

Anchorage School District

Social Media Guidelines

Social media includes the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily over the Internet to share information and resources. Social media can include text, audio, video, chat rooms, images, podcasts and other multimedia communications. Some examples of these electronic communications include, but are not limited to:

- Social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn)
- Photo and video sharing (YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Flickr, Snapchat)
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Social bookmarking (Pinterest, Reddit)
- Podcasting
- Text messaging or instant messaging
- Electronic mail (email)
- Telecommunications (cell phones, landlines and Web-based applications)

All these tools have become part of our everyday lives. They are how more and more people interact with each other. While these sites allow people to interact in ways never before seen, they bring with them a new level of responsibility for the user. Across the country and in ASD, employees – both in the public and private sectors – have done things online that have affected their careers. There are cases where employees have been disciplined or terminated because of something that appeared on a social media site or other electronic communication.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide employees with guidance on what they should and shouldn't do online. The goal is to help staff avoid any unintended situations that could potentially have an adverse effect on their employment status.

When using electronic communications tools, all district guidelines for acceptable use and appropriate boundaries still apply. Please reference these additional guidelines:

- Crossing the Line, Guidelines for Appropriate Adult/Student Boundaries
www.asdk12.org/forms/uploads/AdultStudent_Boundaries.pdf
- ASD Internet and Electronic Communications Guidelines
www.asdk12.org/informationtechnology/internetuse
- Internet Safety Guidelines
www.asdk12.org/edtech/internetsafety
- Code of Ethics of the Education Profession
www.asdk12.org/forms/uploads/PTPC_Brochure.pdf

Some additional points to be aware of when using social media tools:

- Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic media as they are for any other public conduct. This includes private accounts that are publically viewable.
- Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner when working with students and parents.
- If material posted for personal reasons interferes with an employee's ability to perform his/her job, it may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- All official communication between district staff and students should be handled through official district channels. For example, use district email, not a personal email account.
- Participation in social networking sites for work purposes must be done with the knowledge and approval of the employee's supervisor.
- Be familiar with the administration of the service. Specific attention should be paid to setting up privacy controls.
- Be familiar with your target audience when posting items online as some may be perceived as offensive to some recipients and may be a violation of state and/or district rules and policies.
- Never post information that is proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts) as it may be a violation of state and/or district rules and policies.
- Think before you complete a post or hit the send button.

The reality is that both the Internet and social networking sites are constantly changing. These guidelines are intended to give employees points to consider when using these tools. Common sense and professional decorum are a district expectation.

Guidelines for official school accounts

ASD supports the use of online social media to facilitate district programs and schools in more successful parent, community and student engagement.

The following guidelines are meant to provide guidance to schools, clubs, school-sponsored groups and sports teams regarding the official district use of social media and build on the overall Social Media Guidelines.

ASD understands the value of social media and its many benefits. The district currently has a Facebook page, Instagram account, YouTube channel and two Twitter accounts. ASD authorizes schools to open social media accounts. Communications Department staff provides in-person training to interested school staff and principals, as well as on-going support.

Setting up official school accounts

Prior to starting any social media account, the school must:

- Have principal approval to open the social media account.
- Principal must identify other staff member(s) to be administrators of the account, in addition to him/herself.
- Notify the Communications Department.
- School social media accounts must be created using an official district email account.
- It is not required but it is recommended that staff participate in an in-person training led by a member of the Communications Department. Training is conducted at the school at a time convenient to the participants.

Setting up official principal accounts

Principals and administrator can set up social media accounts to communicate with their stakeholders.

Principals and administrators must:

- Notify the Communications Department.
- Never direct message or private message with students.
- Principal must use an official district email account.
- Remember that this account is reflective of their position in the district and should not be used for personal use.
- In-person training is encouraged.

Expectations

Respect copyright and fair use laws. Be sure to follow the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others. Don't use images pulled from Google Images or other websites without knowing the terms of usage. If using a quote or language from someone else's work, provide links.

Be respectful. Don't use language that reflects poorly on the district or Anchorage School Board.

- Make sure communications are in good taste.
- Be sensitive when providing links to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.

Build community and positively represent the district. Always reflect the district in a positive light. Under no circumstances should negative comments be made about school board or administrative

decisions. Posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Don't comment on or forward unsupported information, like rumors and gossip.

Protect the brand. Only those authorized by the Communications Department may use ASD brand marks or logos in communications.

Keep personal views separate. Uphold the district's mission and values. Don't include political comments or comments on social issues. This includes changes to the account's photo or avatar in relation to political or social issues.

Follow through. If a promise is made on social media, that promise must be kept (in the same way as on other forms of communication). If a parent is told the principal will call, make sure it is followed through within a timely manner.

Allow and encourage comments. Users of the sites should be encouraged to comment about the posted content. Whenever anyone responds, it is a good thing that they are engaging with the district – even if it's about a negative issue. Ways to encourage the audience include posting questions, holding competitions or simply responding to their posts.

Spell check and proof read! There's nothing worse than spelling errors by school employees. Parents are very unforgiving of spelling errors and typos by the very individuals who are teaching their children how to read. Always use proper grammar, capitalization and punctuation. Always proof read messages before posting. Also, be mindful of not using education jargon or lingo. Not everyone knows the definition of EDS or RTI.

Own and correct mistakes. If a mistake is made, admit it and correct it quickly. Apologize if appropriate.

Take appropriate security measures. If an employee or delegate who contributes to a social media account is no longer employed at the school, he/she must be removed from having access to the account. All employees using social media channels should never share passwords and should not click on links from untrustworthy organizations or individuals.

Protect confidential student information. Do not publish, post, or release confidential student information.

Follow the media release guidelines. The guidelines set form in the ASD Media Release form apply to social media usage. www.asdk12.org/forms/uploads/MediaRelease.pdf

Use the disclaimer. The Communications Department will provide a disclaimer to post on a Facebook account. The disclaimer outlines the expectations of those visiting and commenting on district and school pages.

Stay cool. One of the hallmarks of social computing is creating dialogue. Unfortunately, people won't always agree on an issue. When confronted with a difference of opinion, express points in a clear, logical way. Don't pick fights. When making a correction, be sure to make it clear that it has been done.

Sometimes, it's best to ignore a comment and not give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response. However, dialogue is encouraged, hence the name "social" media.

Conclusion

When used correctly and thoughtfully, social media can be a valuable communications tool. Contact the Communications Department if you have questions about these guidelines, need support or to schedule a social media consultation.

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