

460 SOCIAL MEDIA

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that School District employees are aware of and comply with the School District's expectations for personal and professional use of publicly available social media networks. This includes, but is not limited to individual personal blogs, personal web sites, postings on wikis and other interactive sites, postings on video or picture sharing sites, or in comments sections of online blogs or on other sites. These guidelines are designed to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of Willmar Public Schools, its employees, students and their parents.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

The School recognizes the importance of online social media networks as a communication and e-learning tool. The School District acknowledges the value of teacher inquiry, investigation, innovation and the use of new technology tools to enhance the learning experience. That said, the School District also recognizes its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

When employees choose to join or engage with School District students, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside those approved by the school, they are advised to maintain their professionalism and to be cognizant of their role as a School District employee. Employees are responsible for their behavior or activity on these networks. Employees must report inappropriate student behavior or activities including incidents governed by mandated reporting to their supervisor.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Public social media networks" are defined to include: websites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers and which do not fall within the School District's network (MySpace, Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in, Flickr, YouTube, blog sites, etc.).
- B. "School District approved password-protected social media tools" are those that fall within the School District's network or which the School District or the School Board has approved for educational use. The School District has greater authority and responsibility to protect its students, especially those that are minors, from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

- A. Employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to act as role models to students in this community. Participants of social media networks often view a School District employee as a representative of the School District. The School District requires employees to observe the following rules when referring to the School District, its students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks.
- B. The School District takes no position on its employees' decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use on personal time. However, the use of these media for personal use during school work time and/or on School District equipment (including the District's "wi fi" network) is prohibited. School District employees' use of social media for personal use during school hours on School District equipment is only permitted on a case by case basis, when used for a work related purpose and approved by the employee's supervisor.

- C. Public social media networks, outside of those sponsored by the School District, may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorization of the Superintendent or designee and parental consent for student participation. The school District will maintain a list of acceptable social media network tools for instructional use.
- D. A School District employee's use of any social media network and an employee's postings, displays, or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable school policies.
 - 1. Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications by word, image or other means. Employees shall not use obscene or profane language on any social media network or engage in communications or conduct that is 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, sexual harassment, or may be construed as bullying.
 - 2. Employees shall not use their School District provided email address when registering to use or when communicating on public social media networks that have not been approved by the school or are not being used for instructional purposes.
 - 3. Employees must clearly communicate that any views expressed online are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the School District. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the School District post comments as a representative of the School District, except as authorized by the Superintendent or School Board.
 - 4. School District Employees may not disclose on any social media network information that is confidential or proprietary to the School District, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy laws.
 - 5. Employees may not use or post the Willmar Public School District logo and trademarks on any social media network without explicit permission in writing from the District's Superintendent or School Board.
 - 6. Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.
 - 7. Employees may not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent, except for images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances.
 - 8. Employees may not post any nonpublic images of the school premises and property, including floor plans.
- E. The school recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media (sites) representing students or groups within the school. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the school. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online. Employees shall annually disclose to the school the existence of and their participation in such networks.
- F. Employees who participate in social media networks may include information about their work with the school on their personal profile. This may include:
 - 1. Work information including school and/or school name, job title, and job duties.
 - 2. Status updates regarding an employee's own job promotion.
 - 3. Personal participation in school-sponsored events, including volunteer activities.
- G. An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees 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.