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# MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## POLICY #470: EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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### I. PURPOSE

As a national leader in using technology as an accelerator of learning, the Minnetonka School District recognizes the value of inquiry, investigation and innovation in using new technology tools and resources to enhance the learning experience and to share information. The District also recognizes its obligation to teach, model and ensure responsible safe use of such technology tools.

District staff are expected to model appropriate and healthy use of technology tools in their interactions with one another, students and the global community both in person and through technology. With social media continuing to emerge and thrive as a dynamic, influential and evolving aspect of communication, the District developed this policy to address the unique circumstances that arise when employees engage through publicly available social media such as personal websites, virtual and augmented reality environments, social networks, online forums and other similar tools.

### II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The District recognizes the importance of social media networks and platforms as communication and e-learning tools. To that end, the District provides select, approved social media accounts and other online engagement tools and encourages use of these tools for collaboration by employees, as appropriate for employees' roles with the District. Public social media, outside of accounts sponsored and approved by the District, may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorization of the Superintendent, or designee. Additionally, such use must comply with all District policies and with regulations set forth by the social media provider.

The District has official accounts on select social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vimeo, YouTube, other) and additional technologies (Schoology, PreciouStatus, Peachjar, Let's Talk) it uses in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with its various audiences, including the general public. Communications Department staff members and designated staff at each of the schools and in some additional departments,

such as Athletics and Community Education, are approved to post for the District on accounts that have been designated as their responsibility. They are the only employees who may post for the District or schools on such accounts without additional approval from the Superintendent or designee.

Employees must limit personal use of social media during work, using professional discretion. If a building principal or executive staff member determines personal use of social media is becoming an issue for an employee, restrictions may be placed on employees' use of personal devices. Such restrictions would take place at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

When a new official District social media account is desired by an employee, the request should be elevated to a principal or executive staff member, who then will discuss it with the Superintendent or designee and the Executive Director of Communications. From there, any approved social media account will be created in coordination with the Communications Department. The login, password and recovery information will be shared with the Communications Department, and any update to that information in future will be shared, as well.

All employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violates state or federal laws or District policy.

When employees choose to join or engage with District students, families, fellow employees or members of the general public in a social media context that exists outside those approved by the District, they must maintain their professionalism as District employees and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks, including requirements for [mandated reporting](#).

### III. DEFINITIONS

- A. ***Public social media networks*** are defined to include: websites, social networks, online forums, virtual and augmented reality environments, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers. Examples of public social media include but are not limited to the following platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, Vimeo, YouTube and blogs.
- B. ***District approved online engagement tools*** are those the District has approved for educational or official communication purposes. The District has greater ability to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access with such tools. Examples include but are not limited to the following platforms: Schoology, Let's Talk, PreciouStatus.

### IV. REQUIREMENTS

As set forth in the District's Vision, all employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in the

community. Because those on 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 postings, displays, or communications must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies.

Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image, implication and other means). Employees shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media network or engage in communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, defamatory or that encourages any illegal activity, the inappropriate use of alcohol, the use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment or bullying.

Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications on public social media networks for personal use or without approval from the Superintendent or designee.

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 or as appropriate for their defined role as a spokesperson or social media poster for the District. When authorized as a spokesperson for the District and not posting from a District account, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the District.

Employees may not disclose information that is confidential or proprietary to the District, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy laws.

Employees may not use or post the District's logos on any social media network nor create a social media account that represents the District without permission from the Superintendent or designee.

Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.

Employees may not post images of students on any public social media network if the parent has opted out of image use of their child, except for images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances.

Employees may not post any nonpublic images of the District's floor plans.

- B. The District recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media accounts representing teams or groups within the District. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking

groups, they always do so as an employee of the District. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student and employee-public relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate student behavior or activity witnessed on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

1. When an official student group or team creates a social media site or team website for itself, the coach or advisor must request and secure the login, password and recovery information for that online group. This will prevent, for example, dozens of out of date Twitter accounts for a sports team, as each year's team captain has graduated and the social media account remains up but not active.
- C. Employees who participate in social media networks may decide to include information about their work with the District as part of their personal profile, as it would relate to a typical social conversation. This may include:
1. Work information included in a personal profile, to include District name, job title, and job duties.
  2. Status updates regarding an employee's own job promotion.
  3. Personal participation in District-sponsored events, including volunteer activities.
  4. Words of praise for a District accomplishment.
- D. The District monitors social media and will respond to content when necessary. An employee who is responsible for a social media posting that fails to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information or information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party.
- E. Anything posted on an employee's personal or professional website, blog, social media account or other online content for which the employee is responsible will be subject to all District policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines. The District is free to view and monitor an employee's publicly viewable website or blog at any time without an employee's consent or previous approval or knowledge. Where applicable, employees may be asked to disclose to the District the existence of and to provide the District with access to an employee's personal or professional website, blog, social media account or other online content for which the employee is responsible as part of an employment selection, promotion or disciplinary process.

