



# Student Social Media Guidelines

The Sarasota County School District allows schools and the District Communications and Community Relations Department to use online social media to improve communication among the District, families, students, staff and other members of the Sarasota County Schools community. This document contains guidelines to ensure that participants in social media communications understand and follow procedures that will make the use of online social media a positive and productive experience for everyone involved.

## **A. Definitions**

“Social media” include various Internet sites and technological tools that enable users to share information and resources easily. Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other electronically transmitted communications. These media provide information from various published sources and allow for interaction through user-generated content.

“Technology” includes the Internet and any device used to access it or otherwise share information electronically, including, but not limited to, computers, notebooks, telephones, cell phones, personal digital assistants, pagers, MP3 players such as iPods, USB drives, wireless routers, or other wireless communication devices.

“District technology” is technology owned or provided by the Sarasota County School District.

“Personal technology” is any device that is owned by the user or provided by a third party other than the District.

## **B. Representative Social Media Sites**

These guidelines pertain primarily to social networking sites. Some examples include the following:

- Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)
- Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>)
- YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>)
- Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com>)
- Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>)
- Blogs (Web Logs)
- Any District-related social media account or page

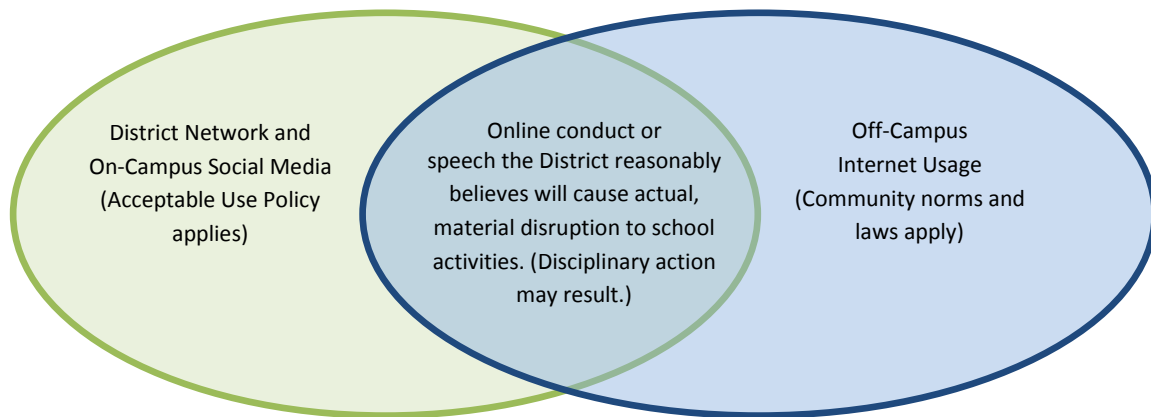
## **C. Social Media and Internet Use Guidelines**

Although students enjoy free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution, those rights are subject to certain limitations. Access to District technology is a privilege, not a right. The guidelines in this document are intended to present students and families with direction for responsible, safe, ethical and effective use of social media.

Student use of District technology for electronic communication is governed by the District Acceptable Use Policy, which describes consequences for violations. Students should not expect privacy in the content of their personal files on the District Internet system or other District technology, including email. District technology may be used for educational purposes only. Use for entertainment purposes such as personal blogging, instant messaging, on-line shopping or gaming is not allowed.

Use of personal technology may violate the District’s Acceptable Use Policy if school or District authorities reasonably believe the conduct or speech has caused or will cause actual, material disruption of school activities or a staff member’s ability to perform his or her job duties.

Although off-campus Internet use is generally unrelated to school, in some circumstances courts have held that the off-campus electronic communications may be connected enough to school or District interests to result in either student or staff-member discipline. The figure below illustrates the potential overlap in the use of District and personal technology.



#### **D. Student Use of Technology**

**Control of Personal Information** – Students are expected to protect personal information that would allow a recipient to locate the student, including his or her family name, home address or location, school address or location, work address or location, or phone number.

When using District technology, students shall not disclose their personal contact information or the personal contact information of others. Students are encouraged to follow these rules in their use of personal technology as well. If student use of personal technology causes disruption to the school community, the student may be disciplined.

**Cell Phone Use** – Students may possess electronic devices such as cell phones, smart phones, laptops, electronic tablets, e-readers and other devices designed to receive and send an electronic signal or store digital data in school, on school property, at after-school activities and at school-related functions, provided that during the student day the electronic devices remain powered off and concealed from view.

