

# Richland School District #400

## Social Media Guidelines

### **Purpose for Social Media Guidelines**

The Richland School District #400 (RSD) realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning.

RSD has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for employees, students and the school district community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that schools can discipline teachers if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. RSD social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social activities both personally and professionally and as such has created these guidelines as a staff resource. However, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by RSD teachers and students is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to the district's Responsible Use Policy (RUP) as well as Washington State and district public records retention schedules

By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, podcasts or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before engaging in any social media activities.

### **Personal and Professional Responsibility**

- RSD encourages teachers with a personal online presence to be mindful of the information they post. Your online behavior should reflect standards of honesty, respect, good judgment, and consideration that you would use with someone in person. Even if you delete specific information, be aware that it may still be public for a long period of time – therefore protect your privacy accordingly!
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying yourself as a RSD employee online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at RSD and Board policy.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the appropriate security settings for any social media (personal or professional) that you may use. Be sure that the settings are such that any personal content may only be viewed by your intended audience. By *posting* your comments, having online conversations, etc., on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world, be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what you 'say' online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.

### **Personal and Professional Responsibility (cont.)**

- It is inappropriate to use email, text messaging, instant messaging or social networking sites to discuss with a student a matter that does not pertain to school-related activities. Appropriate discussions would include the student's homework, class activity, school sport or club, or other school-sponsored activities. Electronic communications with students are to be sent simultaneously to multiple recipients, not to just one student, except where the communication is clearly school related and inappropriate for persons other than the individual student to receive. In the later situation, you must include another school employee, preferably your administrator, in the electronic communication.
- Engaging in social networking friendships on Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites is strongly discouraged with current students, and with parents or guardians of students. RSD recognizes that staff members may have students or parents of students that are family members or close personal friends. However, RSD cautions staff members against engaging in such social networking friendships with these individuals and the potentially perceived perception.
- Material that RSD employees post on social networks that is publicly available to those in the school community should reflect the professional image applicable to the employee's position, and not impair the employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents/guardians or impair the employee's ability to serve as a role model for children.

### **Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media**

#### **Be Transparent**

- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work, and what you do.

#### **Always a School Employee**

- Remember: the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. You will always be considered a RSD employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as an employee in what you say online.

#### **School Values**

- Represent the values that RSD holds true. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. All communications should be done in good taste. Build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Do not denigrate or insult others, including students, staff, administrators, parents, or other school districts. Consider carefully what you post through comments.

### **Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media (cont.)**

#### **Build Community/Positively Represent School**

- Represent RSD and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Respect the privacy and feelings of others. Under no circumstances should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyberbullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offense. Your post and comments should help

build and support the school community. Do not comment on nor forward unsupported information. You are responsible for what you post, even if on a personal page. Be certain that it is accurate. It is a good idea to monitor your profile page to ensure that all material being posted is appropriate.

### **Share Your Expertise**

- Write what you know about and be accurate. Add value to the discussion. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. A district's most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school.

### **Respond and Post Regularly**

- To encourage readership, post regularly. Don't post to your page and then not post for three weeks. Readers won't have a reason to follow you if they cannot expect new content from you on a regular basis. Respond to other's posts. Answer questions; thank people even if it is a few words. Make it a two-way conversation.

### **Respect and Responsibility**

- Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful of others' opinions in your posts or comments. You are responsible for the content you post. Do your tags, descriptions, and image portray you and RSD in a professional manner?

### **Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism**

- How you respond to a negative comment or criticism will say more about you and your character than what you post. When in doubt, it is best not to give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response publicly; perhaps a private response would be more appropriate. If you become aware of an inappropriate student post, notify your administrator. If a student's posts contain threats of violence, notify your administrator and/or law enforcement accordingly.

### **Spelling and Abbreviations**

- Any online post or comment should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Be cautious about using common abbreviations. When in doubt, define the abbreviation at least once in a post or include a definitions page on your site.

### **Copyright and Fair Use**

- Respect Copyright and Fair Use guidelines. Share what others have said by linking to the source and using embedded content. Be sure to cite your source when quoting. When using a hyperlink, confirm that link goes where it should and that the content is appropriate and it is your responsibility to maintain accurate links going forward

## **Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media (cont.)**

### **Personal Information**

- Be careful about sharing too much personal information. Do not share with a student your personal problems that would normally be discussed with adults. Be wise and don't share too much information. Teachers who use social networking to interact with students in an educational manner must find a way to interact without giving students access to their personal information and/or posts and to maintain appropriate professional distance. Many social networking sites allow

you to create “groups” or “pages” where you can interact with students without giving them access to your personal account. Policy and Regulation [5270, General Staff Responsibilities](#).

### **Student Information or Photographs**

- Personally identifiable information about a student should not be disclosed unless it is directory information or information exempted from the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements and district Policy 3600.

### **Video**

- The internet is becoming an increasingly popular educational tool and place to share personally created movies. You are responsible for all you do, say, and post online including videos. Anything you post online should represent you in professional manner as others will see you as connected to RSD. Anything you show in your classroom should be previewed by you in its entirety, prior to any student seeing the video. Consult a administrator if you feel the content may be questionable. [Policy 2311, Instructional Materials](#).

### **School Logos**

- Obtain school/district permission before using any school/district logo or image. School logos may only be used in a professional capacity and it is highly recommended when using social media resources that represents a school club, sport, program, department, etc., all images and colors should match the schools logo and/or mascot. No deviations are permitted.

### **Social Bookmarking**

- Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark.
- Be aware of words used to *tag* or describe the bookmark.
- Be aware of URL shortening services. Verify the “*landing site*” to which they point before submitting a link as a bookmark. It would be best to utilize the original URL if not constrained by the number of characters as in microblogs -- i.e. Twitter.
- Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as you do not control what appears on landing pages in the future.

### **District Recommended Social Network Sites**

While RSD recommends the following sites, it does not guarantee all of the content found on the sites may not be found objectionable by any person. Parents, teachers, educators and students are urged to notify a teacher or parent of any material found that is objectionable. Please be aware these sites may change or even be removed over time as well as new sites created.

#### **Social Media resources include, but are not limited to:**

- Blogs (Blogger, Wordpress, ELearnSpace, etc.)
- Wikis (Wikispaces, Google Sites, etc.)
- Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, Twiducate, Pinterest, etc.)
- Photo & Video Sharing (YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Diigo, Delicious, etc.)
- Podcasting and Vodcasting (MyPodCast, Audacity, GarageBand, etc.)

**Other District Approved Social Media Programs**

- [Ning \(http://www.ning.com/\)](http://www.ning.com/) - create your own social network
- [Google Apps for Educations](#) - documents, presentations, spreadsheets and forms
- [LinkedIn \(www.linkedin.com\)](http://www.linkedin.com) - professional networking site
- [VoiceThread \(http://voicethread.com/\)](http://voicethread.com/) - digital storytelling using images and voice capture online
- [SimplyBox \(http://simplybox.com\)](http://simplybox.com) - Share screen captures, organized as you want, with others