



Adopted: 8/17/2015

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DISTRICT POLICY NO. 524.1

ALBERT LEA AREA SCHOOLS DISTRICT 241

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

I. PURPOSE

The Albert Lea School District recognizes the importance of using social media as a communication and learning tool. The purpose of this policy and the accompanying guidelines 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.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY


The District recognizes the importance of online social media networks as a communication and e-learning tool. Toward that end, the District shall provide password-protected social media tools and District-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages use of District tools for collaboration by employees. However, public social media networks outside of those provided by the 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 on social networks.

The District may use these tools and other communication technologies in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with the general public. However, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or District policies.

The line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within a social media context. When employees choose to join or engage with District students, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside those approved by the District, they are advised to 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

1. Public social media networks are defined to include: Web sites, 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 District's electronic technologies network (including but not limited to Facebook,  Twitter, Google Plus, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, and blog sites.)

2. District approved password-protected social media tools are those that fall 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 within this limited public forum.

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. District 241 does not monitor employee use of public online social media; however, it 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 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 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 District policies.
- B. Employees must consider their role as school personnel before posting or communicating content that is obscene, profane, 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 bullying.
- C. Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications on public social media networks for personal use.
- D. 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.
- E. Employees may not use or post the District logo on any social media network without permission from the Superintendent, or designee.
- F. Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.

- G. 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.
- H. The District recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media representing students or groups within the District. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the District.
- I. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times. This includes using professional judgment when necessary for the safety of students online and responding appropriately as a mandated reporter when applicable.
- J. 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 by District Policy, Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records.

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 423 (Employee-Student Relationships)
District 241 Policy 430 (Professional Ethics)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 524 (Technology Acceptable Use)