

Social Networking Sites

BP 4419.5

The same professional standards that dictate an adult should never be alone with a student in an isolated space (e.g., one student, one teacher together in a classroom with the door closed before or after school operating hours) shall also apply to online environments. The District encourages students and employees to use District-provided websites, blogs, and email for communication and collaboration.

Employees who believe mainstream social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, etc.) add educational value that cannot be attained without the use of such sites shall receive permission to use a personal social networking site for educational purposes from the school principal and from the District's Chief Information Officer, or designee. Employees shall communicate their intent to use the personal social networking site for educational purposes to the parents/guardians of their students.

Professional staff using personal social network sites shall:

- Not initiate friendships with students;
- Not discuss students or coworkers or publicly criticize District policies or personnel; and/or
- Not post images that include students without parental release forms on file.

Inappropriate Communication

The District is aware that the reputations and careers of students and educators have been damaged due to inappropriate communications between parties. Therefore, it is the intent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District to ensure all District employees and students are made aware of District expectations and procedures regarding proper use of all electronic communication devices when used to communicate with each other.

District employees shall be required to comply with all District policies, procedures, and practices regarding direct communications with a student. Any failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Extreme circumstances may constitute willful neglect of duty. Should an employee's failure to comply also violate federal or state law, the Superintendent, or designee, shall report such violation to the proper authorities.

Violations

Any violation of this policy shall be immediately investigated by the employee's supervisor. The investigation shall include date(s), the name of the person reporting the allegation, and the specific allegation made. The supervisor shall meet with the employee to document his or her response to the allegation. The employee shall be required to cooperate fully with the investigation. The supervisor shall provide all information about the investigation to the Superintendent, or designee.

Violations of this policy or any implementing regulations or procedures may result in discipline of the employee up to and including termination of employment.

- *Electronic Communication*: Includes any direct communication facilitated by computers, voice or text-based telecommunication devices, or both, as well as by those devices that facilitate indirect communication using an intermediate method including, but not limited to, Internet-based social networks. It shall also include transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectric, or photo-optical system and pertains to both personal and District-issued devices.

Definitions

- *Electronic Mail*: The transmission of text-based information or communication by use of the Internet, computers, a facsimile machine, a pager, a cellular telephone, a video recorder or any other electronic device or means sent to a person identified by a unique address or address number and received by that person.
- *Computers*: Pertains to any all computers.
- *Social Networks*: Locations on the Internet where users may interact with other users (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and other social networks available on the Internet).
- *Improper or Inappropriate Communications*: Any communication between employee and student, regardless of who initiates the communication, that may be viewed as derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, simple fraternization, or suggestive in nature.