

## **West Fargo Public Schools Social Media Guidelines and Administrative Policy for District Employees**

West Fargo School District recognizes that many of our staff, students, parents and community members are active social media users. As a school district, we are also incorporating social media as part of our communications strategy. These outlets provide new opportunities to promote the school district and build relationships with multiple audiences. Although various classrooms and groups may operate their own social media outlet, all West Fargo Public Schools social media accounts are a voice for the school district.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you to participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects your reputation and the reputation of West Fargo School District and successfully creates an online West Fargo Public Schools community. It is an expectation that everyone follows these guidelines when using social media to communicate consistently on behalf of the school district. These guidelines complement, but do not replace, any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet that are in place at West Fargo School District.

For the purposes of this document, social media includes, but is not necessarily limited to, social networking and media sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Flickr, Pinterest, and YouTube. It also includes blogs, comments on web sites, Smore, discussion forums, and any other activity online involving connecting or communicating with other users.

### **Affiliated West Fargo Public Schools Social Media Accounts**

All district-affiliated social media accounts must be registered with the Communications and Community Relations Department.

In order to have a school-affiliated social media account, staff members must:

- Create the account with their school-issued email address.
- Complete the social media survey and submit it to the Communications and Community Relations Department. Completion of the survey also indicates that you have read and understand the district's social media guidelines and administrative policy.

### **West Fargo Public Schools Social Media Directory**

Accounts that are open to the public are compiled into a central directory to ensure continuity in social media and allow easy access to the accounts for the West Fargo Public Schools community.

In order to be added to the directory, staff members must:

- Have a completed social media survey on file with the Communications and Community Relations Department.

- Discuss their social media plan with their supervisor and consult with the Communications and Community Relations Department if necessary.
- Keep in mind that a successful social media account takes time to maintain and requires staff resources to develop engaging content. Staff members must be willing to commit for at least one year of use of the selected social media tool. Inactive accounts (accounts that have not been utilized for three months or more) reflect negatively on the school district. The Communications and Community Relations Department may request inactive accounts to be taken down.

### **Your Personal Responsibility**

We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to those concerning non-discrimination, staff/student relations, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. We ask that you carefully consider the very public forum you are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and the West Fargo School District. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Seek to build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Avoid insulting others, including students, staff, parents, our extended school community, or other school districts. Do not use racial slurs, innuendos, obscenity or other inappropriate content. Avoid posting, sharing, commenting, or otherwise engaging in rumors or unsupported information. Represent the District and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. You are responsible for what you post and communications that would be deemed inappropriate or actionable if they occurred inside, or outside, of the classroom do not become acceptable merely because they are made online. Always bear in mind that once posted, you cannot take it back.

Once a social media account has been added to the directory and become active, staff members should understand the following guidelines to ensure the best experience for everyone involved.

- **Follow the rules.**
  - Make sure you understand the policies of the social media outlet you are using. Read the terms of service before beginning so you know the rules.
  - All West Fargo Public Schools' policies apply to social media outlets. Follow copyright and FERPA laws, as well as district policies. Be aware of other laws regarding confidential information about students or employees; do not post their personal information online.
  - To align your posts with FERPA laws, review your students' FERPA permissions before posting videos and photographs. Do not identify students by their names or the names of their parents. Do not tag students or parents in your posts.

- **Make it easy for people to find you.**
  - Increase exposure for your social media account by using West Fargo Public Schools in the title and avoiding acronyms. The district utilizes its Twitter handle (@WFPSchools) and hashtag (#wfpschools) to promote our social media posts.
  - Choose a recognizable profile picture that makes it easy for users to identify and relate to your group. The Communications and Community Relations Department has the official logo packages for West Fargo Public Schools that can also be utilized.
  
- **Create a management method.**
  - Designate a content manager for your social media account (this is oftentimes the principal, teacher or coach). Create a flexible schedule for posting timely content that is relevant to your audience. To develop a consistent flow of content, determine when and what you will post.
  - In some instances, it may be appropriate for students to be content managers for the social media account. However, all content posted is still the responsibility of the adult supervisor.
  
- **Manners matter.**
  - The content that you post reflects on the school district. Post respectfully and responsibly. Use correct grammar and write in complete sentences when possible. If you are ever unsure about the appropriateness of material to share on social media, check with your supervisor. If still unsure, contact the Communications and Community Relations Department.
  - You should also be mindful that everything you post is public and that once something is posted, you cannot take it back. In most instances, deleting content will not make it disappear; deleted content can still show up in online searches. With just the click of a button, other users can take a screen shot, re-post, or share your content with others. Even if you share your content with a very limited number of people, nothing prohibits your contacts from sharing the information you post.
  
- **Post content that is meaningful and relevant.**
  - Think about how the content might advance your initiatives and goals. Keep content fresh. Provide regular and timely updates, but don't overdo it. Keep in mind what is appropriate for the specific social media outlet that you are using.
  - Consider having an annual maintenance plan to ensure all photos, content, access and administrative privileges are accurate and updated.
  - Interact with users. Post content that encourages feedback and positive interaction. When possible and appropriate, include visual content — such as photos and videos — to increase engagement. Be friendly, helpful and informative. Connect users with resources. Link back to content throughout the district website to drive traffic back to WFPS.

- **Be Accurate.**
  - Make sure you have all the facts before you post. Double-check everything for accuracy. Link to your sources when you can and give credit where credit is due. Correct errors quickly and visibly. Posts often include timestamps and users will be able to see how quickly you respond.
- **Focus on West Fargo Public Schools.**
  - Do not comment on other institutions or legal matters. It is likely that people will post negative comments on your social media outlet, but you should respond to them professionally. Be respectful of others' opinions and do not suppress disagreement. Use it as an opportunity to correct misinformation and turn a negative into a positive.
  - Delete profanity and other offensive content. Consider posting the language below, or something similar, on your social media account to inform users of your expectations for use:

*West Fargo Public Schools welcomes participation through our social media channels and encourages you to interact with us often. We hope to provide a forum for dialogue among the many diverse voices of our district and we encourage comments about the content you find here. Posts containing personal attacks, profanity, nudity, hate speech or illegal material are prohibited. We reserve the right, at our discretion, to remove any post or to revoke a user's privilege to post to our page. Please be aware that we cannot immediately review every comment posted on the page. Opinions expressed in non-WFPS posts are not necessarily those of the district and its employees, and we cannot guarantee the accuracy of these posts. Posts are to be used only for noncommercial purposes. You may not solicit funds or promote commercial entities. All content posted by WFPS is the property of WFPS and is subject to copyright laws.*

- **Customize posts for the social media outlet you are using.**
  - It is OK to post about the same topic on multiple outlets, but tailor the text for the audience. Mix it up. Make the posts different to avoid repetition. Do not link status updates to post automatically from one social media account to another.
- **Track your success.**
  - Analyze and organize your content to improve your social media account. Use analytic tools to assess your progress and keep track of posts that users respond to positively.

For additional information regarding this policy, or the use of social media in your classroom or building, please contact the Communications and Community Relations Department.

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