

SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY

Section:	4000 Personnel	Office Responsible:	Human Resources
Policy:	4107 Social Media		
Related Policies:	6150 Smyrna School District Computing and Internet	Administrative Procedure:	N/A

I. Purpose

To define and outline the District’s expectation of employee behavior on social media.

II. Authority

Delaware Code, Title 14 § 1049, Policy Making

III. Definitions

Social Media: All forms of online applications, websites, tools, and platforms that enable communications between users.

IV. Policy Statement

This policy is intended to provide the employees of the Smyrna School District with an overview of what is considered appropriate use of social media. This policy shall not be interpreted to infringe upon First Amendment rights, and is not intended to prohibit expression of religious, philosophical, or political views that are not pursuant to the employee’s official duties, provided that such speech:

- a. Involves a matter of public concern, and;
- b. Does not interfere with the government interest in official public service.

Because of the evolving nature of social media, employees should be aware that this policy is not intended to be comprehensive in scope. Instead, employees are expected to apply the standards set forth in this policy and the more general standards of good judgement and professionalism to all conduct, including their conduct online. This policy is intended to supplement – not replace – other Smyrna School District Policies. All of the expectations and obligations contained in other Smyrna School District policies also apply online. As with other Smyrna School District policies, any employee whose conduct violates this policy will be subject to the Smyrna School District’s disciplinary measures, up to and including termination. Social media changes rapidly and there will likely be events or issues that are not addressed in this policy. If, at any time, you are uncertain about the application of this policy or if a question relating to the appropriate use of social media arises and it is not fully addressed by this policy, you should seek the guidance of your immediate supervisor before posting or otherwise engaging online. When in doubt, employees should ask for guidance first because, once the information is online, it cannot be recalled.

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V. General Guidelines

Individuals Covered:

This policy applies to all online and social-media activity of all Smyrna School District employees. This policy applies without regard to whether such activity occurs in the workplace or whether Smyrna School District equipment or technology is used. Refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for more guidance.

Technologies Covered:

“Social Media” includes all forms of online applications, websites, tools, and platforms that enable communication between users.

Professionalism:

- a. Smyrna School District employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face.
- b. Maintain professionalism in all online activities. Apply a good-judgement test for every activity relating to your employment. For example, what would your parents, students, or immediate supervisor think of your posting?
- c. By using the name of the Smyrna School District or the names of any Smyrna School District school(s) in your profile/personal social media account(s) or by identifying yourself as a Smyrna School District employee online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents, and the school community.

Be Cautious:

Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and any sensitive or restricted confidential information. What is published is widely accessible, not easily retractable, and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Employees should be extremely cautious about the information they post online, taking particular care to avoid disclosing personal information about themselves, their families, or the Smyrna School District. Always consider the possibility that what you post online will become public and permanent. Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect a high standard on your professionalism. At the same time, be cautious of not only the material that you are posting to sites under your control, but also sites that are not directly managed by the user. Photographs or other materials showing you in a negative light may end up on a social media site. While you are not directly posting the information, you still may be held accountable for those actions that are deemed inappropriate. Employees should make sure all privacy protocols are in place.

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Acknowledgement:

Your honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are blogging about your work at the Smyrna School District, use your real name, identify that you work for the Smyrna School District, and be clear about your role.

Personal Sites:

Identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a Smyrna School District staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Smyrna School District. It is suggested you use a disclaimer, such as, “The postings on this site are my own, and do not necessarily represent Smyrna School District’s positions or opinions.” This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt the Smyrna School District employee from a special or personal responsibility when posting online.

V. Prohibited Conduct

Social Media has become a mechanism to inform our public and celebrate Smyrna’s success. Smyrna Employees are reminded that our parents, students, colleagues, and the public view these social media posts. Employees are prohibited from engaging in, accessing, or otherwise using their personal social media during work time unless they are sharing work related content that adheres to the standards of good judgement and professional conduct. As stated above, employees’ online activity, including participation on social media, is subject to the same standards of conduct applicable to in-person communications and activities. The following non-exclusive list is intended to address some issues that are of particular importance to the Smyrna School District. Employees are prohibited from engaging in any of the following in their online activities and posts:

- a. Promoting illegal activity, including the use of illegal drugs;
- b. Promoting or endorsing violence;
- c. Comments that are disparaging, defamatory, harassing, or false of coworkers, supervisors, members of the public with whom you interact as a result of your employment;
- d. Disclosure of any confidential information related to Smyrna School District;
- e. Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Any communication between employees and students, including but not limited to, communication through letters, emails, cell phones, texting, social media websites, and traditional phones, must be professional and appropriate;
- f. Employees who are posting, uploading, or sharing any recordings or images (including audio, pictures, and videos) taken in the workplace or at any

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employer sponsored event must ensure they do not post images of students who parents/guardians have opted out of sharing; and

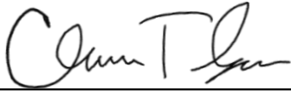
- g. Employees who are found to have engaged in inappropriate behavior will be subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination of employment. Notifications of alleged violations of this policy can come from internal or external sources (e.g. parents, students, other individuals, etc.) and will be appropriately reviewed and investigated by district administration.

VII. Prohibited Conduct

Smyrna staff's obligations to report are in effect anytime a staff member becomes aware of activity that is reportable under Delaware's mandatory reporting laws, including information obtained on social media, such as reportable School Crimes (*14 Del. C. § 4112*), Bulling and Cyberbullying (*14 Del. C. § 4164*), and Teen Dating Violence (*14 Del. C. § 4166*). Additionally, Delaware law mandates any person, agency, organization, or entity to make an immediate oral report to the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, Division of Family services, when they know of, or suspect, child abuse, dependency, molestation, or neglect under Chapter 9 of Title 16 of the Delaware Code and follow up with any requested written reports ("Mandatory Reports Related to Child Abuse and Neglect," 2020).

*Italics indicate Delaware Regulation Administrative Code Title 14 wording

Board Approval Acknowledged by:



Christopher Scuse, *President*
Smyrna School District Board of Education

Policy Actions

Adopted: 10/23/2023

Revised: