



## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **A. Introduction/Purpose**

Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing our students to be successful in a 21<sup>st</sup> century college and/or work environment. The Marlborough Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders who utilize social media technology for professional purposes, including staff and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. However, due to the nature of social networking or social media sites, there exists a risk of misuse. Staff members should always be mindful of how they present themselves to the world, online and otherwise. A staff member's conduct in the social media area is viewed as an extension of classroom behavior. Therefore, any online behavior by school employees must meet the same standards as those used for face-to-face communications at the Marlborough Public Schools.

This policy is adopted as a supplement to, and not as a substitute for, the Marlborough Public Schools Internet Acceptable Use Policy, which governs use of the School District's technological resources.

### **B. Definition of Social Media**

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including but not limited to, cell phones, social networks, blogs, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Specific networking sites include, but not limited to, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Tumblr, and the like. A distinction is drawn between professional social media, which is work-related social media activity, and personal social media, which is a non-work-related social media activity.

### **C. Applicability**

This policy applies to all Marlborough Public Schools employees. The superintendent or designee will ensure that staff members are annually reminded of, and that new staff members are oriented to, the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line digital world, as well as in person. Steps will be taken to ensure that all other stakeholders, such as parents, non-district employee coaches, vendors, volunteers, and independent contractors, are informed of this policy.

### **D. Professional Social Media Use**

Marlborough Public Schools employees, who engage in professional social media activities, should maintain separate professional and personal email addresses. As such, employees should not use their personal email address for professional social media activities. The professional social media presence should utilize a professional email address and should be completely separate from any personal social media presence maintained by the employee.

Marlborough Public Schools employees who work with students and communicate with students through professional social media sites should ensure that these sites are school based and designed to address reasonable instructional, educational, or co-curricular program matters. Professional social media sites that are non-school based should have a reasonable relationship to the mission and goals of the program or group creating the site.

All contact and messages by coaches with team members will be sent to all team members, except for messages concerning medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the messages will be copied to the athletic director and/or the school principal.

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Staff members are prohibited from engaging in any of the following conduct or uses of the school district's network:

- Fraternizing with students using any social media. Staff members may not invite/accept or list current students as "friends" on networking sites. Classroom participation on educational sites for instructional purposes is permitted. This prohibition extends, as well, to cell phone or texting use.
- Posting of items with sexual content.
- Posting of items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- Posting of items encouraging or constituting hazing or bullying.
- Knowingly posting or communicating inaccurate or false information.
- Providing students with home telephone numbers or with private cell phone numbers without prior approval of the school district.
- Accessing inappropriate websites, including but not limited to material that is sexually explicit, that is pornographic, that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence, harassing, bullying, or discriminatory behavior.
- Accessing social media or video streaming sites for personal reasons during work hours.
- Posting information that is reasonably considered to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene.
- Posting names or any information about students, including but not limited to "student records" information as defined by law.
- Providing any confidential or private information regarding students or other employees.

The above are examples of prohibited conduct or unacceptable uses and are not intended to be all-inclusive.

**E. Personal Social Media Use**

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, Marlborough Public School employees should not communicate on personal social media sites with students who are currently enrolled. Communications include, but are not limited to, 'friending,' 'following,' 'commenting,' or posting messages.

Employees of the district are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. There are limitations to privacy settings and private information published on the Internet can easily become public. Employees have an individual responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being used.

If you are communicating as an employee of the district in online communications, you must be aware that readers will assume that you 'speak for the school district.' Therefore, all online communications, when you are actually acting on behalf of the district, or creating the appearance that you are doing so, must be professional at all times and reflect positively on the district.

This policy is not intended to infringe upon a staff member's right to speak publicly as citizens on matters of public concern, or to communicate with fellow union members on workplace issues, so long as such communication adheres to appropriate time, place and manner restrictions and does not interfere with the performance of job duties. However, when a staff member speaks through social media sites or tools on matters concerning their work, they



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are speaking as employees and as such, restrictions may be placed upon their freedom to express themselves. Those restrictions are intended to preserve student confidentiality, maintain staff members' status as employees

who should command and receive the respect of students, be able to maintain order and discipline in their classrooms, remain objective with respect to their students, and to further the efficient and effective operation of the school district in its educational mission.

Employees should not 'tag' photos or videos of other Marlborough Public Schools employees without the prior permission of the individual being tagged.

Personal social media use should not interfere with or disrupt the school day.

The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites is prohibited.

In the use of personal social media sites, any use of the school's logo, likeness, or any school photographs or other property that belongs to the school or district, must be of a positive nature.

**F. Inappropriate Use of Social Media/Discipline**

The superintendent or assigned designees may conduct Internet searches to see if staff members have posted inappropriate materials online. When inappropriate use of school computers and websites is discovered, the school principals and superintendent will promptly bring that inappropriate use to the attention of the staff member and may consider and apply disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The school district disclaims all liability for the content of material that user's access on social media, for damages suffered in the course of or as a result of social media use, and for any related consequences. The school district shall not be responsible for any unauthorized use of the school district's network, including any unauthorized costs, financial obligations, fees, charges or purchases.

Legal Reference:  
*cf. 7.970*

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