Because of the unique nature of social media sites, including personal sites, and because of St. Maries Joint School District No. 41's desire to protect its interest with regard to its electronic records, the following rules have been established to address social media site usage by all employees.

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology, when used appropriately, can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors. Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, MySpace, Flickr, etc.

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

Due to the unique nature of social media and the District's desire to protect its interest with regard to its electronic records, the following rules have been established to address social media site usage by all employees.

PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Employees shall not post confidential or proprietary information about the District, its employees, students, agents, or others. The employee shall adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality policies adopted by the District or as provided by State or federal law. Employees shall not use images of students, or names or data relating to students, absent written authority of the parent of a minor or authority of an adult or emancipated student.

USE OF THE DISTRICT'S NAME, LOGOS, OR IMAGES

Employees shall not use the District logos, images, iconography, etc., on personal social media sites. Nor shall employees use the District name to promote a product, cause, political party, or political candidate.

RESPECT DISTRICT TIME AND PROPERTY

Employees will use e-mail, texting, and social media for personal purposes only during designated non-work times, such as during lunch or before or after school. Any use must occur during times and places where the use will not interfere with job duties, negatively impact job performance, or otherwise be disruptive to the school environment or its operation.

Employees are advised that the use of District-owned communication devices and any other District-owned technology does not provide an expectation of privacy. The use of District-owned devices is consent by the user to the District to access any and all uses and the content of such uses.

ON PERSONAL SITES

Individuals identifying themselves as District employees must state that the views expressed, posted, or published are personal views, not necessarily those of the District, its Board, employees, or agents.

Opinions expressed by staff on a social networking website have the potential to be disseminated far beyond the speaker's desire or intention, and could undermine the public perception of fitness of the individual and District to educate students, and thus undermine teaching effectiveness. In this way, the effect of the expression and publication of such opinions could potentially lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member, up to and including termination or nonrenewal of the contract of employment.

KEEP PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTS SEPARATE

Employees who choose to engage in professional social media activities will maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. Employees will not use District email for personal social media activities. Use of District email for this purpose is prohibited and will be considered a violation of District policy that may result in disciplinary action.

CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

Although it is desired that employees have a sincere interest in students as individuals, partiality and the appearance of impropriety must be avoided. Pursuant to the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators, individuals shall maintain a professional relationship with all students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Adhere to each of the following:

1. Employees should not have online interactions with students of the District (with the exception of relatives) on social networking sites outside of approved forums dedicated to academic use. Listing current students as "friends" on networking sites wherein personal information is shared or available for review which results in the certificated professional employee not maintaining the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators is prohibited. District employees' social networking profiles and personal blogs should not be linked to District students' online profiles in any manner.

2. Employees should not contact students of the District through electronic means other than the District's email, telephone system, or academic forum (i.e. Schoology), unless such communication includes the parent(s)/guardian.
3. Athletic or academic coaches, advisors or other student group leaders, or designee approved by the Building Administrator (e.g. team parent volunteer), shall not electronically contact a team member or members without including all team members in the communication, unless such communication includes the parent(s)/guardian.
4. Employees shall not provide private cell phone or home phone numbers to students without prior approval of the Superintendent or designee.
5. Employees shall not have inappropriate contact of any kind with students including via electronic media.

Nothing in this Policy prohibits District staff and students from the use of educational websites or use of social networking websites created for curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular purposes where the professional relationship is maintained with all students.

Failure to maintain a professional relationship with students, both inside and outside of a classroom setting, including interaction via social networking websites of any nature, emailing, texting, or any other electronic methods will result in the required reporting of such conduct to the Professional Standards Commission by the District's Administration.

RULES CONCERNING DISTRICT-SPONSORED MEDIA ACTIVITY

If an employee wishes to use social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements, etc., for a school-based club, activity or organization, the employee must also comply with the following rules:

1. The employee must set up the club, activity, etc., as a group list, which will be "closed and moderated."
2. The employee must establish mechanisms for delivery of information to students that are not members of the group via non-electronic means.
3. Members will not be established as "friends" or similar designation, but as members of the group list.
4. Access to the communications conveyed through the site may only be gained with the permission of the employee maintaining the site.

5. Parents shall be granted access to any site that their student has been invited to join. Parents shall report any communications by students or school personnel they believe to be inappropriate to Building Administration.
6. Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization, or team.
7. The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly.
8. The employee's supervisor shall be granted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose.
9. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all District-sponsored social media activity. This includes maintaining a separation between the school activity pages and employees' personal social media profiles and pages.
10. Postings made to the site must comply with this Policy and Policy 401.21.2 – Employee District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks.
11. The Superintendent, or designee, reserves the right to shut down or discontinue the group if he or she believes it is in the best overall interest of the students.

Policy Cross Reference:

Board Policy 401.21.2
Board Policy 502.17

Employee District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks
District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks

Legal Reference:

Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators

Policy History:

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