

Oklahoma City Public Schools Social Media Guidelines

A. Applicability

These Guidelines apply to all OKCPS employees.

B. Professional Social Media Use

1. Maintain Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts

- a. OKCPS employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate professional and personal e-mail addresses. OKCPS employees should not represent themselves as an employee of the district while using their personal e-mail address for professional social media activities. Employees should use a professional e-mail address that is completely separate from any personal social media they maintain. Regular and continuous use of a personal e-mail address, while representing themselves as an employee of the district for professional purposes, may result in OKCPS considering the corresponding use of that address as a professional account.

2. Communication with OKCPS Students

OKCPS employees who work with students and communicate with students through professional social media sites should follow these guidelines:

- a. Professional social media sites that are school-based shall be designed to address instructional, educational, or extra-curricular program matters;
- b. Each school year, site administrators shall ensure OKCPS parents are notified about the professional social media activities their children may participate in. OKCPS will instruct parents to contact Communication Services at (405) 587- NEWS (6397) with any questions or concerns.

3. Guidance Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

- a. OKCPS employees should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in OKCPS professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site;
- b. OKCPS employees should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using professional social media sites.
- c. When establishing professional social media sites, supervisors and employees should consider the intended audience for the site and consider the level of privacy assigned to the site, specifically, whether the site should be a private network (for example, it is limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school) or a public network (for example, anyone within the school, a larger

group within the OKCPS community or individuals outside of the OKCPS can participate). It is recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.

- d. Professional OKCPS social media sites should include language identifying the sites as professional social media OKCPS sites to differentiate from personal sites. For example, the professional sites can identify the OKCPS school, department, or particular grade that is utilizing the site.
- e. Departments that wish to create a social media presence for their office should consult with Communication Services at (405) 587- NEWS (6397) for additional guidance prior to creating a social media presence.
- f. Professional social media sites that are non-school-based, such as a central office department, shall have a reasonable relationship to the mission and function of the OKCPS office creating the site.
- g. OKCPS employees should use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites with the objective that professional social media communications only reach the intended audience. However, OKCPS employees should be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, each employee has a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.
- h. Professional social media communication must be in compliance with existing OKCPS policies and applicable laws, including, but not limited to, prohibitions on the disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language.
- i. Personally identifiable student information required to be kept confidential under Federal and State law, and district policy, shall not be posted by OKCPS employees on professional social media sites. If images of students are to be posted online there must be a photo/media consent form on file at the school for each child featured.
- j. OKCPS students who participate in professional social media sites may not be permitted to post photographs or videos featuring other students without the approval of the OKCPS employee responsible for the site.
- k. It is not recommended that OKCPS employees post photos of other OKCPS employees on professional social media sites without prior permission of the photographed employee.

4. Monitoring of Professional Social Media Sites

- a. The Superintendent shall designate those staff persons responsible for monitoring and providing feedback regarding employee professional social media sites. The monitoring responsibilities include

reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis. If questionable communications or behaviors are discovered on professional social media sites, the individual will be notified.

If OKCPS employees decide to create a professional social media site and they are notified of questionable communications or behavior on their site, they may remove the material or contact their supervisor.

- b. To assist in monitoring, as a recommended practice to the extent possible, the OKCPS employee should examine the default settings for comments on professional social media sites and in general use more restrictive custom settings. The OKCPS employee creating the site should intentionally move to more public settings as dictated by need. If the default setting for comments is turned on, allowing any user to post a comment without review, the comments on the site should be monitored regularly.
- c. Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media.

5. Press Inquiries

- a. Any press inquiries received via professional social media sites should be referred to Communication Services at (405) 587-NEWS (6397).

C. Personal Social Media Use

1. Communication with OKCPS Students

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, OKCPS employees should not communicate with students who are currently enrolled in OKCPS schools on personal social media sites. OKCPS employees' communication with OKCPS students via personal social media is subject to the following exceptions:

- a. communication with relatives about non-school issues;
- b. if an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case the OKCPS employee should notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.

2. Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

OKCPS employees should exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

- a. As a recommended practice, OKCPS employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilized.

- b. It is not recommended that OKCPS employees “tag” photos of other OKCPS employees, OKCPS volunteers, OKCPS contractors or OKCPS vendors without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.
- c. The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites, in violation FERPA, is prohibited.
- d. OKCPS employees are discouraged from using the OKCPS’s logo or making representations that their personal social media sites speak in an official OKCPS capacity.
- e. Notwithstanding the guidelines above, postings by an OKCPS employee may be protected activity under applicable labor laws and collective bargaining agreements.

D. Applicability of OKCPS Policies and Other Laws

1. These Guidelines provide guidance intended to supplement, not supersede, existing OKCPS policies. Users of professional social media sites must comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, including, but not limited to the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) (<http://business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security/children>), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>), and intellectual property laws.
2. These Guidelines are not designed to serve as a code of conduct for social media use and do not constitute separate bases for potential discipline. However, all existing OKCPS policies, regulations, and laws that cover employee conduct may be applicable in the social media environment, including, but not limited to, the OKCPS Acceptable Use Policy and relevant state and federal law.

E. Additional Inquiries

This document is meant to provide general guidance and does not cover every potential social media situation. Should any questions arise, please contact Communication Services (405) 587-NEWS(6397) or Legal Services at (405) 587-0350. As these Guidelines address rapidly changing technology, OKCPS will annually revisit these Guidelines and update them as needed.

In addition to the Guidelines, OKCPS Communication Services will offer regularly scheduled training for District staff.

OSSBA Policy DHAC