

Social Media Policy

Social media is a form of electronic communication where users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content and has become an integral form of communication for our schools and communities. Schools use electronic communications to share information, gather input, and publicize events, among other purposes. The District recently issued a bulletin regarding social media, Bulletin No. 5658, *Social Media Policy for Employees and Associated Persons*, to help clarify roles and responsibilities of District stakeholders when using this communication tool. Below are some key points to consider from the bulletin.

Social media is broadly defined to include podcasts in MP3 format, social networking sites including Facebook, Google+, digital publishing services such as Shutterfly or Flickr, and wikis for creating interlinked web pages. This bulletin applies to both District employees and associated persons. For purposes of this bulletin, “Associated Persons” includes, but is not limited to, parents, parent-elected leaders of school committees, representatives and volunteers, consultants, contracted employees, walk-on coaches, child care/enrichment program providers, vendors and afterschool providers.

When District employees or associated persons use District computers, email accounts, or resources, all related District policies and procedures apply. Even when non-District equipment or resources are used, there are restrictions as to what can be shared or posted. District employees and associates are responsible for information they post, share, or respond to online. The bulletin reminds us that we can’t rely on privacy settings to ensure online security. Pupil record information, including information such as names, grades, and attendance as well as photographs or other recordings, may not be shared without written authorization from parent/legal guardian/adult student first. Personnel information and any other confidential or privileged information should not be posted. Posting inappropriate threatening, harassing, racist, biased, derogatory, disparaging or bullying comments toward or about any student, employee or associated person on any website is prohibited and may be subject to discipline. Use of District logos, names, or images without District authorization is also prohibited.

When an incident is reported, schools should take reported incidents of online misconduct seriously and investigate, report, follow up, and monitor, in accordance with applicable District bulletins. Inappropriate postings may be documented by printing screen shots or saving the screens to a flashdrive and stored in a secured location. Document all critical incidents in iSTAR. The target of online misconduct may request removal of objectionable postings by contacting the internet service provider or webmaster—many sites have a “report abuse” button. If there is inappropriate or sexualized images of minors, or child pornography, contact local law enforcement and LASPD. If the content raises a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect, contact a child protective services agency (local law enforcement or DCFS). If there is an online threat, try to obtain a copy of the threatening post and refer to Bulletin 5610.0, Workplace Violence, Bullying and Threats (Adult to Adult) or Organizing for Assessing and Managing Threats, Bulletin 1119.1.

As preventative measures, school administrators may want to review this policy with parent groups and other associated persons and develop guidelines for parent/community “netiquette” if email listservs are established.

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