

Staff Use of Personal Electronic Devices and Social Media

Social Media

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, and a key platform for sharing information. Especially in school settings, however, it is important to be very thoughtful about the use of social media.

Personal Use

Most people use one or more social media channels for personal communication purposes: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and SnapChat, are just a few popular examples of the many social media platforms available.

Staff members certainly have every right and opportunity to have accounts and profiles on various social media platforms; however, it's essential to keep the following in mind:

1. Staff members should have separate accounts for personal and professional use;
2. Staff members should not "friend" current district students unless the purpose of the social media platform is educational in nature;
3. The following documents address staff behavior expectations:
 - a. Board policy GBC - Staff Ethics and administrative regulation GBC-AR - Staff Ethics;
 - b. Board policy GBNA - Hazing/Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying/Menacing Complaint Procedures - Staff;
 - c. Board policy GCAB - Staff use of Personal Electronic Devices and Social Media;
 - d. Employee Handbook: Personal Electronic Devices and Social Media;
 - e. Employee Handbook: Computer Use;
 - f. Employee Handbook: Staff Ethical Standards;
 - g. SafeSchools: Professional Boundaries - Staff to Student.
4. Comments or pictures that are shared or posted can have an impact on an employee's work life if those things are felt to be in violation of the above-referenced policies/guidelines;
5. Never post confidential information or disparaging comments about students, co-workers, or the workplace;
6. Remaining professional and positive, even on personal social media sites, is always expected.

Professional Use

Medford School District uses social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) to share positive stories about students, important information about district activities, news releases, and emergency information, as necessary. The district is a public entity and has a responsibility for maintaining public records; caution must be used in determining what will be posted to these sites.

Schools can also set up social media accounts to share information about their events and accomplishments; however, posting content to these sites should not take precedence over maintaining the school's website, since the school's website is the information source of record, as is the district website. It is recommended that posts to the school's official sites are managed by the principal, office manager or other approved employee. The principal should always have access to the login and password for each site so that if inappropriate content is posted, it can be removed quickly.

Posting Images

Exercising personal and professional judgment and discretion is essential when taking and posting images to social media sites. Staff and/or district-related groups may take photographs at schools or school-related events (such as pictures of classroom activities, union meetings, their own children or family friends, and other similar situations), and may choose to post them, as long as such activity does not violate any laws or existing Board policy, and does not compromise the safety, security, and personal privacy of district facilities, staff, students and/or nondistrict-related individuals or entities. If there are questions about a staff member's or district-related group's ability or authority to take and/or post a photograph, those questions should be directed to the building administrator or the communications specialist.

Pictures of students are usually permitted unless students have opted out of photos. The district assumes that all students are opted IN for photos and the sharing of directory information (as defined in Board policy JOA - Directory Information); however, parents can complete the Release of Information Opt-Out form if there is certain information they do not want shared. Office managers and registrars have the ability to run reports for their schools, showing which students (if any) have opted out. This information will be shared with teachers or other staff members who may be taking event photos.

Unless a particular student has received a special award or recognition, it is recommended that pictures of individual students, along with their full names, not be used on social media sites. Whenever possible, photos should include groups of students, rather than individuals.

Parent groups may set up social media accounts to share information about events and activities, but should be very clear that they are not speaking for the school. It is also important for school-sponsored parent groups to share administrative access with the principal or designee, so there will be continuity if there is a change in site administrators.

Teachers who wish to use social media to collaborate with students or to have their students collaborate with each other on class projects, are encouraged to use the tools that are specifically designed for education (e.g., Moodle and Google Apps for Education). Teachers who wish to create classroom blogs or use other social media platforms, and intend to regularly take and post pictures of classroom activities, must first secure their principal's approval, and are then recommended to provide notice to parents

describing the project, its purpose and goals, and how students' information will be kept secure (e.g., whether the site is password protected). Parents must have the opportunity to opt their child out of a classroom-level activity, if they wish, without having to opt out at the school and district levels.

Teachers often want to post examples of student work to help illustrate expectations to current students, and to help students differentiate between work that does and does not meet learning standards. This is acceptable, as long as the following guidelines are met:

1. Use professional discretion to determine whether or not the work sample contains material of a personal or sensitive nature; if it does, then either do not post it, or take steps to redact the information in question, or secure prior approval from the student or the parent;
2. In general, avoid posting student names; and
3. When possible, post excerpts of work, not the entire piece.

Questions about the appropriateness of posting student work should be directed to the building principal.

Special Projects, Videos, Outside Agencies

If staff members plan a special project that might extend beyond parent's reasonable expectation as part of the student's educational day, it is recommended that parents be notified and provided an opportunity to opt their children out, if they wish to do so. This is particularly true with videos in which individual students will be featured/interviewed and identified by name. In these situations, permission slips should be sent home with each student, providing a description of the project and requesting the parent's/guardian's permission for their child to participate.

If an outside agency wishes to take photos or videos of students, it is absolutely essential that the communications specialist be notified, and that permission from parents/guardians be secured in advance (unless the request is coming from the media).

Members of the media must receive permission to be on school grounds during the school day, but once permission is granted, they have a right to photograph students and list their names, unless those students receive special education services or their parents have opted them out of photos.

Personal Electronic Devices

Staff may use and possess personal electronic devices on district grounds, subject to the following:

1. Personal electronic devices shall not be used in a manner that disrupts the educational process or school programs or activities, or in a manner that violates law, Board policy, administrative regulations or school rules;
2. At no time, whether used on-duty or off-duty, will a personal electronic device be used in a manner that interferes with staff duties and responsibilities, or in a manner that violates state and/or federal law;

3. Personal electronic devices that have the capability to take photographs or record video or audio shall not be used for purposes that violate Board policy GCAB and/or the Employee Handbook while on district property or at school-sponsored events;
4. The district shall not be responsible for loss, theft, or damage to personal electronic devices brought onto district property or to school-sponsored events;
5. The use of personal electronic devices in any manner that would violate the confidentiality or privacy rights of another individual is strictly prohibited.

Acceptable Use

When using personal electronic devices on district time, and when using district electronic devices, staff members are required to abide by the Medford School District Network (MSDNet) and Internet Access Staff Consent and Waiver Agreement which outlines expected online behavior. All staff members are required to sign the agreement upon employment. This document is available on the district's Intranet.

Questions

Questions regarding social media, student photos, videos or media relations, should be addressed to the communications specialist.

Questions regarding educational technologies or personal electronic devices should be addressed to the chief academic officer.

Questions regarding staff conduct online should be addressed to the human resources director.