SUBJECT: **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES**

Social media and social networking sites (SNS) have great potential to connect people around the globe and enhance communication; however, they are also more informal, less structured and constantly changing. These guidelines are designed to establish some basic parameters on the creation and use of SNS and other social media for the District and its personnel.

For purposes of this regulation, the definition of **public social media networks or Social Networking sites (SNS)** are defined to include: websites, 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 technology network (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, blog sites, etc.). The definition of **District approved password-protected social media tools** are those that fall within the District's electronic technology network or which the District has approved for educational use. Within these internal forums, the District has greater authority and ability to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within these internal forums.

Official District Use

Official District use is defined as the use of social media by an employee, on behalf of his or her department, program or school that has been authorized for the express purpose of communicating the District's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests. The authorization may be granted by the Superintendent or his/her designee. For example, the School District may decide to have its own official Facebook page. Or employees could be authorized to develop other pages dedicated to a single building, program, or sports team. There are also many official uses of social media that are not public, such as the use of internal blogs or wikis for collaboration among grade-level or project teams. Employees are prohibited from setting up public social networking sites for any official District use related to their division, building or service unless they have obtained prior approval in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

Establishing a Social Networking Site for Official District Use

1)   Following approval from the appropriate Building Principal and/or public relations designee or Technology Coordinator, the public relations or technology staff will work with the department, building or service to properly set up an appropriate social networking site. All account names and log in passwords must be on file in the Technology Department.

2)   The Superintendent/designee shall have the exclusive and final authority to determine whether individual buildings/facilities may initiate and maintain separate page(s) on the SNS.

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Quality Control/Content Integrity

1)   The District shall provide general training for all applicable personnel, including training on ethical and legal considerations, and compliance with all applicable policies and regulations.

2)   The official District website will remain the primary source for all content. Any and all material on the District SNS will only supplement information that exists on the District's official website.

3)   All the material/content that is entered or posted to the District SNS (e.g., Facebook) account/page must include a link back to the official District website or relevant partner. An occasional reminder or announcement without a link is permissible (for example, a "Save the Date" announcement).

4)   Photos should only be posted on the District-owned website that the SNS can link to. For control purposes, do NOT upload images of students directly on to a SNS.

5)   Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the District, its students, alumni or employees. Use good judgment and follow District policies (i.e., FERPA).

5)   Thoroughly spell check and grammar check your content before posting. Citizens expect that education employees will set a good example when they write and speak in public.

6)   Remember you are writing for publication, even on social networks. Refrain from making unsubstantiated statements. Always provide full citations for laws or research.

Disclaimers

As a public entity, the District should include disclaimers on their site regarding grounds for removal of comments and the frequency to which the site is monitored. "Base School District is an agency that is not liable for the content or comments posted to this site. Any inappropriate content may be removed. This site is monitored during normal business hours."

Professional or Classroom Use

Professional use is defined as an employee's use of social media for the purpose of furthering his or her specific job responsibilities or professional duties through an externally focused site or a district sponsored site. For example, many teachers across the country have signed up for discussion forums on EdWeek.org to engage with other teachers in a community of practice. While use for professional interests is beneficial to the work of the District because it enables employees to stay informed on

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important issues or to collaborate with their peers, the social media tool or site the employee is using is not maintained or monitored by the district itself. The employee is accessing sites and setting up accounts owned by private entities to consume and exchange information. Again, internally, professionals often collaborate through various technologies, but professional use of social media implies going outside of the internal network of the district. Employees' participation in external social media for professional use, using district technology, equipment and email addresses or during the school day requires prior approval and is subject to the procedures set forth below.

Classroom use is defined as use of SNS in a classroom for instructional purposes. An example of classroom use may be the creation of a forum for class discussion taking place in a password protected online environment. Students can interact with their peers and their teacher to discuss a current class topic, sharing what they have discovered on the internet and voicing their opinions. Teachers can upload homework, post school notices, moderate discussions and share materials. This online portal develops writing skills, encourages research skills and promotes intellectual discussion. Staff must also obtain prior approval for classroom use of these internal forums.

Establishing Access

1)   If you are participating in a social network site and/or blog for District-related professional use, it must be done with the approval of your supervisor or principal.

2)   Teachers are encouraged to use existing District or RIC established web tools such as teacher web pages within the District website, Angel, Edmodo, etc. to communicate with students, to assign and collect student work, or to provide online feedback to students.

3)   Staff interaction with former students outside of the district controlled environment is prohibited. Use caution when "friending" former students. Realize that many former students have online connections with current students. Information shared between school staff and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.

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4)   The District understands that 21st century learning is constantly changing and that many sites that are currently "blocked" by the District internet filter may have educational significance for teacher and student use. If you would like to request that an online site be accessible to use for teaching and learning, submit a request to the Technology Coordinator for review. Requests will be reviewed and the District list of blocked sites will be updated throughout the school year. A description should be provided of the intended use of the site and what tools on the site match your needed criteria. A link to the privacy policy for such sites should also be included.

