

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 719
PRIOR LAKE - SAVAGE AREA SCHOOLS**428 EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA****I. PURPOSE**

Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools recognizes the value of technology tools to enhance student learning experiences and the increasing role of social media in our learning environments. The District also recognizes its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

The purpose of this policy is to address the use of social media in the classroom, to provide guidance to employees on the maintenance of professional ethics and boundaries when utilizing social media in their personal and professional lives, and to provide Student Code of Ethics guidelines.

II. DEFINITIONS

Public online social media are defined to include: websites, blogs, wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other interactive social media generally available to the public on the Internet (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, blogs, etc.).

The Learning Management System (LMS) is defined as a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of e-learning education courses or training programs.

Per Policy 404, employee means all persons whose employment is approved by the board.

III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. This policy addresses employees' use of publicly available social media networks. The District takes no position on employees' decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use on personal time. However, use of these media for personal use during District time or on District equipment is prohibited. In addition, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws, or District policies.

The District provides password-protected District-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages use of District tools for collaboration by employees. However, 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 Superintendent, or designee.

The District may use social media tools and other communication technologies in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with the general public.

- B. 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.

All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in this community. 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:

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 must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means).
3. Employees shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media 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.
4. Employees should not use their District email address for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the District.
5. Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the District.
6. 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.
7. 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 data privacy laws.
8. Employees may not use or post the District logo (defined as the leaf seedling) on any social media network without permission from the Superintendent, or designee.
9. Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.
10. The use of student photos for educational purposes on school-approved social media venues is allowable. A parent/legal guardian or student may, however, notify the school in writing that photos of individual students may not be shared on social media sites. Parents/legal guardians (or students age 18+) who wish to opt out of Directory Information and/or Use of Student Photos in Social Media must fill out and submit an

opt out form to the school district by October 1st of each year. Employees may not post or publish any student photos if an opt out form for an individual student has been submitted to the building principal. Opt out forms are to be submitted no later than October 1st of each year, per policy 515.

11. Employees may not post any non-public images of the District premises and property, including floor plans.
12. Exercise caution when choosing to be “friends” with students of Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools or their parents/legal guardians on your personal online social media site. Educational employees have a responsibility to maintain appropriate employee-student relationships, whether on or off duty. In general, if your connection is due to your role as an employee of the district (rather than as a relative or family friend) it is recommended that you maintain a professional relationship and decline the online “friendship” on your personal site.

If you are uncertain of the language to use when declining the “friend” request of a student or parent/legal guardian, consider the following suggestion for a response:

Thank you for your friend request. I have a routine practice of only sharing information with students or parents/legal guardians through my professional email and web resources. If you feel your request is directly related to my professional responsibilities, feel free to use my school email or through the LMS to contact me.

- C. The District recognizes that student groups that are sanctioned by the District 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 inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online. Employees shall annually disclose to their principal or administrative supervisor the existence of their professional participation in such networks.

- D. 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. This may include:

1. Work information included in a personal profile, to include District name, job title, and job duties.

2. Status updates regarding an employee’s own job promotion.

3. Personal participation in District -sponsored events, including volunteer activities.

- E. An employee who is responsible for a professional 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.

- F. Anything posted on an employee's website, blog or other Internet content or social media site for which the employee is responsible will be subject to all District policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines. Where applicable, employees may be asked to disclose to the District the existence of and to provide the District with access to an employee's website, blog or other personal social media network as part of an employment selection, promotion, or disciplinary process.
- G. Use of District-approved, online social media in the classroom is subject to the following:
1. Students will adhere to a Student Code of Ethics Using Social Media which can be found in Policy 524: Electronic Technologies Acceptable Use Policy.
 2. Teachers shall instruct students on the appropriate use of such sites. Policy 524 Electronic Technologies Acceptable Use Policy, contains Acceptable and Unacceptable Internet Use by Students and a Student Code of Ethics Using Social Media.
 3. Teachers must ensure that private student data and work is not made public on public online social media sites unless permission for publication of student work or data on the Internet is obtained.
 4. When using online social media in the classroom, teachers shall ensure compliance with any applicable terms of use.

Cross References: Policy 404 (Employment Of All Staff)
Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Student Records)
Policy 524 (Electronic Technologies Acceptable Use Policy)

School Board Adoption: February 12, 2024

Orig: May 2011
Revised: August 2012
June 2014
October 2017
February 2022
February 2024