

FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Reg. No. 100-08
Subject: RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	Issued: 3/14/18
Preparing Office: Office of the Superintendent	Amended: 10/7/20

I. Policy 115

II. Philosophy

Social media is an important tool for facilitating community engagement, encouraging collaborative communications, and enhancing education. Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) believes that social media can be used professionally to foster relationships with the community, model positive digital citizenship for staff and students, and promote and celebrate school system and student success. FCPS employees may use social media and other digital tools to help equip each and every student to be an empowered learner.

Consistent with this philosophy, all employees and students are expected to use social media in a civil, respectful, and appropriate manner that does not infringe on the rights of others and in a manner that is consistent with the mission of the school system.

III. Definitions

Instructional Use of Social Media

- Use of social media by FCPS students, supervised by FCPS teachers or staff, for instructional purposes.

Organizational Use of Social Media

- Use of social media by FCPS employees for official business (FCPS work-related purposes). In these instances, community members may reasonably believe that employees are representing FCPS or its views and positions and that employees are communicating with community members (including students, parents, and others) in an official capacity. FCPS employees use these accounts to perform their FCPS duties, conduct official business, represent FCPS, and share information about FCPS programs, services, and activities on behalf of the organization.

Personal Use of Social Media

- Use of social media by FCPS employees for non-work-related purposes. In these instances, it is clear that employees are not representing FCPS in any way and that employees are not communicating with community members (including students, parents, and others) in an official capacity.

Social Media

- Any form of electronic communication through which users communicate interactively. Social media include, but are not limited to, blogs and microblogs (like Twitter), application software (like Instagram), and social networking websites (like Facebook).

IV. Procedures

A. Expectations for the Instructional Use of Social Media

1. Instructional social media accounts created, used, or maintained by employees are the property of FCPS and may be modified or deleted by FCPS at any time.
2. FCPS reserves the right to exercise editorial oversight and control over all FCPS instructional social media.
3. Principals and administrators are ultimately responsible for instructional social media created for or used by their school or department, just as they are responsible for other instructional tools used in a school or department.
4. Authorized FCPS staff (including, but not limited to, the Executive Director of Public Affairs; the Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation; and the Director of Technology Infrastructure) will identify social media appropriate for instructional purposes and ensure that all FCPS employees can access the approved list.
5. Authorized FCPS staff will update the list of social media approved for instructional purposes regularly throughout the school year.
6. Periodically, FCPS may approve pilot studies to explore new learning materials or approaches; exceptions to this regulation may be made for that purpose by the Superintendent or his/her designee.
7. Employees who use approved social media for instructional purposes or for extracurricular activity related purposes will:
 - a. Receive permission to do so from their supervisor.
 - b. Treat social media as an extension of the classroom.
 - c. Inform parents of the social media tools being used, how their children will use or participate in the use of the tool, and the class expectations for appropriate behavior and conduct online.
 - d. Share expectations for appropriate conduct and behavior online with students and actively monitor to ensure that those expectations are being met.
 - e. Evaluate the tool to ensure that it meets curricular needs and is appropriate for the developmental level of students.
 - f. Ensure that the use of the tool adheres to all relevant Board policies and FCPS regulations, particularly related to acceptable use, anti-bullying, and data privacy expectations. (Cross-reference FCPS Regulation [400-73](#) *Responsible Use of Technology – Students*, FCPS Regulation [400-18](#) *Electronic Devices – Student Use*, and FCPS Regulation [400-48](#) *Bullying-Harassment-Intimidation Complaint Process for Students*)
 - g. Ensure that students are accessing social media through the FCPS network (regardless of whether students are using personal devices or FCPS-owned devices).
 - h. Configure privacy settings of the tool to the most restrictive level possible to limit the visibility of content to the intended audience.

8. Employees may not use any social media platform for instructional purposes that allows the anonymous posting of content or the inability to trace the sender or recipient of messages.

