

Electronic Resources and Social Networking

The District recognizes that an effective public education system develops students who are globally aware, civically engaged and capable of managing their lives and careers. The District also believes that students need to be proficient users of information, media and technology to succeed in a digital world.

Therefore, the District will use electronic resources as a powerful and compelling means for students to learn core subjects and applied skills in relevant and rigorous ways. The District intends to teach technology use that reflects and anticipates its application in workplaces and other real-life settings. The appropriate use of the District's technology will enable educators and students to communicate, learn, share, collaborate and create; to analyze and solve problems; to manage their work and to take ownership of their lives.

Because the use of technology as a communication tool presents a relatively new frontier in public education, the District reminds all staff to review the Professional Educators of Montana Code of Ethics.

This Code, set forth by the Montana Department of Education, serves as a statement of the requirements for maintaining a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom. Staff is cautioned that the same relationship, exchange, interaction, information or behavior that would be unacceptable in a non-technological medium is equally unacceptable when brought about through the use of technology. In fact, staff should exercise extra caution when communicating through social media because of the potential for vastly increased dissemination, as well as the negative impacts on the learning environment and educational process brought about by communication indiscretions.

The District realizes that a certain degree of real-life connections and interactivity occurs between staff and students within an educational or living community. To provide an appropriate forum, the Board permits the following:

- The creation of administratively approved and sanctioned "groups" on social networking sites that allow the broadcast of information without granting students access to staff members' personal information; and
- The acceptance of student solicitations to be 'friends' or contacts on social networking sites.

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Since staff misuse of social media could be a source of major disruption to the educational environment, indiscretions could potentially lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member, up to and including termination or nonrenewal of contract of employment. In order to help define the parameters of conduct, the following activities are expressly forbidden:

- Emailing students other than through and to school controlled and monitored accounts;
- Soliciting students as ‘friends’ or contacts on social networking sites; and

Sharing information with students that would allow access to personal websites or other media, through which the staff member would post personal information or narrative, may subject the staff member to disciplinary consequences if the personal information or narrative is not appropriate given the professional relationship between a staff member and student.

Accessing social networking websites via district or personal technology equipment for individual use during school hours is prohibited, unless requested by administration or accessed during an employee’s authorized break time (lunch for certified staff; lunch or other authorized breaks for classified staff). Use of District equipment under any circumstances must be appropriate, and the District retains the right to inspect all use of its equipment. The posting of any private or confidential school district material on social networking websites is strictly prohibited.

The Board directs the Superintendent or his/her designee to create safe and secure electronic educational systems that support innovative teaching and learning, to provide appropriate staff development opportunities and to develop procedures to support this policy.

Cross Reference:	5013	Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation
	5223	Personal Conduct
	5255	Disciplinary Action
		Professional Educators of Montana Code of Ethics

Legal Reference:

Policy History:

Adopted on:

Revised on: 11 July 2016