Students may not use electronic devices on school property or at a school-sponsored activity to access or view Internet websites that are otherwise blocked to students at school. In special circumstances with permission from a supervising District employee, a student may use an electronic device for communicating. The requirement that electronic devices must be turned off will not apply when the electronic device is being used for an educational or instructional purpose with the teacher's permission and supervision.

Students may not possess electronic or recording devices at their desks, clipped to their belt, in their pocket, or anywhere within reach during testing, even if the device is turned off or the student is not using it. If a student is found to be in possession of any electronic device during testing, his or her test must be invalidated.

Possession of an electronic device by a student is a privilege that may be forfeited by any student who fails to abide by the terms of District policy, or otherwise engages in misuse of this privilege. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or confiscation of the electronic device. If the electronic device is confiscated, it will be returned to the student's parent or guardian as defined by Florida statute.

The student who possesses an electronic device is responsible for its care and security. The District is not responsible for preventing or investigating the theft, loss, damage or vandalism to electronic devices brought on to District property.

### **Inappropriate and/or Illegal Uses of Technology**

The following activities are prohibited uses of District technology, including computers and other hardware, software and the District network:

- Taking or posting photographs of individuals without their knowledge or consent
- Using a computer, video recorder, camera or program in any manner other than for appropriate educational purposes
- Accessing, copying, transmitting or distributing threatening, offensive, inflammatory, pornographic, obscene or otherwise inappropriate images, language or materials, including screen savers, backdrops, or pictures on school District-owned technology or on any other electronic device brought to school
- Transmitting or copying material in violation of federal, state, or local law, School Board policy or regulation, or Code of Student Conduct, including, but not limited to, copyrighted material; test questions or answers; unauthorized student work products; trade secrets; or computer viruses, "worms" or "trojans."
- Committing plagiarism; cheating; or reproducing tests, textbooks, teaching materials, or other intellectual property without expressed written permission
- Using technology for commercial activities unless explicitly permitted by the School Board
- Conducting private business or illegal activity
- Using email, instant messaging, web pages, or other technology to threaten, disrupt, or interfere with the safety and welfare of the school community
- Using technology to threaten, harass or bully other students or staff
- Using profanity, obscenity, epithets or other language that violates generally accepted norms of appropriate public discourse

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- Accessing online telecommunication systems other than those authorized and assigned as student educational systems
- Downloading or printing music, games, videos or inappropriate files during school hours
- Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to the District's network, computer servers, or data files
- "Hacking" into the school's computer systems or modifying computer settings without permission
- Attempting to log on to the District's network using another person's identity
- Bypassing or attempting to bypass the District's filtering software
- Modifying the District's original pre-set software or hardware, including, but not limited to, loading software applications not authorized by the District; changing the computer name; changing or removing operating system and extensions; altering security/filtering software; altering the pre-loaded operating system or application; dismantling the computer for access to internal parts; or accessing or altering passwords
- Vandalizing data
- Using network access to destroy information that belongs to others
- Using technology in any other manner not listed above but determined to be inappropriate by staff or administrators.

**Violations will result in serious disciplinary actions and may include arrest and prosecution if a criminal law is broken. Examples of such criminal violations would be computer hacking or trespass, harassment or threats via computer, or computer fraud.**

**System Security** – Students are responsible for their individual District account and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from using their account. Under no circumstances should a student provide his or her password to another person. Students shall immediately notify a teacher or administrator if they identify a security problem.

**Resource Limits** – Students shall not download large files without permission of a teacher or administrator. Students shall not misuse District or school distribution lists or discussion groups by sending irrelevant messages.

Because online content can be spread in mere seconds to a mass audience, the District encourages students to ask themselves before posting any information online whether they would be comfortable having the information printed in a newspaper alongside their photo.

**If you would not bring it to a college admissions or job interview,  
do not post it online!**

## **References**

This document was developed by the Sarasota County Schools Communications Department in collaboration with the Sarasota County Schools Information Technology Department and the Office of the Superintendent.

The guidelines were adapted from the Student Social Media Guidelines of the San Diego Unified School District, which developed them in consultation with a consortium of legal, educational and social media experts.

Thanks to the San Diego Unified School District for their support and permission to use this document.

**Policies:** 532; Zero Tolerance of School-Related Crimes  
5322; Prohibition Against sale or Possession of Alcohol or Drugs  
5323; Bullying and Harassment  
5371; Gang Control Policy  
5.38; Student Use of Electronic Devices

**Procedures:** Parent and Student Handbook  
Section 3; Behavior  
Acceptable Use Policy

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**GDL**