

## **7544 - USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to make employees and other persons who use Akron Public School District (“District”) technology aware of their responsibilities when using social media. Employees should be aware of the potential consequences of violating this policy whether in their personal or professional use of social media, as defined below. The purpose of this policy is also to protect the interests of the District and the privacy of employees where applicable. This policy is also intended to ensure efficient use of employee time, to minimize distractions from an employee’s assigned tasks and duties, and to assist employees in making informed decisions concerning the appropriate use of social media. What is said online comes under close scrutiny by others, especially when a communication involves public employees. This policy is intended to protect employees from unintended consequences of social media posts, and protect the District from harm that can result from such posts.

This policy also establishes that only authorized individuals are permitted to post on the District’s official media sites or speak on behalf of the District when posting on social media.

### **II. SCOPE**

For purposes of this policy:

“Communications Director” is the individual designated by the Superintendent to coordinate and oversee Authorized Users and District-approved social media accounts.

“Authorized User” shall mean individuals authorized by the Communications Director to maintain and post on a District-approved social media account.

“Social Media” shall mean websites and applications that enable users to create or share content or participate in social networking.

“Personal Use” shall mean the use of any Social Media website or application that is not controlled or administered as an official District page, account, or profile.

“Professional Use” shall mean the use of any District-owned e-mail account, or any Social Media website or application that is District-approved and controlled or administered by the District.

“Unprotected Speech” shall mean Social Media communications that:

- (1) Concern matters ordinarily within the scope of the employee’s duties;

- (2) Are reasonably calculated to disrupt the operation of the District, obstruct performance of duties, interfere with the maintenance of discipline by supervisors, or undermine the authority in the District; or
- (3) Bring the mission of the District and the professionalism of its employees into disrepute.

This policy applies to all District employees' use of social media whether for Personal or Professional Use, regardless of using District or personal technology, and to any person using District equipment (phones, computers, etc.). Nothing in this policy should be construed as denying employees their civil or political liberties under the U.S. and State of Ohio Constitutions. Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with collective bargaining rights or agreements. If there is a conflict between a collective bargaining agreement and this policy, the terms of the collective bargaining agreement shall apply.

### **III. ADMINISTERING DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS**

- A. The Communications Director is responsible for overseeing all District Social Media accounts and consulting on an as-needed basis with Department and Building leads concerning the management of Social Media.
- B. The establishment of any District social media account must be authorized by the Communications Director before being created. Department/Building leads should provide a brief summary of the purpose along with recommended Authorized Users with administrative and/or password access.
- C. Each social media account shall have at least two Authorized Users with administrative and/or password access.
- D. Annually, each department and building lead shall provide the Communications Director with a list of Authorized Users. Any changes in the status of an Authorized User must be coordinated with the Communications Director.
- E. When using official District Social Media, Authorized Users shall comply with the Third Party Social Media User Terms and Conditions, which shall be distributed to Authorized Users by the Communications Director. Authorized Users shall display the Third Party Social Media User Terms and Conditions on all District social media accounts that the Authorized User maintains (attached as Exhibit A).
- F. Record retention is the responsibility of each department that maintains a social media presence. Authorized Users on any District-approved Social Media site must have knowledge of the District's record retention obligations and comply with those obligations. In general, there are very limited circumstances in which content posted on District Social Media sites should be deleted by District employees. The Communications Director should be consulted for further guidance prior to content being deleted.
- G. The Communications Director reserves the right to refuse the creation of a new account, to consolidate existing accounts and to delete stagnant accounts in coordination with department and building leads.

- H. Authorized Users should use proper and approved branding when using District Logos.

#### **IV. EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- A. Unless authorized by the employee's job duties as an Authorized User, or the employee is otherwise authorized to use Social Media, employees shall refrain from using social media while on work time.
- B. No person shall use District-issued electronics (desktops, laptops, cell phones, etc.) to post, view or engage with Social Media unless they are an Authorized User or the usage is specifically permitted as a part of that person's job duties.
- C. Authorized Users are expected to comply with "Terms of Use" of social media platforms.
- D. Statements made on Social Media that affect the workplace may be investigated under any relevant Board policy, Administrative Guideline, District directive and Code of Conduct, including, but not limited to, Staff Technology Acceptable Use and Safety policy, Anti-Harassment policy, and Nondiscrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity policy.
- E. Employees shall comply with all federal, state, and local law, and all other Board policies, Administrative Guidelines, District directives and Code of Conduct when using social media platforms.
- F. Communications related to public business may meet the definition of a record under Ohio's Public Records Law (and therefore possibly be subject to review and release) even if the communication is on the employee's personal account.

#### **V. PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

- A. The following employee conduct is prohibited:
  - 1) Disclosure of District information that is confidential, proprietary, and/or information that is prohibited from release by law.
  - 2) The use of an employee's or any District email address to register on social media or other online tools without prior approval.
  - 3) Sharing content that is sexual, obscene, violent, or pornographic in nature in their Professional Use, or in their Personal Use, in connection with any reference to the individual's employment with the District.
  - 4) Conduct or encourage illegal activity in their Professional Use, or in their Private Use, in connection with any reference to the individual's employment with the District.
  - 5) Promote illegal discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, military status, or any other class that is prohibited by state, federal, or local law in their Professional Use, or in their Personal Use, in connection with any reference to the individual's employment with the District.

- 6) Threaten, intimidate, or harass any individual, as prohibited by federal, state, or local law in their Professional Use, or in their Personal Use, that references the individual's employment with the District.
- 7) Incite or promote violence, as prohibited by federal, state, or local law in their Professional Use, or in their Personal Use, that references the individual's employment with the District.
- 8) Defame any individual, group or organization, as prohibited by federal, state, or local law in their Professional Use, or in their Personal Use, that references the individual's employment with the District.
- 9) Attribute personal statements, opinions, or beliefs to the District or do anything to give the false impression that the employee is representing the District in such personal statements.
- 10) Conduct public business or make official statements as a representative of the District via personal social media accounts (including private or direct messages), unless so authorized.
- 11) Retaliating for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation.
- 12) Engage in Unprotected Speech.

## **VI. CONSEQUENCES OF A POLICY VIOLATION**

Violation of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Violations of law or other policies that occur through social media usage may also result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.