

## STAFF USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING AND OTHER FORMS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

### Internal Policies and Procedures Statement

Social media is a powerful communications and marketing tool that may have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations.

In professional roles, employees need to follow the same, if not better, behavioral standards online as they would in life. The same laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with your target audiences apply online as in the real world. Employees are personally liable for anything they post to social media sites.

### Policy for all social media sites, including personal sites

- Protect confidential and proprietary information: Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Waterloo Schools, employees, or students. Adhere to all applicable district confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
- Respect copyright and fair use: When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others.
- Do not use the Waterloo Schools logo or any other district iconography on personal social media sites.
- Terms of Service: Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform used.

### Social media best practices

This section applies to those posting on behalf of Waterloo Schools, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity.

- Think twice before posting: Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the district. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say it in a private meeting or to a member of the media, consider whether you should post it online. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input.
- Strive for accuracy: Get the facts straight before posting them in social media platforms. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.
- Be respectful: Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the district and its voice.
- Remember your audience: Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.
- On personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as an employee of Waterloo Schools online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the district.
- Photography: Photographs posted on social media sites easily can be appropriated by visitors. Do not post creative property or controversial

photographs of faculty, staff, or students. Photography of minors in social media must follow regular district guidelines previously established. This is addressed in policy 418.0.

- Acknowledge who you are: If you are representing Waterloo Schools when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.
- Have a plan: Departments should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date.
- Responding to a negative post: If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accusatory, or negative comment about the district or any individual school/program, do not engage in the conversation without prior approval of the School and Community Relations department.
- Responding directly to a journalist: If you are contacted directly by a journalist regarding issues of concern to the district, clear the query with the School and Community Relations department before responding.
- Link back to [Waterloo Schools](#) whenever possible. Ideally, posts should be very brief; redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the Waterloo Schools Web environment.
- Protect our district voice: Posts on social media sites should protect the Waterloo Schools voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste.

### **Social media comment policy**

We expect conversations to follow the rules of polite discourse, and we ask that participants treat each other with respect. Employees should not post or approve posted comments that include:

- Profanity and vulgar or abusive language
- Threats of physical or bodily harm
- Sensitive information or offensive terms

For the benefit of robust discussion, we ask that comments remain “on-topic,” when you post or approve posts. This means that comments will be posted only as they relate to the topic being discussed/viewed/played/displayed. Employees should not post comments that include:

- Off-topic comments
- Questions from the media

Waterloo Schools’ social media sites should not permit friends, followers, or the general public to create new posts on behalf of the district unless the individual is a staff member who has authorization. Comment moderation will be turned on and monitored. Comments will be approved in a timely fashion so as to appear authentic and transparent.

Identical comments by the same user or multiple users (a group of people sending identical messages or one person submitting under different aliases) should not be used. In the case of identical comments, you should approve the first submission unless you have specifically requested the comment as part of a challenge, contest, or promotion.

**Social media policy notification**

Social media websites each have their own terms and conditions and/or policies; all Waterloo Schools employees must adhere to these policies if they choose to use the social media platforms. Not following these policies/terms may lead to the removal of your social media account during work hours, and may adversely affect or reflect poorly upon other areas of Waterloo Schools. Please keep up-to-date on your social media platform policies/terms.

**Social media for schools within the district**

Each school within the district wishing to participate in the social media space, must adhere to the following policies, in addition to all policies and best practices listed above:

- Notify the District: Individual schools, classes, or school-sponsored extracurricular activities or athletics considering a social media page or who would like to start one, should contact the School and Community Relations Department at #10161 or email [hemannk@waterlooschools.org](mailto:hemannk@waterlooschools.org) to ensure all district-wide social media sites coordinate with other Waterloo Schools' sites and their content. All district-wide pages must have an appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content and one employee designated as a backup. We will verify your employment and that you are authorized to run the social media profile. For a list of district-wide approved social media profiles, contact the School and Community Relations Department.
- Have a plan: Individual schools or organizations should consider their messages, audiences and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. The School and Community Relations Department can assist and advise you with your social media planning.
- Link back to the main district website: Whenever possible, link back to [www.waterlooschools.org](http://www.waterlooschools.org). Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the Waterloo Schools Web environment. When linking to a news article about the individual school or the district, check first to see whether you can link to an official release within the "Press Releases and Media Resources" section of the main district website, instead of to a publication or other media outlet.
- Protect the district voice: Posts on social media sites should protect the district's voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual entity should construe its social media site as representing the district as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post – names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular school/organization as opposed to the district as a whole.

ADOPTED: 3/7/12

Reviewed: 3/7/12, 3/1/18