



# SOCIAL MEDIA

## POLICY & GUIDELINES



**Olathe**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# BOARD OF EDUCATION *SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY*

## Social Media as a Professional Communication Tool

The district recognizes the growing importance of social media, including its role in public education. To assist staff in using social media to enhance student learning and promote school-home communication, the district will provide to its employees information on appropriate and effective use of social media. Professional communication includes any message or content delivered as a part of instructional, curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular work.

Staff members are to observe in their social media interactions with students, parents and community members the same level of personal responsibility, discretion and professionalism expected in any other form of communication. Use of social media as part of curricular and/or extracurricular activities

must comply with the district's acceptable use policy (IFBD) as well as policies on use of instructional materials (Board policies IF and IFBB). Staff are expressly prohibited from using social media to communicate with students or minors in a manner that would constitute "grooming," would be in violation of the district's policies on sexual harassment or would violate any criminal laws regulating conduct between adults and minors. Inappropriate use of social media may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Just as with any curricular or instructional decision, the decision to use social media for classroom or extracurricular use should align with the Guiding Principles of the district.

## Social Media for Private Use by Staff

To assist staff in making decisions regarding private use of social media, the district will provide staff members with responsible use guidelines. The purpose is to provide guidelines and suggestions that inform staff how to manage private social media behaviors.

Staff members should observe in their social media interactions with students, parents and community members the same level of personal

responsibility, discretion and professionalism expected in any other form of communication. While decisions regarding private use of social media are made by the individual, inappropriate social media use which negatively impacts the staff member's ability to carry out their professional responsibilities may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

# SOCIAL MEDIA *PROFESSIONAL* USE

## Suggested Guidelines

1. Social media sites maintained by the district can be used by staff with students, so long as the use aligns with standards for use expected with any instructional material or strategy. The district's technology department does not offer technical support for external social media sites. Any use of other social media should be closely monitored for propriety and accessibility.
2. Olathe School District employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online.
3. Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration expected in face-to-face communication and should be in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards.
4. Comments related to the school, its staff, or students, should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even on the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.
5. Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject whenever possible. Please be advised that the district has policies restricting the publication of student images.
6. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
7. Be cautious how you setup your profile, bio, avatar, etc. The settings should be consistent with professional communication.
8. Understand and use your privacy settings. The district encourages privacy settings that restrict viewership to those whom you invite to the site.
9. Staff members using social media should share information that promotes education and involvement. Personal and private information should not be shared if the same information would not be shared in a classroom setting.
10. Gossip and rumor are not appropriate in communication with students and community. Staff should carefully observe FERPA rules regarding disclosure of any protected student information. Social media should never be used to embarrass or humiliate students or adults.
11. Staff members who use social media to promote communication and educational opportunities for students should structure communication so that equity of access isn't dependent on social media participation.
12. Any site that can be accessed by students should be consistent with board-stated student goals, including avoiding inappropriate references or photos that include (but are not limited to) alcohol, tobacco, drug use, illegal activity, hate speech, etc.
13. When using any social media allowing student participation, teachers should monitor content and delete inappropriate content.

# SOCIAL MEDIA *PRIVATE USE*

## Suggested Guidelines

1. All online communication should meet the standards of professional interactions expected at school or among the school community.
2. Despite your intentions, privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the district. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it at a public meeting or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online.
3. Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect on your professional role as an educator.
4. Be cautious how you setup your profile, bio, avatar, etc. Understand and use your privacy settings. The district encourages privacy settings that restrict viewership to those whom you invite to the site.
5. While online sharing is a personal decision, remember that the information you share online can easily become public knowledge. In the social media environment, anything you post can easily be copied and transmitted to others, including students, parents, colleagues, and community members. It is advisable that personal and private information that should not be shared in the classroom not be shared on social media sites.
6. Any site that can be accessed by students should be consistent with board-stated student goals, including avoiding inappropriate references or photos that include (but are not limited to) alcohol, tobacco, drug use, illegal activity, hate speech, etc.
7. Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration expected in face-to-face communication and should be in accordance with the highest professional standards.
8. Gossip and rumor are not appropriate in communication with students and community. Moreover, sharing of workplace information can lead to a strain on workplace relationships and harmful controversy.
9. Staff should consider cyber-bullying policies and standards when utilizing social media. Social media should never be used to embarrass or humiliate students or adults. It is unprofessional to report in private social media the details of the school and/or classroom.
10. Before "friending" or allowing other social media access, staff members should consider the potential content of a social media site/outlet. It is prudent to recognize that content can develop from many sources, including other friends.

Notice of Non-Discrimination: The Olathe Public Schools prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity in its programs, activities or employment, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups to its facilities as required by: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Access Act of 1984 and other relevant state and federal laws as amended. Inquiries regarding compliance with applicable civil rights statutes related to race, ethnicity, gender, age discrimination, sexual orientation, gender identity or equal access may be directed to Staff Counsel, 14160 S. Black Bob Road, Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone 913-780-7000. All inquiries regarding compliance with applicable statutes regarding Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act may be directed to the Executive Director of Special Services, 14160 S. Black Bob Rd. Olathe, KS 66063-2000, phone (913) 780-7000. Interested persons including those with impaired vision or hearing, can also obtain information as to the existence and location of services, activities and facilities that are accessible to and usable by disabled persons by calling the Assistant Superintendent, Operations. (05/22)