

# NEWTON

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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### NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' School Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines Fall 2016

#### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Technology and Social Media can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication and learning. This technology, such as email, school-based websites, learning and data systems and educational apps, can provide both educational and professional benefits.

The School Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines (“Guidelines”) establish the protocol for staff to create and use technology, educational apps, websites, and social media for educational purposes (“Professional Use”). These Guidelines also provide guidance regarding recommended practices for professional social media communication among Newton Public Schools (“NPS”) employees,<sup>1</sup> as well as social media communications between NPS employees and NPS students and families.

The Newton Public Schools has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is communicated on behalf of the Newton Public Schools on its websites and social media sites.

These Guidelines also address recommended practice for use of personal social media by NPS Staff.

#### 2. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

*Social Media:* Social media is understood to be content created by individuals, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet and any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest and other video and photo capturing applications.

*Professional Social Media:* Is a work-related social media activity, including, but not limited to school-based sites linked to and accessed through a district provided Email account such as First Class. This includes classroom, athletics and other extra-curricular activities. For example: a NPS Principal establishing a Facebook page for his/her school; an NPS teacher establishing a blog for his/her class; the Human Resources Department creating a LinkedIn or Facebook page; a coach or advisor using a Twitter account.

*Personal Social Media:* Is a non work-related social media activity (e.g., a NPS employee creating his/her own Facebook page or a Twitter account for his/her own personal use.) Please reference Section 4B of this document for guidance in using personal social media accounts.

#### 3. APPLICABILITY

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<sup>1</sup> NPS employees include but are not limited to: teachers, administrators, teachers’ aides, behavior therapists, service providers, or other school and professional staff, networks, superintendents, central staff, school committee members, coaches, custodians, and extracurricular leaders.

These Guidelines apply to all NPS employees. The NPS will take steps to ensure that other NPS stakeholders, including vendors, volunteers, and independent contractors are informed of these Guidelines.

#### **4. GENERAL GUIDELINES**

##### **A. School Website and Professional Social Media Use**

###### **1. General Guidelines**

- a. The establishment and use by an NPS school, department or employee of NPS website or social media sites are subject to approval by the Superintendent or his/her designees.
- b. NPS websites and social media sites shall be administered and monitored by individual department site administrators jointly approved by Principals or individual department heads and the Superintendent or designee. The Director of Information Technology and Library Services has the right to monitor sites created with NPS accounts.
- c. NPS websites and social media sites must make clear that they are maintained by NPS and that they follow NPS School Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines.
- d. Wherever possible, NPS websites and social media sites should link back to the official NPS website or school/department web pages for forms, documents, online services, NPS guidelines, applicable policies, and other information necessary to conduct business with NPS.
- e. All NPS websites and social media sites shall adhere to relevant federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations and policies including, but not limited to, Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), and federal and state student records laws (FERPA, 603 CMR 23.00).
- f. The website or social media account should be linked to and be accessible through a district provided Email account.
- g. NPS Information Technology Department reserves the right to review content on NPS school websites and social media sites to ensure adherence to the NPS School Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines and the interests and goals of NPS.
- h. NPS reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of the School Web Publishing and Social Media Policy or Guidelines or any applicable NPS policies, rules, and/or state or federal laws, regulations as well as comments or other content on topics or issues not related to NPS' business.
- i. The Newton Public Schools' website at [www.newton.k12.ma.us](http://www.newton.k12.ma.us) will remain the primary and predominant Internet presence.
- j. NPS websites and social media sites are subject to Massachusetts public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations and policies. Any content maintained in social media format that is related to NPS' business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure.
- k. Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media.

1. PTO's and other ad hoc groups and organizations must comply with the NPS School Web Publishing and Social Media Policy Guidelines and the Photo, Video, Recording Guidelines as stated in Massachusetts State Law and federal laws and regulations and comply with any applicable NPS Opt-Out and Media Release forms.

## 2. Maintaining Separate Professional and Personal Email Accounts

- a. NPS employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate professional and personal Email addresses. As such, NPS employees should not use their personal Email address for professional social media activities, rather, employees should use a professional Email address that is completely separate from any personal social media they maintain. Regular and continuous use of personal Email address for professional purposes, including social media use, may result in NPS considering that Email address, and the corresponding use of that address as a professional account.
- b. If a Social Media or other Internet site used for professional purposes requires an Email account and password, your NPS Email address must be used.

