



Procedures and Guidelines for Social Media Use & Text Messaging by Employees of The School District of Volusia County

Effective: August 1, 2016

The Volusia County School District realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning. To this aim, the District has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for instructional employees and the school district community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that online postings cannot disrupt school operations. All employees are encouraged to participate in online social activities in support of student learning and promoting his/her school campus or department. But it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by VCS employees is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to District Policy 518, *Use of Electronic Information and School Office Equipment*. By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog, wiki and/or podcast.

All social media and text messaging conducted for school business and instructional purposes are considered a public record. A record is a record regardless of its physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received in connection with the transaction of official district and/or school-related business. An electronic record is any information that is recorded in machine readable form.

In accordance with School Board Policy 518, *Use of Electronic Information Services and School Office Equipment*, these procedures are intended to support employees of the School District of Volusia County in use of social media and text messaging in the course of their duties.

VCS-related Accounts vs. Personal Accounts

Employees who maintain VCS-related social media accounts and/or VCS-generated text messaging are acting as representatives of the district. As such, they must refrain from allowing personal or political viewpoints to dictate the kind of information they share. Employees will not use derogatory language when posting on behalf of the district/school, and will maintain a positive and friendly tone. Employees are encouraged to share often, and to be genuine, but they must always carry themselves with professionalism. Social media posts, once active on the site, are considered public information.

Personal social media and text messaging are not considered VCS-related accounts. However, while these personal accounts may represent your personal views and opinions, if they are used for official district or school-related business, they **are** considered a public record. Refer to section: “Personal Social Media and Text Messaging”

District-level Social Media Accounts:

The district will maintain social media accounts for the purpose of district business to share general news and information with the public. These are authorized by the superintendent.

- Employees who manage these social media accounts shall regularly maintain and update the account(s).
- Employees who maintain these social media accounts are acting as representatives of the district. They must refrain from posting personal or political opinions and will not use derogatory language.
- Examples of acceptable information to post on these social media accounts are:
 - ✓ News about activities and events within the district;
 - ✓ Weather and other emergency information;
 - ✓ District approved videos; and,
 - ✓ Pictures of activities and events. Care must be taken to not post pictures of students who have an Opt-Out form on file (form #2012-022-VCS).

School-level Social Media Accounts:

The purpose of these accounts is for the school to share general news and information with the public about that individual school or the district.

- The Principal must designate an employee to maintain the account and link to the district-designated archive program.
- In the event of a public records request, these archived posts must be provided to appropriate district personnel.
- Information on these social media accounts shall be professional.
- All social media accounts shall be regularly maintained and updated.
- Employees who maintain these social media accounts are acting as representatives of the district.
- They must refrain from posting, reposting, “liking”, or other promotion of personal or political opinions.
- Employees will not use derogatory language when posting information.
- Examples of acceptable information to post on these social media accounts are:
 - ✓ News about activities and events related to the school;
 - ✓ Weather and other emergency information;
 - ✓ School approved videos; and,

- ✓ Pictures of activities and events. Care must be taken to not post pictures of students who have an Opt-Out form on file (form #2012-022-VCS).

Individual Employee Official Use of Social Media Accounts

Employees are not required to initiate a social media account. In the event that an employee wishes to initiate a social media account for official use to disseminate educational information to their students and parents and/or guardians, the following shall apply:

- Social media account(s) must be approved by the school principal or designee and maintained in compliance with these procedures.
- The employee will maintain the account and link to the district-designated archive program.
- Employee must document communication with parents outlining student participation in the social media platform for classroom use.
- Communications between student and teacher on social media account must be limited to official school-generated educational accounts.
- In the event of a public records request, the social media content must be produced upon request by school or district official.

Personal Social Media Accounts

Personal social media and text messaging are not considered VCS-related accounts. However, while these personal accounts may represent your personal views and opinions, if they are used for official district or school-related business, they *are* considered a public record. The simplest way to comply with public records laws is to use school accounts when conducting school business.

Examples of official district or school-related business are: school event information, faculty meeting information, classroom blogs, homework information, any form of student feedback, student behavior, or student-produced content, etc. Employees shall not engage in private messaging exchanges with students on personal social media account(s).

In the event of a public records request, the personal social media content **that addressed official district or school-related business** must be produced upon request by school or district official.

Employee Text Messaging

The use of text messaging for official district and/or school-related business is considered a public record.

District/School Text Messaging platforms

All text messaging applications provided by the district or utilized by school administration, are public record, regardless of device from which a message was sent. Examples of these applications may be, but are not limited to: Remind, Class Messenger, Class Dojo, Connect Ed Messaging Center, et al. These messages are usually archived by the provider and can be accessed by the employee in the case of a public records request.

Personal Employee Text Messaging

Personal text messaging accounts are not considered VCS-related accounts. However, while these personal accounts may represent your personal messages, if they are used for official district or school-related business, they ***are*** considered a public record.

Examples of official district or school-related business are: school event information, faculty meeting information, homework information, any form of student feedback, student behavior, or student-produced content, etc. Employees shall not engage in private text messaging exchanges with students on personal social media account(s).

In the event of a public records request, the personal text messaging content **that addressed official district or school-related business** should be produced upon request by school or district official.

District-provided Cell Phones

Employees who have been issued a district cell phone understand that the same rules for electronic usage in policy 518 are in effect for all electronic communications made from the district device.

Archiving Solutions

To assist staff with archiving social media communications made on behalf of official district or school business, the district recommends an application called **Archive Social**. Every school and district department has identified a Social Media Contact who can provide on-site assistance with archiving social media content.

To assist staff with archiving text messages made on behalf of official district or school business, the district has purchased archiving software called **iExplorer** software. This product provides an archiving solution for employees using either a district-issued iPhone or personal Apple device. This software can be downloaded to a district computer via the Software Center icon. The Apple device is then connected to the district computer for archiving. Currently, there is no district solution for Android devices. This document will be updated upon procurement of a

solution. Employees using an Android personal device to communicate official district or school business must retain and archive these communications in the event of a public records request.

More information on both products, iExplorer and Archive Social, is available to all employees via a brief, self-paced course in myPGS (course #70737).