

It is the policy of the Grand Rapids Public Schools (“GRPS”) that employee use of social media, even while off duty and off-site, must not interfere with the educational purpose and mission of the district. This policy applies to all GRPS employees, vendors, and consultants.

Social media is a powerful tool that can enhance student and staff learning and communication. General rules for behavior, ethics, and communications apply when using social media. Employees will be held accountable for creating, copying, or publishing inappropriate content on social media.

For the purpose of this Policy, “inappropriate content” includes but is not limited to: confidential information about other employees, such as addresses, phone numbers, social security numbers, and medical information; confidential, personally identifiable, or sensitive information about students, guests, or vendors; slanderous, libelous, or discriminatory statements and images; disparaging or derisive comments about students or their parents/guardians even if the comments are not personally identifiable; infringed upon intellectual property; content that distracts from or disrupts the educational process such as sexually provocative images or sexually explicit messages; illegal items and activities; and content that violates any school district policy or code of conduct, such as bullying, harassment, or making threats. Notwithstanding the preceding guidelines, certain social media content may be protected under applicable labor laws or collective bargaining agreements. GRPS does not prohibit employees from posting social media content regarding protected or concerted union activity.

For purpose of this Policy, “social media” includes but is not limited to: blogs; microblogs such as Foursquare, Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit; social networks such as Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn; media sharing sites such as YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr, Snapchat, Instagram, and Imgur; and virtual worlds such as Skype, Facetime, Periscope, WeChat, Google Video and the like.

Employees shall use social media in a way which represents them and GRPS in a professional manner. Employees shall exercise caution and sound judgment when using social media sites. An employee’s online activities, even while off-duty or off-site, has the potential to result in disruption to the educational environment or workplace. Such disruption may be a violation of GRPS policies or the law.

Section 5000 – Personnel

5202 Use of Social Media

5202

Employees shall not use social media for non-work related matters during the time they are required to be fulfilling their work, learning, or school responsibilities, unless authorized by the superintendent or designee.

Employees are encouraged to not communicate, network, “friend”, or otherwise connect with students using personal social media or personal e-mail accounts. All allegations of inappropriate conduct or content will be thoroughly investigated.

Employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their social media sites. However, be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. If a student, parent, other GRPS employee, the public, or news media obtain access to inappropriate content posted by a GRPS employee, such employee’s actions will be investigated. Employees should presume that their social media postings and communications will last indefinitely and can be seen by anyone. Employees should not rely on the “private” nature of any content on social media platforms.

Employees shall not make representations that their social media content or communications speak in an official capacity on behalf of GRPS.

Employees should be aware that all communications engaged in by an employee using a district-owned network — including personal, non-work related communications on a personal device — may be subject to investigation, litigation holds, discovery, and disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, MCL 15.231 *et seq.*

This Policy incorporates all other applicable district Policies, including but not limited to Policy 4510 and 4510-R (Computer Network) and Policy 5203 (Use of District Equipment, Supplies, Property and Materials). Discipline for violating this policy may include suspension or other disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Approved: May 2, 2016

Amended: