



Adopted: 5/03/17

Revised: 8/05/20

Revised: 8/4/21

Revised: 8/3/22

## 524.1 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### I. PURPOSE

Northeast Metropolitan 916 Intermediate School District recognizes the value of staff inquiry, investigation, and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience and interpersonal communication. The District also recognizes its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

This policy addresses employees’ use of private and district-connected internet content including: websites, blogs, wikis, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Tik Tok, etc), online forums, and any other social media.

### II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The District recognizes the importance of online social media networks as a communication and learning tool. Toward that end, the District provides district-approved social media tools and 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) and parental consent for student participation on social networks.

When engaging with social media, whether for professional or personal use, District employees are advised to be respectful and maintain the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct. An employee is responsible for any content communicated by them on social media.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**A. Public social media networks** are defined to include: websites, blogs, wikis, social networks, online forums, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers that do not fall within the District’s electronic technologies network. Examples of public social media networks are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, blog sites, Instagram, SnapChat, Reddit, Tik Tok, etc.

This would not include internal only networks like Google Chat or Google Classroom.

B. *District approved social media tools* are those that fall within the District’s electronic technologies network (outlined in the social media guidelines) or which the District has approved for educational use.

#### IV. REQUIREMENTS

Individual sites and departments or even teachers may choose to establish an official presence on public online social media sites with prior administrative approval (see social media guidelines for details). Once approved, this presence will be included in the definition of “district approved social media tools” as noted above. For any district-approved social media account, a district employee shall be designated as the site manager. Any security, login credentials, or passwords for such accounts must be shared with the site manager’s supervisor and the communications coordinator.

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 on any district approved social media tools:

1. An employee’s use of these district approved networks and an employee’s postings, displays, or communications must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies, including responsibilities for mandated reporting.
2. On district-approved social media accounts, employees and the public must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means). Obscene, profane or vulgar language; communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, or defamatory; personal attacks of any kind; offensive terms that target any specific race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, age, family care leave status or veteran status; terms that incite violence; election campaigning for a political office or ballot proposition; communication that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol; or sexual harassment; will be removed from district social media pages and, for employees, may result in further disciplinary actions. Comments or posts will also be removed if they violate the Terms of Use of the social media platform, are spam, are clearly 'off topic,' divulge personal student or staff information or promote services or products.
3. Employees should not use their District email address for communications or registration on public social media networks that have not been approved by the District. 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.

4. 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.
5. Employees may not post images of coworkers without the coworker's consent.
6. Images of students may be posted on official district social media accounts if the student has a consent to release educational data form on file that has been signed by a parent or guardian. Images of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances, are exceptions to this rule. However it is never appropriate to post images of students on any non-district approved or personal social media account for any reason.
7. Employees may not post any private or confidential images of the District premises and property, including floor plans.
8. When a social media account is used to communicate with students or colleagues, even when said communications are private, those personal social media pages, often in their entirety, could become subject to investigation in the event of a legal inquiry, requested under FERPA or the Minnesota Data Practices Act, or requested as part of a Freedom of Information 5 U.S.C. § 552 request.

## **V. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA**

An employee's use of social media for personal reasons during the workday that are not related to one's job duties should be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with one's work responsibilities. The workday includes any time for which the employee is being compensated by the District excluding vacations, sick days, personal/annual leave and paid holidays.

While the District does not actively monitor or restrict an employee's personal use of public online social media, it may take appropriate responsive action when it becomes aware of, or reasonably suspects, conduct or communication on a public online media site that creates an unlawful disruption or impedes their ability to do their job or violates applicable district policies, professional codes of ethics or other laws. An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules set forth in district policy may be subject to discipline as outlined in respective policies. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information on any public forum or website. If the public may consider your statements to be made in your capacity as a district employee, you may want to include "This posting is my own and does not represent the view of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District." An employee in a leadership role in the district, by virtue of their position, must consider whether personal thoughts that they publish will be attributed to this district.

**Legal References:** 15 U.S.C. § 6501 *et seq.* (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act)  
17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.* (Copyrights)

20 U.S.C. § 6751 *et seq.* (Enhancing Education through Technology Act of 2001)  
47 U.S.C. § 254 (Children’s Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA))  
47 C.F.R. § 54.520 (FCC rules implementing CIPA)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.0695 (School Board Policy; Prohibiting Intimidation and Bullying)  
Minn. Stat. § 125B.15 (Internet Access for Students)  
Minn. Stat. § 125B.26 (Telecommunications/Internet Access Equity Act)  
*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 89 S.Ct. 733, 21 L.Ed.2d 731 (1969)  
*United States v. American Library Association*, 539 U.S. 194, 123 S.Ct. 2297, 56 L.Ed.2d 221 (2003)  
*Doninger v. Niehoff*, 527 F.3d 41 (2<sup>nd</sup> Cir. 2008)  
*Layshock v. Hermitage Sch. Dist.*, 412 F.Supp. 2d 502 (W.D. Pa. 2006)  
*M.T. v. Cent. York Sch. Dist.*, 937 A.2d 538 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2007)  
*J.S. v. Bethlehem Area Sch. Dist.*, 807 A.2d 847 (Pa. 2002)

**Cross References:** Policy 403 (Discipline, Suspension, and Dismissal of School District Employees)  
Policy 406 (Public and Private Personnel Data)  
Policy 505 (Distribution of Nonschool-Sponsored Materials on School Premises by Students and Employees)  
Policy 506 (Student Discipline)  
Policy 514 (Bullying Prohibition Policy)  
Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)  
Policy 519 (Interviews of Students by Outside Agencies)  
Policy 521 (Student Disability Nondiscrimination)  
Policy 522 (Student Sex Nondiscrimination)  
Policy 606 (Textbooks and Instructional Materials)  
Policy 806 (Crisis Management Policy)  
Policy 904 (Distribution of Materials on School District Property by Nonschool Persons)