

Policy Number:

Employee Use of Social Media

Code No. **403.7.2**

The Cedar Falls Community School District expects its employees to model responsible and appropriate conduct, both at school and away from school. Employees' use of social media forms, including text, audio, video, images, podcasts, social networking websites including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and similar sites now or in the future, and personal web pages or blogs, and electronic messaging, are subject to the normal requirements of legal and ethical behavior within the District community. Employees should be guided by applicable laws, District policies, and sound professional judgment when using social media.

District / Professional Use of Social Media

An employee using social media in his or her professional capacity as an employee of the District and/or pursuant to his or her official duties shall be honest about his or her identity, and be thoughtful and respectful when submitting or posting messages. In addition, employees using social media for such purposes should adhere to the following guidelines:

- An employee must identify himself or herself and position held with the District. Never create an alias or be anonymous.
- The "cfschools.org" address attached to an employee's name and/or email implies that he/she is acting on behalf of the District and, as such, employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.
- Any information shared via social media regarding the business of the District, whether using personal or District equipment, may be considered a public record. All information communicated through or maintained on the District's system is subject to being monitored or inspected at any time.
- Employees must comply with District policy on *Use of Information Resources*.
- Absent parent permission, staff members may not share, send, or post pictures, text messages, e-mails or other material that personally identifies District students. Employees may not use images of students, e-mails, or other personally-identifiable student information for personal gain, profit, or any other non-school related purpose.
- Staff members shall not submit or post confidential information about the District, its students, alumni, or employees; one must assume that most information about a student is protected from disclosure by both federal law (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and state law (Iowa Code Section 22.7(1)). Disclosures of confidential or protected information may result in liability for invasion of privacy or defamation.

- By their very nature, social media forms such as social networking websites and web pages or blogs are not truly private. To minimize unintended disclosure of information, staff must set and maintain social networking privacy settings at the most restrictive level.
- Internet search engines can find information years after it was originally posted. Comments can be forwarded or copied and archival systems can save information even if a post was deleted; staff must assume that a message or image which is posted or communicated can never be completely deleted.

Personal Use of Social Media

The District recognizes the prevalence of social media used for personal purposes and acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment to speak out on matters of public concern. However, the District also has the right to regulate the speech of employees when that speech in certain circumstances, such as the personal use of social media, interferes with the employee's ability to perform his or her duties or affects the District's ability to efficiently provide educational services. Accordingly, it is essential that employees conduct themselves in such a way that their personal use of social media does not adversely affect their position with the District. In addition, employees using social media for such purposes should adhere to the following guidelines:

- If an employee is participating on a social networking website, web page, and/or blog for personal use, the employee may identify himself or herself as an employee of the District. However, the employee must state that he/she is expressing personal opinions, not those of the District.
- If identifying oneself as a District employee, remember that one's actions will reflect not only on you, but also on the District.
- Staff shall never pretend to be someone else and submit or post information concerning the District.
- Staff shall not use the District's school logos or mascots, photographs, or any other such graphic representations or images, or link any personal page on a social networking website, or other personal web page to any District website or material.
- If submitting or posting information or comments that are not related to the District, a staff member's activities may still result in professional repercussions. Such actions include, but are not limited to, posting of photographs or information which violates federal or state law and regulations and/or District policies and rules.

- While an individual does not have control of what others may submit or post on social networking websites; staff members must be aware that conduct in one's private life may affect one's professional life. Be vigilant about what others post about you or on your page and, if necessary, take steps to remove comments that pose a risk to your status with the District.
- It could be viewed as inappropriate for District employees to communicate with current students enrolled in the District through social media, such as through electronic messaging or any social networking website. This includes becoming "friends" on such sites. Employees should refrain from engaging in social interaction with current students enrolled in the District through personal pages on social networking websites and other personal web pages or electronic messaging.
 - Employees may use professional web pages that are created through the District and used solely for school-related purposes. Notify parents of intentions to use this media to communicate with students and the intended purpose of such communications. All ethical expectations for appropriate employee/student relationships must be followed.
- Staff members shall not provide personal contact information to students currently enrolled in the District. Only provide an official District email address and/or telephone number as a way to communicate with students or parents regarding District business.
- During the work day, participating on any personal social media, regardless of whether such participation is through District or personal equipment shall be limited to professional purposes.

Disciplinary Action

Employees who fail to comply with this policy or who make other inappropriate use of social media may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. If an employee has any questions about the application of this policy, he/she should consult his or her supervisor.

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