

TOPEKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	REGULATION NUMBER: 2935-03
SUBJECT: USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	DATE OF ISSUE: 06/20/13 <hr/> REVISIONS: 08/17/15 <hr/> PREPARING OFFICE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

I. PURPOSE

Topeka Public Schools recognize the value of teacher inquiry, investigation, and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience. The District also recognizes its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

This regulation addresses employees’ use of publicly available or district approved social media networks, including, but not limited to: personal Web sites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other social media. The District takes no position on employees’ decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use on personal time. While access to social media sites for staff is available on the District system, use at school and during the duty day should be limited to educational, not personal, purposes.

II. Definitions

- A. “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 (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, blog sites, etc.).**
- B. “District approved password-protected social media tools” are those that fall within the District’s electronic technologies network, including the learning management system, 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.**

III. Social Media for Classroom Instruction

- A. The District provides password-protected social media tools and District-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages use of District tools for collaboration by employees.**
- B. Public social media networks, outside of those sponsored by the District, may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorization of the building principal. Access to the website must be granted to the principal and/or the IT administrator.**

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- C. Communication with students through district approved social media networks should be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational, or extra-curricular program matters.**
- D. Teachers may allow students to use forms of online collaboration such as wikis, blogs, or district approved social networking sites, only for educational purposes and only with proper supervision.**
- E. Employees using social media for classroom instruction shall have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media and understand that such sites are subject to all District internet and acceptable use policies.**

IV. Rules for Using Social Media

- A. An employee will be held to the same professional standards in his or her public use of social media as for any other public conduct. All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in this community. Use of social media sites should comply with the following:**
 - 1. 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.**
 - 2. Employees should be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means) on social media networks and when referring to the District, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks or when communicating on district approved social media networks, employees shall not:**
 - a. Use obscene, profane or vulgar language;**
 - b. Engage in communication or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, or defamatory; or**
 - c. Engage in communication or conduct that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, or bullying.**
 - 3. Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications that are not related to work on public social media networks. Use on district approved social media networks is not restricted.**
 - 4. On any social networking networks, when referring to the District, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks employees should 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. When authorized as a spokesperson for the District, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the District.**

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5. **Employees may not disclose information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the District, its students, or employees or that is protected by privacy laws.**
 6. **Employees may not use or post the District logo on any public social media network without permission from the Superintendent, or designee.**
 7. **On sites other than district-approved social media sites, “friending” of current students, other than personal relatives, is strongly discouraged.**
 8. **Employees shall not share their usernames or passwords with students or allow students to access public social media networks on employees’ computers. Employees may access public social media networks and share images of these sites with students for the purpose of providing instruction on appropriate use of such sites to students.**
- B. 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. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing or reporting inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.**
- C. An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this regulation 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, information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or the content of anything posted on any social media network.**

Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media

These are the guidelines for social media use in the Topeka Public Schools. If you're an employee contributing to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media both on and off the District network—these guidelines are for you. Topeka Public Schools expects all who participate in social media to do so responsibly. Understanding and complying with these guidelines is a first step. Failure to do so could put you at risk. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge—so check back once in awhile to make sure you're up to date. These guidelines will be maintained with Regulation 2935-3, but are intended as guidelines only.

It's your responsibility. What you write 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 'send.' Take time to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you and fix it. If you're still unsure, you might want to discuss it with your supervisor. Ultimately, what you publish is your responsibility. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Trademark, copyright, and fair use requirements must be respected.

Ensure the safety of students. When employees, especially coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, 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. Disclosing the existence of the site and your participation in it to your supervisor is recommended.

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 the employee's alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of Topeka Public Schools.

Protect confidential information. Be thoughtful about what you publish. You must make sure you do not disclose or use confidential information. Students, parents, and colleagues should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network or publishing a conversation that was meant to be private. It is acceptable to discuss general details about projects, lessons, or events and to use nonidentifying pseudonyms for an individual (e.g., Teacher A) so long as the information provided does not make it easy for someone to identify the individual or violate any privacy laws. Public social networking sites are not the place 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 ethnic 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. In online networks, 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 professional standards.

Are you adding value? There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will 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 up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. Express your points in a clear, logical way. Don't pick fights, and correct mistakes when needed. 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. The line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within a social media context. 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 is prohibited.

Citing Sources: These guidelines are adapted from those of the Minnetonka Public Schools, and based on guidelines originally developed by IBM, Intel and Kodak, and adapted for use by an educational institution.

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