

Social Media and Internet Use Policy

The Dracut Public School District acknowledges the role that various emerging methods of communication play in 21st century learning. As such, teachers, students, and parents engaging in these methods of communication for collaboration and learning is a necessary component. It is important to build an environment of trust and individual accountability. Therefore, members of the Dracut Public School District must understand that information shared through social media or a related method is a reflection of the larger school district.

The Dracut Public Schools provides the following rules of use and social media guidelines meant to encourage employees to participate in relevant online social activities in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

The administration will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the online, digital world. Such reminders shall include the possibility of disciplinary action, including dismissal from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in online conduct.

The Superintendent or designees may periodically conduct internet searches to determine if teachers have posted inappropriate materials. When inappropriate use of computers, websites and/or social media is discovered (in violation of this policy and/or the district's Acceptable Use Policy), the administration will promptly bring that inappropriate use to the attention of the staff member, and may consider and apply disciplinary action up to and including termination.

General Guidelines:

1. Inappropriate contact via e-mail, phone or other social media is prohibited.
2. It is inappropriate to post items with sexual content.
3. It is inappropriate to post items exhibiting or advocating use of tobacco products, drugs, and/or alcohol.
4. Adherence to all applicable privacy laws and regulations must be followed at all times.
5. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
6. Protect your privacy. By using social media sites you are broadcasting to the world. Even the strictest privacy settings may become public.
7. Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark.
8. Be aware of words used to tag or describe the bookmark.
9. Be aware of URL shortening services. Verify the landing site to which they point before submitting a link as a bookmark. It would be best to utilize the original URL if not constrained by the number of characters as in micro blogs.
10. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of character used in the school setting.

11. The use of anonymizing services, networks, plug-ins, or applications is prohibited.

Employee Guidelines:

1. It is improper to fraternize with students using social media/networks, or via cell phone, texting, or telephone.
2. All e-contacts with students should be through the district's email/telephone system or through a depersonalized social media platform, set up through the district's existing network, except in emergency situations.
3. Extra-curricular advisors and/or coaches wishing to establish a social media platform must do so by using a Dracut Public Schools email address to do so. In such cases, the password will be provided to the district in a manner it proscribes.
4. All contact and messages by extra-curricular advisors and/or coaches with group/team members shall be sent to more than one member (i.e. captains, officers), except messages concerning medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the messages will be copied to the school principal and/or the athletic director.
5. Employees may not list current students as "friends/followers" on networking sites.
6. Teachers shall not give out their private cell phone or home phone numbers without prior approval of the district.
7. Official business of the school should occur through existing school provided platforms (phone, email, authorized social media platforms).
8. Before posting photos and videos, parental authorization to utilize a student's image must be sought.
9. Authorization to utilize a colleague's image must also be sought.
10. Dracut public school employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online.
11. The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. If you identify yourself as a Dracut employee you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the community. It is not recommended that you identify yourself as a Dracut employee on your personal social media.
12. When contributing online, do not post confidential student information.
13. Disclaimers should be placed on school-based social media.
14. It is required that teachers moderate content contributed by students in the course of an assignment and report any inappropriate material.
15. No addresses or phone numbers should appear on school-based social media.
16. When uploading digital pics or avatars that represent yourself make sure you select an appropriate image. Images reflect on your professionalism.
17. Remember a social networking site is an extension of your personality, and as such an extension of your professional life and your classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photo in the wall, is it really correct to put it online?
18. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and again refrain from any comment that could be deemed unprofessional including personal views and beliefs.

Student Guidelines:

1. Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
2. Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your teachers and parents.
3. Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image or it is under *Creative Commons* attribution.
4. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
5. If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your teacher right away.
6. Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in the project and/or access to future use of online tools.
7. Be aware that consistent with School Committee Policies (see harassment, discrimination, bullying) actions taken on social media platforms, whether school based or private, that impact the school environment, may lead to disciplinary action.

References:

603 CMR 23.00

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)

CROSS REFERECNE: IJNB, Technology Acceptable Use Policy