

## **479 EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to address employee use of social media in the classroom and also to provide guidance to employees on the maintenance of professional ethics and boundaries when utilizing social media in their personal and professional lives. Employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state and/or federal laws along with District policies.

Pipestone Area Schools recognizes the value of staff inquiry, investigation and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience. The District also recognizes its obligation to ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Public Social Media Networks** are defined to include various forms of discussion and information sharing including; social networks, blogs, video sharing, podcasts, message boards, online forums or similar outlets.
- B. **District-adopted, password protected online social media** are interactive media within the District's electronic technologies network or which the District has approved for educational use. The district has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access with this forum.

### **III. CLASSROOM USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Staff may elect to utilize District-adopted, password protected online social media in the classroom for purposes of instruction. Staff may also elect to use public online social media in the classroom for purposes of instruction. Use of online social media in the classroom is subject to the following:

- A. Employees must ensure that student work, private student data and student images are not made public on public online social media sites unless written parental permission has been obtained.
- B. When utilizing either type of online social media in the classroom, employees shall ensure compliance with any applicable terms of use of the online social media site.
- C. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's posting, displays or communications on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies.

- D. Before creating any official Pipestone Area Schools social networking sites on a non-school site (such as Facebook and Twitter) you must contact the Technology Coordinator. If approved, the site creator must include the official District Logo, a link to the District's homepage and a respective Pipestone Area Schools email and telephone number; notify the Technology Director of the site location so the site can be added to Pipestone Area Schools social networking monitoring tool. Upon approval you will be given additional information that will need to be placed on the social media site.

#### IV. PERSONAL USE OF PUBLIC ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA BY EMPLOYEES

The decision to make personal use of public online social media is left to the discretion of each employee. Our District does not monitor employee use of public online social media; however, we may take appropriate responsive action when it becomes aware of, or suspects conduct or communication on a public online social media site that adversely affects the workplace or violates applicable professional codes of ethics.

Because readers of social media networks may view the employee as a representative of 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 use of any social media network and an employee's posting, displays or communications on any social media network should comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies.
- B. Employees should consider their role as school personnel before posting or communicating content that is obscene, profane, vulgar, 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 or sexual harassment.
- C. Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications on public social media networks for personal use.
- D. 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 Principals, Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.**
- E. Employees may not disclose information on any public online social media site that is private, confidential or owned by the District, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy or copyright laws or District Policy 406 Public and Private Personnel Data and District Policy 515 Protection and Privacy of Student Records.
- F. Employees may not use or post a District or school logo on any public online social media site without permission from Principals, Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

- G. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee- student relationships at all times. This includes using professional judgment when necessary or the safety of students online and responding appropriately as a mandated reporter when applicable.

Employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for Pipestone Area Schools and to remember they are role models to students in the community. Employees will be held responsible for their disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or for the content of anything communicated by the employee on any online social media site. An employee who fails to comply with the guidance set forth in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action and other consequences, up to and including termination, subject to applicable collective bargaining agreements.