Cross Reference:

- Policy #427: Harassment and Violence
- Policy #428: Respectful Workplace
- Policy #515: Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records
- Policy #524: Acceptable Use of Electronic Technologies
- Policy #525: Website and Intranet
- Policy # 542: Civility of Students
- Policy #606: Instructional Materials Review, Selection and Use

Policy #910: Media Relations

Legal Reference:

Minnesota Administrative Rule 8700.7500 Code of Ethics For Minnesota  
Teachers Children's Internet Protection Act

*Approved: March 8, 2018*

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## Guidelines for Policy #470: Employee Use of Social Media

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These are guidelines for social media in the Minnetonka School District. If you're an employee contributing to blogs, social networks, virtual or augmented reality environments, or any other kind of social media both on and off the District network—these guidelines are for you.

We expect all who participate in social media to understand and follow these guidelines. Failure to do so may place your employment at risk. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge. Employees are encouraged to check in periodically on the Social Media Use policy to stay current.

**It's your responsibility.** What you write, upload, post, react to or publish in any other way is ultimately your responsibility. If it seems inappropriate, use caution. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'post.' Take time to review these guidelines and determine what's bothering you and fix it. If you're still unsure, you may want to discuss it with your supervisor. Ultimately, what you publish is your responsibility. What you publish is widely accessible and may be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Trademark, copyright, and fair use requirements must also be respected.

**Ensure the safety of students.** When employees, especially coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage in social networking, they do so as an employee of the District and have responsibility for monitoring content and addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

**Be transparent.** Your honesty—or dishonesty—will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are posting about your work, use your real name and identify your employment relationship with the District. Be clear about your role; if you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. If you publish to a site outside the District's network, please use a disclaimer to state in clear terms that the views expressed are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Minnetonka School District.

**Protect confidential information.** Be thoughtful about what you publish. Make sure you do not disclose or use confidential information. Students, parents and colleagues should not be cited or referenced without their approval. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture or statement in a social network (student photos require parental consent). Do not publish a conversation that was meant to be private.

It is acceptable to discuss general details about projects, lessons, or events and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for an individual if you do not have permission from the individual to use their name, so long as the information provided does not make it easy for someone to identify the individual or violate any privacy laws. Furthermore, public social networking sites are not the place for employees who are not designated as official posters for the District to

conduct school business with students or parents.

**Respect your audience and your coworkers.** Always express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Make sure your communications are in good taste. Do not denigrate or insult others, including other schools or competitors. Remember that our communities reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful. This includes not only the obvious (no racial slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Be sensitive about linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.

**Perception can be reality.** On social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a District employee, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the District by community members, parents, students and the general public; and you are creating perceptions about yourself with your colleagues and managers. If you chose to join or engage with District students and families in a social media context, do so in a professional manner, ever mindful that in the minds of students, families, colleagues and the public, you are a District employee. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the District's beliefs and professional standards.

**Are you adding value?** Communication associated with our District should help fellow educators, parents, students, and co-workers. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, do their jobs, solve problems, or understand education better—then it's adding value.

**Keep your cool.** One of the aims of social media is to create dialogue, and people will not always agree on an issue. When confronted with a difference of opinion, stay cool. If you make an error, be upfront about your mistake and correct it quickly. Express your points in a clear, logical way. Don't pick fights, and correct mistakes. Sometimes, it's best to ignore a comment and not give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response.

**Be careful with personal information.** Make full use of privacy settings. Know how to disable anonymous postings and use moderating tools on your social media site(s). Astute criminals can piece together information you provide on different sites and then use it to impersonate you or someone you know, or even re-set your passwords.

**Be a positive role model.** Educational employees have a responsibility to maintain appropriate employee-student relationships, whether on or off duty. Both case law and public expectations hold educational employees to a higher standard of conduct than the general public.

**Don't forget your day job.** You should make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your job. Remember that District technologies are provided for educational use. Use of social media for personal use during District time or on District equipment should be limited, using professional discretion. If a building principal or executive staff member determines personal use of social media is becoming an issue for an employee, restrictions may be placed on employees' use of personal devices.