

Social Media Use Guidelines

As a learner centered school district, the MSD of Decatur Township recognizes the need to adapt to modern methods of communicating with our students. The MSD of Decatur Township has adopted the following guidelines to protect and provide direction to employees when engaging in online social media activities. These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with, and do not supersede the Professional Boundaries Guidelines. Any social media outlets used with students are considered an extension of the classroom. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate on social media. **The MSD of Decatur Township requires employees to set up separate social media accounts for personal use.**

The MSD of Decatur Township does not violate employee freedom of speech legal standards, but employees should know that there are limits to these legal standards. For example, school districts may discipline employees for online postings that substantially disrupt or reasonably can be foreseen to substantially disrupt school operations. Any conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow employees, or otherwise adversely affects the MSD of Decatur Township may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. The MSD of Decatur Township Guidelines do, however allow employees to participate in online social activities both personally and professionally and the MSD of Decatur Township will not violate the legal rights of any employee.

These guidelines apply to MSD Decatur Employees. The MSD of Decatur Township will take steps to ensure that other MSD Decatur stakeholders, including MSD Decatur vendors, volunteers and independent contractors are informed of these guidelines.

MSD Decatur Technology Department is responsible for monitoring their employees' professional social media sites. This includes reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis.

Employees are encouraged to use existing district tools, such as Canvas for professional social networking purposes. If an employee would like to use other social media outlets to communicate with students, please follow the bulleted guidelines on the following page:

Official Department, School, Team and Club Accounts: In order to maintain continuity as roles change, all official department, school, team and club accounts must be registered with the technology department. Please provide the web address, username and password to the technology department and review the bulleted requirements below. Club sponsors are ultimately responsible for content posted, liked or shared on any student-run club accounts affiliated with MSD of Decatur Township.

Professional Accounts: A professional account is any account in which the administrator identifies his/herself as an MSD Decatur employee AND communicates with students or parents about MSD Decatur classroom or extracurricular activities. The MSD of Decatur Township requires district employees to do the following when officially engaging in Social Media with students via professional accounts:

- Include the district, school or team logo on your page.
- Set the highest appropriate security and privacy settings for photos, comments and followers.
- Be aware of the age restrictions for your outlet and do not encourage students to interact in a forum that is not age appropriate.
- Know which of your students have opted out of FERPA. Do not post, or allow others to post photos of or information about those students on your account.
- Unfriend and unfollow any accounts that are not appropriate for or relevant to the classroom. Including, but not limited to accounts related to sex, drugs, alcohol, racial or ethnic jokes, anything that could be considered to promote bullying or harassment.
- Keep your messages relevant to your role within MSD Decatur Township. Notifications about classroom assignments, practices, sporting event scores, etc. are relevant. Vacation photos are not.
- Do not discuss with a student a matter that does not pertain to school related activities.
- Electronic Communications should be sent simultaneously to multiple recipients, not to just one student.
- Do not use social media to communicate about confidential matters, even through direct messaging.
- Review all policy updates from your social media source to ensure that this continues to be an appropriate outlet for educational use.
- Make arrangements to freeze activities on your accounts when you know you will be unable to monitor the dialogue. (For example- if you will be out of the country or on medical leave).
- Ensure that anything you like, follow, friend, or share is relevant to and appropriate for the classroom.
- Encourage attendance at upcoming events, but do not invite individuals join you. Make your statement broad so it cannot be interpreted as a personal invitation
- Encourage students, parents and community partners to follow and friend your professional account.
- Do not allow students and parents to follow and friend your personal account.

Your professional social media presence should utilize a professional email address and be completely separate from any personal social media presence maintained by the administrator of this page. Continuous use of a personal email address for professional purposes, including professional social media, will result in MSD Decatur considering this account and its correspondence to be professional and subject to this policy and the Professional Boundaries Guidelines.

Privacy: MSD Decatur 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, employees have an individualized responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site(s) they choose to utilize.

Personal Social Media Accounts:

As the MSD of Decatur Township requires employees to separate their personal and professional social media accounts, please note the following:

- The FERPA notification does not authorize you to use student photos or information on your personal accounts.
- Please use your discretion when discussing work related topics as statements can easily be copied and publicized.
- You can be held responsible for activity on any social media outlet that negatively affects the school environment or your ability to perform your job duties.