## 3. Content Guidelines

- a. As a public entity, the Newton Public School employees or agents of NPS should abide by certain standards, including those standards detailed below, to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
- b. Content perceived as containing inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on NPS' websites and social media sites and is subject to removal and/or restriction by site administrators, the Superintendent, or his/her designees. Inappropriate content is defined by the NPS Technology and Online Acceptable Use Policy and Guidelines as well as those contained in these Guidelines.
- c. Prohibited content includes but is not limited to:
  - i. Profane, obscene, violent or pornographic content and/or language;
  - ii. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, religion, age, family status, military status or source of income;
  - iii. Content used to harass, discriminate, threaten, defame, demean, intimidate or otherwise constitute personal attacks;
  - iv. Content in support of, or opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot measures;
  - v. Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to, advertising of business or products for sale or any use for private financial gain or fund-raising for any non-school sponsored purpose whether profit or not-for-profit;
  - vi. Content that violates any federal, state or local law, rule regulation or School Committee Policy or Guidelines;
  - vii. Encouragement of illegal activity;
  - vii. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;

- viii. Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as, but not limited to copyright, or any party;
  - ix. Content not related to the original post or the business of NPS;
  - x. Content that represents an employee's personal views as those of the Newton Public Schools or that could be misinterpreted as such; or
  - xi. Content that violates generally accepted rules of E-mail or computer etiquette and/or professional conduct.
- d. Content regarding a student shall not be posted on any NPS website or social media site unless there is a signed Media and Publishing Release on file for the student for the current school year.
  - e. Content posted by a member of the public on any NPS website or social media site shall be the opinion of the commenter or poster only, and publication of content does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Newton School Committee and/or Newton Public Schools, nor does such content necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of Newton School Committee and/or Newton Public Schools.
  - f. NPS reserves the right to deny access to NPS websites and social media sites to any person who violates the NPS Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines, at any time and without prior notice, or take other appropriate and reasonable responsive action.
  - g. Site administrators reserve the right to monitor NPS websites and social media sites for content in violation of NPS Web Publishing and Social Media Guidelines or other NPS policies, rules, practices or laws and regulations and remove or require removal of said content.
  - h. When an NPS employee responds to a comment using a professional account, in his/her capacity as an NPS employee, the employee should do so in the name of the NPS school or department. The NPS employee shall not share personal information about himself or herself or other NPS employees except as required by NPS' business. NPS employees shall not share personal and/or student record information about NPS' students in accordance with the requirements of federal and state student record laws and regulations.

#### 4. Communication with NPS Students

NPS employees who work with students and communicate<sup>2</sup> with students through school-based websites or Professional Social Media sites should only use professional social media sites that are school-based and designed to address reasonable instructional, educational, or extracurricular program matters<sup>3</sup>.

#### 5. Guidance for Creating School-Based Websites and Professional Social Media Sites

- a. NPS employees should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or professional workplace. The same standards expected in NPS professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the

<sup>2</sup> "Communicates" as used in these Guidelines, refers to activity, including, but not limited to, "friending," "Following," "commenting," and "posting messages" using social media sites.

<sup>3</sup> NPS employees should use school-based professional social media sites that involve NPS students for professional purposes only.

classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site;

- b. NPS employees should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using school website professional social media sites.
- c. When establishing school-based websites and 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 NPS community can participate or individuals outside of the NPS). It is recommended practice for school websites and professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.
- d. To the extent possible, based on the educational data system or application or social media site being used, NPS supervisors or their designees should be given separate administrator rights providing limited access to the professional social media accounts established by NPS employees.
- e. NPS employees should obtain their supervisor's approval before setting up a professional social media presence or school-based website. This approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- f. Supervisors and their designees are responsible for maintaining a list of all school-based websites and professional social media accounts within their particular school or office.
- g. Professional NPS social media sites should include language identifying the sites as professional social media NPS sites to differentiate from personal sites. For example, the professional sites can identify the NPS school, department, or particular grade that is utilizing the site.
- h. NPS employees should use privacy settings to control access to their school-based website or professional social media sites with the objective that professional social media communications only reach the intended audience. However, NPS 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.
- i. School-based websites and professional social media communications must be in compliance with existing NPS 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.
- j. No personally identifiable student information may be posted by NPS employees on school-based websites or professional social media sites that are open beyond the classroom, which may include, for example, a "buddy" class in another country. If images of students are to be posted online there must be a Media Release form on file at the school for each child featured.
- k. NPS students who participate in school-based websites or professional social media sites may not be permitted to post photographs or videos featuring other students without the approval of the teacher or other NPS employees responsible for the site.

## **B. Personal Social Media Use**

- i. Communication with NPS Students

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, NPS employees should not communicate with students who are currently enrolled in NPS schools on personal social media sites.

ii. Guidance Regarding Personal Media Sites

- NPS employees should exercise caution, common sense, and good judgement when using personal media sites.
- As a recommended practice, NPS 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.
- Personal Social Media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption at school and/or the workplace, and can be in violation of NPS policies, rules, regulations, and the law.
- The posting or disclosure of student information or student work via Personal Social Media sites, in violation of applicable laws and policy, is prohibited.
- NPS employees shall not use the NPS logo or make representations that their Personal Social Media sites speak in an official NPS capacity.
- Notwithstanding the guidelines above, postings by a NPS employee may be a protected activity under applicable labor laws and collective bargaining agreements and/or the Constitution of the United States of America.