



## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Digital communication, which may include, but is not limited to electronic mail, social media, texting, and cellular communication can provide both educational and professional benefits.

The Maynard Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all District stakeholders who utilize digital or electronic communication for educational purposes, including employees and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. As such, employees, coaches, volunteers, and others that interact with Maynard students on behalf of the District, may utilize digital and electronic communication in their professional capacity to the extent that it supports the academic and extracurricular goals of the schools.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining proper decorum and appropriate communication in the online, digital world as well as in person, employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.

Employees are reminded that social media content is subject to electronic records requirements. Content shared on the District's public-facing social media platforms may be subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law.

The Superintendent of Schools and the School Principals shall annually remind employees and orient new employees concerning this policy. The orientation and reminders shall give special emphasis to the conduct expectations and prohibitions set forth below, and may include examples of behaviors to avoid.

### **I. General Expectations for Use of Social Media**

A. Employees shall not give the impression or explicitly state that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of or as employees of the District unless specifically authorized to do so by an appropriate administrator. Doing so may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the District and/or a violation of District policy.

B. Employees should not have any expectation of privacy in any activity they engage in online while using District resources, including District equipment and/or

wireless internet. Improper use of District resources and/or violation of this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

## **II. Expectations for Use of Professional Social Media**

A. Upon first receiving written approval from the District's IT Director and Superintendent, employees may initiate and maintain professional social media accounts for educational purposes and/or for the purpose of communicating about school and District- related activities, as well as professional educator learning. The District reserves the right to monitor all content on professional social media accounts and to remove any inappropriate material.

B. Employees shall not post items on their professional social media accounts with obscene, vulgar, sexually suggestive, or explicit content; with false or defamatory information about the District, its employees, or others who have a relationship to the District; which exhibit or advocate the use of drugs or alcohol; or which violate the District's discrimination and/or harassment policies or other policies. Employees shall not post examples of inappropriate behavior, even as behavior to avoid.

C. Employees shall not use professional social media accounts for any commercial, political, or religious activity or for personal gain.

D. Employees who use professional social media accounts on behalf of the district, school, or school group must share administrative privileges and passwords with an administrator/additional administrator and Director of IT. For security purposes, employees shall not otherwise share administrative privileges or passwords unless authorized by an appropriate administrator

## **III. Expectations for Use of Personal Social Media**

A. District employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites and pages to the degree that their speech does not distract or disrupt the educational process, violate state or federal law, or violate the policies of the District.

B. Employees should maintain separate personal social media accounts if they wish to post appropriate personal information, including information relating to out-of-school activities or political activities beyond those used for related classroom purposes.

C. The District expects employees to maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Employees shall not post student information, including photographs of students, student work, comments about students,

biographical information, or other information that could be considered part of a student record, to personal social media accounts.

#### **IV. Contact with Students and Content of Social Media Posts**

A. In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, District employees, coaches, volunteers, and any other adult who interacts with Maynard students on behalf of the District should not communicate with students who are currently enrolled in the Maynard Public Schools on personal social media sites or by personal cell phone or other electronic devices.

1. Employees may not “friend”, “follow”, “like”, or use any similar method to link themselves with current students or their content on social media.
2. All electronic contacts with students should be through school-sanctioned modes of communication, except in emergency situations. All other forms of communication with students are prohibited without prior approval.
3. Electronic contacts with parents/guardians related to a student’s academics or other school-related matters shall be through school-sanctioned modes of communication only.

The District may allow the following exceptions for communications with Maynard students via personal social media:

1. Communication with relatives and
2. When an emergency situation requires such communication

B. Employees shall oversee all class, team, or student organization social media pages and shall maintain administrative access to and control of these pages.

1. All contact and messages by employees with students through social media shall be sent to all members of the group (e.g. class, team, student organization). Employees shall not use the private message feature of social media to contact students 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.
2. Employees shall not give their private cell phone or home telephone number to students without prior approval of the Principal or Superintendent.
3. Inappropriate contact via phone or electronic means is prohibited.

#### **V. Privacy of Online Content**

A. At all times, and in the use of any form of communication, employees may not disclose information that is confidential or proprietary to the District or its students, or that is protected by student or other data privacy laws.

B. Employees are reminded that items placed online are never fully private. If inappropriate use of computers, websites, or social media is discovered, the School Principals and Superintendent will promptly bring that use to the attention of the employee and may consider and apply appropriate disciplinary action up to, and including termination.

C. Consistent with other policies and laws, no video recording shall happen during the school day and/or of students without permission of the Principal or other District administrator.

D. When utilizing professional social media accounts and/or the District's network or equipment, employees are responsible for following all applicable laws, regulations, District policies, school rules, and codes of conduct, just as they are for other modes of communication. Employees should have no expectation of privacy with respect to electronic devices or digital media used in school or for school activities.

## **VI. Use of Social Media during School/Work Time**

A. Employees may use professional social media sites during school time to the extent that it does not interfere with the educational process and complies with the policies of the Maynard Public Schools.

B. The use of personal social media sites during school and/or work time is expressly prohibited.

This policy shall not be construed to limit communications protected under M.G.L. c.150E, specifically, comments which involve protected, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

Legal Ref: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974; 603 CMR 23.00 et seq.; M.G.L. c.149, §52C; M.G.L. c.150E; M.G.L. c.66, §10

CROSS REF.:

AC-Discrimination/Harassment = ADM014-1 - Equal Educational Opportunity/Equal Employment Opportunity, ADM016-1 - Harassment

ACAB-Harassment

GBAB-Acceptable Use for Students = POL603 - Computer Acceptable Use

GBI-Political Activities of Staff

IJNDB-Internet Terms and Conditions of Use = ADM603-1 - Computers, Networks and Internet Use/Ethics

IJNDD-P - Social Media Use Procedure

JRA-Student Records = ADM615-1 - Student Records

Student Photo/Video Release in Student Handbooks

ADOPTED: 1/30/20

REVISED: 10/29/20