B. Expectations for the Organizational Use of Social Media

1. Organizational social media accounts created, used, or maintained by employees are the property of FCPS and may be modified or deleted by FCPS at any time.
2. FCPS reserves the right to exercise editorial oversight and control over all FCPS organizational social media.
3. Principals and administrators are ultimately responsible for organizational social media created for or used by their school or department, just as they are responsible for other communications from their school or department.
4. When communicating with community members (including students, parents, and others) in an official capacity, FCPS employees must use an FCPS approved communication platform or system.
5. Employees who wish to develop or maintain an organizational social media presence must:
 - a. Receive permission to do so from their supervisor.
 - b. Adhere to FCPS social media naming conventions which are updated annually by the FCPS Social Media Coordinator and available online at fcps.org
 - c. Share up-to-date administrative access rights (e.g. log-in information and passwords) with FCPS's Social Media Coordinator, as requested.
 - d. Acknowledge that FCPS sites may be monitored to ensure compliance with all relevant Board policies and FCPS regulations.
 - e. Adhere to student privacy and other relevant laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines when using social media.
 - f. Refrain from photographing or sharing images of students who are not authorized by their parents or guardians to be photographed or appear in media. This restriction does not apply to extracurricular activities or events that are open to the public.
 - g. Regularly and routinely monitor their sites to ensure they are appropriately maintained.
 - h. Ensure that the use of the tool adheres to all relevant Board policies and FCPS regulations, particularly related to acceptable use, anti-bullying, and data privacy expectations. (Cross-reference FCPS Regulation [400-73](#) *Responsible Use of Technology – Students*, FCPS Regulation [400-18](#) *Electronic Devices – Student Use*, and FCPS Regulation [400-48](#) *Bullying-Harassment-Intimidation Complaint Process for Students*)
6. Employees will not use an organizational social media presence to generate, discuss, share, reference, comment on, re-post, link to, or otherwise disseminate:
 - a. Anything that could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, improper, defamatory, demeaning, or disparaging to students, parents, community members, or fellow employees or anything that could be viewed as bullying or contrary to the mission of the school system.
 - b. Confidential, private, or proprietary items, including but not limited to privileged information related to assessments, curriculum, personnel issues, or student information.

7. Employees will not use any social media platform for organizational purposes that allows the anonymous posting of content or the inability to trace the sender or recipient of messages.
8. Any inactive or obsolete organizational social media accounts will be deleted by the employee who maintains the account. Because it is possible for a domain name or social media handle or tag could retain value for future use, the employee will consult with his/her supervisor and/or the FCPS Social Media Coordinator before deleting an account.

C. Expectations for the Personal Use of Social Media

Employees may elect to have a personal social media presence; however, it is important that employees recognize they are often viewed as public ambassadors for education and community role models based on their employment with FCPS. Consequently, the following expectations and advice are provided:

1. Employees are encouraged to be mindful of relevant Board policies and FCPS regulations in their personal use of social media.
2. Employees should be aware that they may be identified by the community as working for and representing FCPS even on their personal social media, and users can search by anything on the profile.
3. Employees are encouraged to monitor comments posted on their page and delete any inappropriate language or content.
4. Employees are encouraged to set privacy settings so only “friends” can review their posted information.
5. When using personal social media, employees should not:
 - a. Use FCPS logos or FCPS copyrighted material without the express written consent of FCPS.
 - b. Accept or list FCPS students as “friends” or followers, or knowingly allow students access to their personal social media (unless the student is related to the employee).
 - c. Post content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs (i.e. such as vulgar or obscene language, materials, photos, or links that may be considered inappropriate or unprofessional).
 - d. Use FCPS devices or engage in personal social media activity during work hours, with the exception of duty-free lunch periods.
 - e. Communicate in an official capacity with FCPS students or their parents/guardians.
 - f. Generate, discuss, share, reference, comment on, re-post, link to, or otherwise disseminate content related to identifiable FCPS students (unless the student is related to the employee and provided the content is not improper or inappropriate).
 - g. Speak on behalf of the views or positions of FCPS.
 - h. Conduct FCPS business.
 - i. Libel or defame FCPS students or parents, the Board of Education of Frederick County, individual Board members, or other FCPS employees.
 - j. Engage in any activity or conduct that violates Board policies, FCPS regulations, or federal, state, or local laws.

V. Monitoring, Reporting, and Violations

The Superintendent or his/her designee may routinely monitor use of social media as it relates to Sections A and B above to ensure that FCPS employees are following this regulation.

Anyone who suspects that this regulation has been violated by an FCPS employee should contact the appropriate supervisor or administrator. Concerns can also be emailed to fcpsmd@fcps.org or shared through private messaging on FCPS social media or the FCPS website, fcps.org.

Any employee who violates this regulation may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Note: Employees are encouraged to review social media information and resources available on InsideFCPS: <https://insidefcps.fcps.org/socialmedia>

Approved:

original signed by

Theresa R. Alban
Superintendent