

SOCIAL NETWORKING

1. Purpose:

The Pierre School District recognizes the value of using multiple form of technology, and it will continue to support staff utilization of new and existing resources that offer innovative approaches to enhancing the learning experience. As options for online collaboration or social media platforms continue to expand, employees are encouraged to explore how the use of these tools can promote online discourse with students and our many district stakeholders. Within this framework, the district is responsible for ensuring that such tools are used in a safe and appropriate manner when used to foster collaboration with and among students. While fully respecting employees legal rights, including the rights spelled out under the First Amendment, the district has a vested interest in regulating interaction that occurs within this evolving arena of information and idea exchange. Activities that employees engage in outside the work environment, or in connection with district duties are a proper focus for district policy and the “Staff-Student Social Networking Policy” seeks to provide direction for such interactions.

2: Definitions:

- For purposes of this policy the term “*social media*” is defined as any form of interaction that occurs among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and/or networks.¹ Whether through direct or indirect intent of the vendor, those technologies that serves as a medium for both the creation and exchange of user-generated content to a broader public audience across mobile/web-based platforms fit within this definition.
- “*Private social media networks*” include those platforms that are readily available to the general public/consumers primarily for the distribution and sharing of personal information to a broader audience beyond the district.
- “*Professional social media networks*” include the utilization of social media with the exclusive intent of facilitating collaboration among students/staff,² or update the public about activities supported by the district³ or the South Dakota High School Activities Association. “Professional” networks include those platforms that are approved and supported by the District for educational uses, or may be password protected to protect student information and limit public access. The District has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum.

¹ Examples of social media (but not limited to those listed) include MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Internet Blogs, SnapChat, Daily Motion, Wikipedia,

² Twitter account set up by an employee to keep students informed about course assignments, test updates, etc.

³ Georgia Morse Middle School facebook page designed to update participants about the activities underway at that particular school, or Governor Booster Club which updates those interested in Governor Athletics.

- “Invite” or “Accept” as it relates to this policy occurs when an author of a public or professional social media network knowingly allows access to content that is not readily available to the general public.
- “Stakeholders” include the various constituents with direct or indirect affiliation to the district such as parents, fans, volunteers, community members, and businesses.

3. Information Disclosure

All employees should be positive ambassadors who serve as role models to students and other stakeholders in the community consistent with Pierre School District Policy G7: Staff Conduct. Because consumers of social media networks view employees as a representative of the District, they are required to follow the prescribed rules for information disclosure when referring to the District, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities. Confidential information or other sensitive issues should not be presented on public social media platforms. Additionally, student, parents, or colleague information⁴ should not be disclosed without direct permission or approval. For the legal protection of district staff, the following proscribed conduct includes posting information or sending messages that violate South Dakota’s code of professional ethics for teachers (SDAR 24:08:03). Specifically, employees:

- Shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media (public or professional) network or engage in communications or conduct that is 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.
- May not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers’ consent. Employees may not post images of students on any social media network if the parent or legal guardian requests that images be withheld. This excludes images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances.
- May not post any nonpublic images of the District premises and property, including floor plans.
- Should keep the security setting high on these sites to prevent non-authorized persons from accessing their sites.

4. Private Social Media Networks:

District employees are encouraged to maintain private social media networks for personal use. However, use of these media for personal use on District equipment is prohibited.

⁴ Personal information can take many forms and include test scores, classroom performance, private interaction/ correspondence, or pictures.

- Employees who participate in social media networks may decide to include information about their work with the District as part of their personal profile, as it would relate to a typical social conversation. Work information included in a personal profile may include district name, job title, job duties, status updates related to district promotions or recognitions, and personal participation in district-sponsored event.
- No current Pierre School District student (excluding immediate or extended family members) may be granted access to restricted content private social media networks by either being invited or allowed access to such material. Current Pierre School District students who currently are active participants in such networks should have access restricted. If a current student seeks access to restricted content, the employee should deny such request referencing stipulations spelled out in the District “Staff-Student Social Media Policy.”
- Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish through such networks. In addition the information, outline under the “Information Disclosure” section of this policy, it is not acceptable to discuss general details about projects, lessons, or events and to use pseudonyms for an individual (i.e., Teacher A) so long as the information provided does not make it easy for someone to identify the individual or violate any privacy laws. Generally, private social network sites are not an appropriate venue to conduct school business with students or parents.
- If using private social media networks to reference District related activity please recognize staff responsibilities that fall under Pierre School District Policy G4: Staff Ethics. Discussion of personnel or student issues that have not been vetted through the appropriate channels should not be posted on open access platforms. When doing so, it should be made clear that district personnel are speaking on behalf of themselves and not as a spokesperson for the district.⁵
- Employees have no expectation of privacy with respect to utilization of district property, or engagement in private social networking sites.

5. Professional Social Media Networks:

District employees are encouraged to maintain professional social media networks, and such sites should be employed in an appropriate manner for employees’ to perform tasks associated with their positions and assignments.

- A District managed professional social media network or service should be clearly labeled as such. District logos or trademarks should be used appropriately and employees should seek authorization from his/her supervisor prior to use.

⁵ District content posted on private social media networks should use a disclaimer such as “The posting on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the Pierre School Districts positions or opinions.”

- If such a site is maintained, the employee will inform his/her supervisor of the site and will provide a link to the site. Such sites and services will be reviewed for possible policy and copyright violations. Administration or designees have the right to remove content or limit access for violations of established policies.
- Current District students and interested stakeholders may be invited or allowed access to professional social media networks.
- When using this form of social media to communicate with students, permission must be received from parents when minors are involved unless interaction involves at least one other district employee.⁶

6. Compliance

Any district employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this policy 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.

- District personnel are responsible for reporting inappropriate behaviors to the appropriate district administrator(s) or state officials in compliance with mandatory reporting requirements.
- When notified the administrator(s) is responsible to taking the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate disciplinary action is taken. Any other reports of inappropriate behavior, violations, or complaints related to this policy will be routed to the staff supervisor for appropriate action. Violations may result in a loss of access and/or disciplinary action. When applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.⁷

Revision - First Reading: 7/11/11

Revision - Adoption: 8/8/11

Revision - First Reading: 5/9/14

Revision - Adoption: 6/9/14

⁶ Coach, assistant coach, athletic director, principal, teacher,

⁷ Consistent with nationally established techniques for establishing best practices a number of resources were utilized to generate the principles framed within this policy for the Pierre School District. These include the Brookings, SD School District, Minnetonka, MN School District, West Central, SD School District, White River, SD School District, and IBM.