

**Franklin Public Schools
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

Action Required

Subject: Policy

Date: November 27, 2018

Dept: School Committee

Reason: Required Vote

Enclosure: yes

Recommendation:

Policy – First Read

I recommend moving Policy INJDD – Social Media Policy to a second reading as discussed.

Action Requested of the School Committee:

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

Vote Tabulator

A. Bergen: Y / N

D. Schultz: Y / N

C. Douglas: Y / N

MJ Scofield: Y / N

D. Feeley: Y / N

G. Zub: Y / N

M. Linden: Y / N

Action: _____

Policy on Social Media

Digital communication, which may include, but is not limited to electronic mail, social media, texting, and cellular communication, can provide both educational and professional benefits.

The Franklin Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all District stakeholders who utilize digital or electronic communication for educational purposes, including employees and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. As such, employees may utilize digital and electronic communication in their professional capacity to the extent that it supports the academic and extracurricular goals of the schools.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining proper decorum and appropriate communication in the online, digital world as well as in person, employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.

Employees are reminded that social media content is subject to electronic records requirements. Content shared on the District's public-facing social media platforms may be subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law.

The Superintendent of Schools and the School Principals shall annually remind employees and orient new employees concerning this policy. The orientation and reminders shall give special emphasis to the conduct expectations and prohibitions set forth below, and may include examples of behaviors to avoid.

I. General Expectations for Use of Social Media

- A. District employees are cautioned that speech on or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties, being speech which owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities, is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the District.
- B. When employees post information related to, or comment about the activities of their classrooms, school and District activities, including but not limited to students, student work, or classroom or school activities, they should assume that they "speak for the District" and are expected to conduct themselves accordingly and should do so with the appropriate permissions. Employees shall not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the District, unless specifically authorized to do so by an appropriate administrator.
- C. Employees will be oriented about monitoring practices and penalties for improper use of District computers and technology.

- D. Employees will be oriented about the possibility of penalties, including dismissal from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in online conduct. Additionally, law enforcement officials may be notified if abuse, neglect, or other criminal conduct is suspected.

II. Expectations for Use of Professional Social Media

- A. Employees may maintain professional social media accounts for educational purposes and/or for the purpose of communicating about school and District-related activities, as well as professional educator learning. The District reserves the right to monitor all content on professional social media accounts and to remove any inappropriate material.
- B. Employees shall not post items with obscene, vulgar, sexually suggestive or explicit content; with false or defamatory information about the District, its employees or others who have a relationship to the District; which exhibit or advocate the use of drugs or alcohol; or which harass, threaten, demean, defame, bully, haze or otherwise violate the District's discrimination and/or harassment policies. Employees shall not post examples of inappropriate behavior, even as behavior to avoid.
- C. Employees shall not use professional social media accounts for any commercial, political, or religious activity or for personal gain.
- D. Employees who manage professional social media accounts on behalf of the district, school, or school group must share administrative privileges and passwords with an administrator/additional administrator. For security purposes, employees shall not otherwise share administrative privileges or passwords unless authorized by an appropriate administrator.

III. Expectations for Use of Personal Social Media

- A. District employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites and pages to the degree that their speech does not violate state or federal law or the policies of the District.
- B. Employees should maintain separate personal social media accounts if they wish to post appropriate personal information, including information relating to out-of-school activities or political activities beyond those used for related classroom purposes.
- C. The District expects employees to maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Employees shall not post personnel information or student information, including photographs of students, student work, discussions about students, or other information that could be considered part of a student record, to personal social media accounts.

IV. Contact with Students and Content of Social Media Posts

- A. Employees shall not engage in improper fraternization with students using social media or other electronic means, including:
 - 1. Employees may not “friend”, “follow”, “like”, or use any similar method to link themselves with current students or their content on social media.
 - 2. All electronic contacts with students should be through school-sanctioned modes of communication, except in emergency situations.
 - 3. Electronic contacts with parents/guardians related to a student’s academics or other school-related matters shall be through school-sanctioned modes of communication only.
- B. Employees shall oversee all class, team or student organization pages and shall maintain administrative access to and control of these pages.
 - 1. All contact and messages by employees with students through social media shall be sent to all members of the group (e.g. class, team, student organization). Employees shall not use the private message feature of social media to contact students.
 - 2. Employees shall not give their private cell phone or home telephone number to students without prior approval of the Principal or District.
 - 3. Inappropriate contact via phone or electronic means is prohibited.

V. Privacy of Online Content

- A. At all times, and in the use of any form of communication, employees may not disclose information that is confidential or proprietary to the District, its students, or employees that is protected by personnel, student, or other data privacy laws.
- B. All photographs, videos, or work samples which may identify individual students require permission from the subject, or in the case of minor children, the parent or guardian.
- C. Employees are reminded that items placed online are never fully private. The Superintendent or designee may periodically conduct Internet searches to see if employees have posted inappropriate content online. When inappropriate use of computers, websites, or social media is discovered, the School Principals and Superintendent will promptly bring that use to the attention of the employee and may consider and apply appropriate disciplinary action up to, and including termination.
- D. In order to maintain safety, live-streaming video of students from classrooms and school spaces is prohibited without prior permission of the Principal or appropriate District administrator.
- E. When utilizing professional social media accounts and/or the District’s network, employees are responsible for following all applicable laws, regulations, District policies, school rules and codes of conduct, just as they are for other modes of communication. Employees should have no expectation of privacy with respect to electronic devices or digital media used in school or for school activities.

VI. Use of Social Media during School/Work Time

- A. Employees may use professional social media sites during school time to the extent that it does not interfere with the educational process and complies with the policies of the Franklin Public Schools.
- B. The use of personal social media sites during school and/or work time, and/or on the District's network, is expressly prohibited.

This policy shall not be construed to limit communications protected under M.G.L. c.150E, specifically, comments which involve protected, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. Furthermore, this policy shall not be construed so as to limit the First Amendment rights of all employees to engage in free speech when such speech involves a matter of public concern, is not made in the employee's official capacity as a District employee and does not possess the potential to affect the District's operations.

The provisions of Sections IV.A.1, IV.A.2, IV.A.3, IV.B.1, IV.B.2, and V.B of this policy shall not apply to communications that are exclusively among and/or between family members. Employees whose family includes students in the Franklin Public Schools should take special care to avoid potential conflicts of interest and violations of this policy through inappropriate contact with non-familial students via social media.

Legal Ref: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974; 603 CMR 23.00 et seq.; M.G.L. c.149, §52C; M.G.L. c.150E; M.G.L. c.66, §10

Cross Ref: AC-Discrimination/Harassment;
GBAB-Acceptable Use for Students
GBI-Political Activities of Staff
IJNDB-Internet Terms and Conditions of Use
JRA-Student Records
JRA-R-Student Records
JT - Electronic Device Policy
JU - Electronic Device Policy Between Students and Staff/Teachers/Coaches
Student Photo/Video Release in Student Handbooks

For First Read by School Committee 11/27/2018