



Lawrence Public Schools Policy: Social Media Use

Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) values District, school, classroom, parent, student and community voice and engagement. To that end, LPS supports, as one of many tools for communication, the responsible use of social media. District employees who engage in work-related or personal use of social media are responsible to read, understand and adhere to this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, social media shall be defined as any online-based tools and applications used to share and distribute information, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram.™

This policy provides guidance for professional and personal use, including training and community participant guidelines. Additionally, LPS staff and student Code of Conduct, Non-Discrimination, and Acceptable Use policies apply to all social media activity, as do student and staff confidentiality laws and guidelines.

1. Work-Related Use of Social Media

The goal of LPS-affiliated social media is to share news, updates, photos, and videos about our District, students, schools, staff and upcoming events, as well as to engage with our stakeholders openly and respectfully.

- LPS-affiliated social media includes any account, site or page, regardless of platform, created for the purpose of communicating information about and on behalf of an LPS school, program, club, team, initiative or similar entity.
- All content should be reflective of and related to LPS' educational mission, values and goals.
- Only staff authorized by the Office of the Superintendent may post on behalf of LPS on LPS-affiliated social media. Similarly, only staff authorized by school leaders or their respective department heads may post on behalf of specific schools or programs.
- To ensure that LPS Media is well positioned to assist staff in launching or maintaining a successful, positive and productive LPS social media presence, managers for all LPS-affiliated accounts, including those for specific schools, classrooms, clubs, sports and/or programs, are required to register all new or existing accounts with LPS Media.
- Team, class, or student organization pages, accounts, or groups will be created only in conjunction with the coach, classroom teacher or faculty advisor. All such groups must include the appropriate administrator as a member, who will maintain responsibility for the account, including registering it with LPS Media. (see above)

- Staff should be mindful that engagement in LPS-affiliated social media activity is participation in a public forum by a government agency, and content could constitute a public record.
- The use of private messages between students and staff on LPS-affiliated accounts is prohibited.
- It is understood that staff, students, families and the community can join the conversation by liking, sharing and commenting on news and photos on LPS-affiliated social media. To ensure a vibrant and productive online community, staff who are social media managers must be aware of the following expectations and guidelines for community participation:
 - Comments and posts must be appropriate for an educational environment and for community members of all ages.
 - Comments deemed offensive to any member of the school district or community will not be tolerated. Inappropriate remarks and profanity will be removed, and the poster may be blocked from LPS-affiliated sites.
 - These platforms are not intended to replace regular communication channels for sharing individual issues and concerns between students, families and schools. While the District makes every effort to respond to direct questions in a timely manner, comments regarding a personal issue with the District, a school or staff member may be removed. Personal issues or concerns can be brought to District or school staff, or shared by email at LPShelp@lawrence.k12.ma.us.
 - Comments and posts should be related to the news and stories shared by the District, school or program.
 - Posts regarding product sales or promotions are strictly limited to LPS-affiliated fundraisers, and must be approved by the superintendent, school leader or designee.

2. Personal Use of Social Media

- Employees' personal use of social media should not be attributable to LPS, a specific school or employee's job function in the District. Employees' use of and comments made on social media sites are subject to First Amendment protections. However, any personal use made of social media sites outside of work assignments or responsibilities, where such personal use is related to subject matter pertinent to LPS or the employee's specific school, must be conducted in such a manner that a reader would not think that the employee is speaking for or on behalf of his or her specific school or the District.
- Employees' use of such sites must be in compliance with the applicable portions of LPS' relevant policies, including harassment and discrimination, code of conduct, student confidentiality and others. These policies could apply to employee actions performed outside of normal working hours at third party sites. This section serves as a reminder that certain off-duty conduct may be in violation of state ethics law, code of conduct, professional standards, or other District policies and be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

3. LPS Staff Training:

The Superintendent and school principals will annually review with staff and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining appropriate decorum on social media. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. The review and orientation will include policy review as well as training in the following areas:

- Student and staff confidentiality, including understanding of District media opt-out policy
- Improper fraternization with students on personal social media or by other electronic means, including:
 - Teachers and staff may not use their personal social media to friend, follow, like, “direct message” or otherwise communicate one to one with current students
 - Social media should not replace traditional means of communication
 - Any inappropriate contact via phone or electronic device is prohibited
- Inappropriate content, including items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs and alcohol, and sexual content
- Monitoring practices and penalties for improper use of District computers and technology
- The possibility of penalties, including termination from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in online conduct

The District may periodically conduct internet searches or audits of LPS-affiliated social media online activity. Inappropriate use of computers, websites or the internet will be promptly addressed, with the possibility of disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Approved: March 2021