

CHAPTER 6 - PERSONNEL

EMPLOYEES' USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

6.84

1. Introduction. Social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter have become a widely used means for people to share personal views in many forms, including photographs, text, podcasting (audio files) and videos. Such media reaches millions of public viewers over the Internet in seconds after publishing. Personal websites, public blog websites, podcast websites, online chat rooms and video sharing websites (like Youtube) also provide instant Internet access.
2. Expectations. District employees are expected to be professional, civil and appropriate in all their communications with students, parents, fellow employees and the public, including in their electronic and on-line communications. This expectation applies to the posting of publicly accessible communications and material (collectively referred to as "Material") on the Internet, where it is available for viewing by members of the public, including students and parents. For purpose of this rule, websites, other electronic media and online Material are deemed to be publicly accessible if they can or may be viewed by District students, parents or the general public. The School Board finds that publication of inappropriate or unbecoming Material on publicly accessible websites or electronic media by an employee has the potential to disrupt the educational process, damage the reputation of the District, its teachers and staff, damage the District's reputation and stature, and subject the District, its teachers and employees to ridicule. Accordingly, employees shall refrain from publishing Material on publicly accessible media that is unsuitable for school-age children to view or read, or otherwise is objectionable under the guidelines described below.
3. Purpose. This rule provides guidelines for employees to follow in using the Internet and other forms of publicly accessible electronic communication. It also informs employees that displaying Material in violation of this rule will be cause for disciplinary action, including dismissal. The purpose of this rule is to protect the reputation of the School District and its employees; to assure the continued effectiveness of District employees in the performance of their duties; and to prevent disruption of the educational process.
4. Prohibited Activities. These rules apply to District employees who publish or cause to be published, material on social networking websites, and any other broadcast media where such material may be viewed by students, parents and other members of the public. Employees shall not publish on social networking websites or other publicly accessible electronic media Material that is unprofessional or unbecoming of a District employee, including:
 - a. Material that is unlawful or unethical within the meaning of the Code of Ethics for the Education Profession in Florida.

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- b. Slanderous, false or defamatory Material.
 - c. Obscene, vulgar or sexually suggestive Material.
 - d. Material that encourages or celebrates substance abuse.
 - e. Material that promotes or incites violence.
 - f. Material that is contrary to the pillars of Character Counts!
 - g. Material that foreseeably could impair the employee's effectiveness in the performance of his or her duties.
 - h. Material that is unsuitable for school-aged children to view or read.
 - i. Material that otherwise could hold the employee or the District up to ridicule or otherwise could foreseeably could disrupt the educational process.
5. Private Publication. These rules do not apply to private communications and publication of Material on private, secure websites, where they cannot be viewed by District students, parents or the general public. However, an employee who privately publishes Material on private websites or media is responsible for ensuring that it remains private and does not become publicly accessible.
6. Personal and Business Websites. Employees are permitted to have personal or business web pages hosted on non-district web servers, but those personal web pages must not contain information related to students, and if they are publicly accessible, the web pages' contents and postings must comply with the requirements of this rule.
7. Procedures and Guidelines. The Superintendent is authorized to adopt procedures and guidelines to implement and administer this rule.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

1001.41, F.S.

LAWS IMPLEMENTED:

1001.42; 1012.32, F.S.

HISTORY:

ADOPTED: 05/15/2012