

**DISTRICT LOGO HERE**

**SOCIAL MEDIA/DIGITAL DEVICE POLICY  
(Name) SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SCHOOL YEAR 20XX-20XX**

## **I. PURPOSE**

The **ABC School District** recognizes the value of teacher inquiry, investigation and innovation using various technology tools to enhance the student learning experience. The district also recognizes its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

Therefore, we have created this policy to address employees' use of digital devices as well as publicly available social media networks including the following: personal websites, blogs, social networks (Twitter, Facebook, etc.), online forums and discussion boards and any other online application that connects an individual to others.

The district takes no position on employees' decisions to participate in the personal use of social media networks on their own time. Personal use of these media during contract hours and with district equipment, however, is prohibited. Likewise, to ensure primary focus remains on education, personal digital devices should not be used during contract hours when employees are engaged with other staff or are instructing students.

The policy is not intended to limit the use of technology as an effective teaching tool but rather set guidelines on its place and proper usage in the educational realm.

## **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

The district recognizes the importance of and need for online social media networks and wireless devices as communication and learning tools. Toward that end, the district provides password-protected social media tools and district-approved technologies for learning and encourages use of district tools for collaboration. 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, designee and parental consent for student participation on social networks. The district may use these tools and other communication technologies in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with the general public.

The line between personal and professional relationships is often blurred in social media. When employees choose to join or engage with district students, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside those authorized by the district, they shall maintain their professionalism as district employees and remember even on personal time, they are representatives of the district and should be thoughtful of comments/photos/videos posted or otherwise distributed. District

employees must also know they have the responsibility of addressing any inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks, including **any** student-initiated communication that may be construed as inappropriate. Additionally, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate state or federal laws or any district policies.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Public social media networks** are defined as websites, blogs, social networks online forums and message boards, video and photo sharing sites, virtual worlds and any other social media available to the public and used in a non work-related manner. This might include a teacher establishing a Facebook page for his/her personal use.

**District-authorized, professional social media tools** are those that fall within the district's technologies network or that the district has authorized for educational use. The district has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum. This might include a classroom blog administered by a teacher for student communication and collaboration.

**Improper or inappropriate communications/behavior** is any direct or indirect communication between employee and student, regardless of who initiates the communication, that may be viewed as inappropriate, derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, simple fraternization or suggestive in nature.

**Digital devices** include, but are not limited to, smart phones, tablet computers, laptops or similar devices.

### IV. REQUIREMENTS

**A.** All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students. Because readers of social media may view the employee as a representative of the school 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:

Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image, video, or any other means). Employees shall not use obscene, profane, or vulgar language or engage in communications that are or may be reasonably perceived to be harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous or defamatory in nature. Likewise, employees shall not participate in any

communication—direct or indirect—that discusses and/or encourages any illegal activity.

Employees should not use their district e-mail address for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the district. It is important to remember that all communications using your district-issued email address or equipment are public and participating in any social media or other online communications/activity using them subjects you to the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of 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.

When authorized as a spokesperson for the district, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the district.

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.

Employees may not post images on social media of co-workers without the coworkers' consent.

Employees may not post student images on any social media network without written parental consent.

Employees may not post any non-public images of the district premises and property, including floor plans.

**B.** The district recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media accounts representing students or groups within the district. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these groups, they do so as an employee of the district. Therefore, they have a responsibility to maintain appropriate student-employee relationships at all times and to address any inappropriate behavior they witness or to which they are a party. Employees are also discouraged from "friending" current students or otherwise fraternizing with students on personal social media accounts. This is simply to protect the safety of minors online.

**C.** Employees who participate in social media may decide to include information about their work with the district as part of their personal profile. This may include work information (district name, job title, job

duties), job promotions, volunteer participation and other activities related to district-sponsored events. Again, it is important for the employee to remember he/she is a representative of the district being named and should communicate in a manner that is responsible and positive.

**D.** Personal digital devices shall be turned off and out of sight in locations deemed “private” such as restrooms, locker rooms, changing rooms, or other similar areas. The use of audio/visual recording and camera features is strictly prohibited in these areas. Since many devices have the capability for photographs, video, and audio recording, employees must NOT record conversations or events without first advising all affected individuals.

**E.** In instances involving students, no audio or video may be made without the written authorization of the principal or superintendent. Likewise, photographs/video containing recognizable students may only be shared online (website, social media, etc.) if a parent has signed a consent form to be kept on file at each school.

**F.** Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information or information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of another. An employee who fails to comply with these social media rules and guidelines may be subject to disciplinary actions, including suspension, non-renewal, or even termination of employment.

**G.** The taking, disseminating, transferring, or sharing of obscene, pornographic, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or photographs, whether by electronic data transfer or use of a digital device (through texting, sexting, emailing or other modes of electronic communication) is strictly prohibited by the district and may constitute a crime under state and/or federal law. Any person performing any of the above actions will be reported to law enforcement and any other appropriate state/federal agencies, which may result in arrest, criminal prosecution and inclusion on sexual offender registries.

## **V. KEY GUIDELINES TO REMEMBER**

***Know when it's appropriate to use.*** Personal use of social media or a digital device during work hours should NOT interfere with assigned duties and related professional responsibilities. Doing so diverts attention from instructional and supervisory responsibilities and detracts from the learning environment.

***Be responsible!*** Remember—what you post is ultimately your responsibility, and once it's out there, it will always be there! If you have any

reservation at all about what you are about to post, chances are you shouldn't. Use caution and good judgment with all accounts. It's also good to keep in mind that others' trademark, copyright and fair use requirements must be respected.

**Remember your students.** You are the adult, and it is essential that we as educators protect our students from inappropriate online content and activity.

**Always be respectful.** Before you post, remember the acronym THINK:

T: Is it true?

H: Is it hurtful?

I: Is it illegal?

N: Is it necessary?

K: Is it kind?

Always express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. We don't always have to agree with others, but we can voice those disagreements without being hateful or cruel. Remember that our communities reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.

**Are you adding value?** There are millions of posts, pictures, videos, etc. online. The best way to get yours acknowledged is to write things that people will value. Communication associated with our district should help fellow educators, parents, students and co-workers. It should be thought provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve their knowledge, skills, do their jobs, solve problems or understand education better, then it's adding value.

**Be careful with personal information!** If you do choose to use social media and other online sites, be thoughtful about what you post. Criminals can piece together information you provide from different sources and use it to impersonate you, hack your passwords or commit fraud against you. Be smart, and don't share too much about yourself online.