Quality Control/Content Integrity

1)   When using social media for professional purposes, always identify yourself and your position with the District. Use your actual name - never create an alias or post as anonymous. Misidentifying yourself or providing false information may result in disciplinary action. The District email address attached to your name implies that you are acting on behalf of the District.

2)   While engaged in professional use of social media, do not post confidential or proprietary information about the District, its students, alumni or employees. Use good judgment and follow District policies.

3)   Thoroughly spell check and grammar check your content before posting. Citizens expect that education employees set a good example when they write and speak in public.

4)   Remember you are writing for publication, even on social networks. Refrain from making unsubstantiated statements. Always provide full citations for laws or research.

5)   District personnel acknowledge and agree that when they create or post material on the District SNS they are in effect "content publishers" and as such are subject to a host of ethical and legal obligations including, but not limited to, compliance with the federal Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

Personal Use and Responsibility

        Personal use is defined as use that is not related to an employee's job duties for the District or his or her professional interests. For example, outside of work hours, an employee might create or maintain a blog related to a hobby, or a personal Facebook page containing news about his or her family and friends. An employee checking his or her personal Facebook page, sending out a personal Tweet, or watching the latest viral YouTube video are examples of personal use of social media during the work day.

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1) The District does not allow personal use of social media during work hours and on District owned hardware.

2) District employees are personally responsible for all comments/information they publish online. Be mindful that what is published will be public for a long time. Be sure to protect privacy.

3) Social media sites require an email address to register and begin use. District employees should not use their work email address for registering or logging in to any social networking sites.

4) Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that are used in face-to-face contact, and be in accordance with the highest professional standards. District employees are expected to behave honorably in online spaces. Online activities or communications which are improper, unethical, illegal, or which cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents, or other members of the school community should be avoided.

5) Posting comments and having online conversations on social media sites makes those comments public and available to anyone who has any online access. Please be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what is said online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social media under the impression of a 'private conversation' could end up being shared in a larger, more public domain.

6) Comments related to the District should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, employees should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain. Remember that posted information could be interpreted as an extension of your office or classroom. What is inappropriate in your office or classroom is also inappropriate online. If posting comments or viewpoints on topics related to the District using any online medium be sure you state that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the District.

7) Before posting personal photographs or avatars that represent you, consider how the images reflect on your reputation and professionalism. Also, remember not to use copyrighted images.

8) Due to the evolving nature of social websites, District personnel should not use personal SNS to create or maintain personal relationships with students. For purposes of these guidelines, "personal relationships with students" shall mean any behavior or conduct that is unrelated to course work or official school matters. Such behavior may erode the professional authority and traditional roles of teacher and student within the District and may violate District policies and/or regulations.

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Teachers should not "friend" current students or any student currently enrolled in any school within the District Pre-K through 12. It is too easy for genuinely-intentioned and innocent comments and situations to be misinterpreted, resulting in potentially damaging consequences for everyone involved. If your position within the District calls for communication with students or parents and is educationally justifiable, the use of the District network, email, teacher web pages within the District website, and school-provided/owned equipment are suggested for use when communicating on-line.

9)   While mindful of employees' First Amendment free speech rights, District personnel who participate in social networking websites, including the District SNS, shall not post any material which may result in the disruption of classroom or District activities. The District is entitled to make such a determination based on the facts surrounding the material as the District reasonably believes them to be.

Employees are encouraged to seek permission from the subject before posting photographs and videos of fellow employees taken on school property or at school sponsored events. Due to the sensitive nature and potentially damaging consequences, posting photographs or information about currently enrolled students in any capacity is prohibited. Realize that many former students have online connections with current students. Information shared between school staff and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.

School Logos

Within your personal social mediums, do not use any District or school logo without written permission from District officials. For official pages, the District will provide you with a profile image to use.

Reporting Requirements

District personnel shall be required to report known or suspected violations of the District SNS Guidelines to their Building Principal or immediate supervisor.

Disciplinary Sanctions

District personnel who violate any provision of the SNS guidelines shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment in accordance with legal guidelines, District policy and regulations, and the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

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Compliance with Other Applicable Policies and Regulations

District personnel who participate in social networking websites, including the District SNS, shall be subject to all applicable policies and regulations including, but not limited to, the following:

1)   Confidentiality of Computerized Information;

2)   School District Standards and Guidelines for Web Page Publishing;

3)   Teacher Web Pages Including Web 2.0 Tools for Collaboration;

4)   Code of Ethics for Board Members and All District Personnel;

5)   Sexual Harassment of District Personnel;

6)   Staff-Student Relations: Fraternization;

7)   Sexual Harassment of Students;

8)   Student Records and Student Directory Information (FERPA);

9)   Staff Use of Computerized Information Resources;

10)   Use of Email in the School District;

11)   Students Use of Computerized Information Resources (AUP);

12)   Internet Safety/Internet Content Filtering Policy and Guidelines; and

13)   Use of Copyrighted Materials.