

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Code: GBEEA

The Rangeley Lakes Regional School (the Board) recognizes that social media has become an important means of communication with potential pedagogical value. Social media can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This Policy sets forth expectations for school employees when using social media for **school-related** and **personal purposes**. Employees are expected to preserve the integrity of the learning environment and shall maintain professional boundaries with students at all times.

"Social media" means technology and/or Internet-based tool(s) for sharing and/or discussing information among users, and includes, but is not limited to, web pages, social networking sites and applications, blogs, forums, educational applications accessible through the web and/or through applications on phones, computers, and/or tablets, image sharing applications, and social news sites. Some common examples include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google, Wikipedia, Instagram, Snapchat, Yik Yak, and Pinterest and Slack. District sponsored sites without external visibility such as Google Classroom are educational by definition and are thus not considered social media for the purposes of this policy.

Rangeley Lakes Regional School staff should be aware that any information shared privately with a recipient could be redistributed by such recipient, without knowledge or consent. Please keep in mind that nothing posted online is ever truly "private."

A. Approval Procedure for School-Related Social Media

The use of social media for school-related purposes requires pre-approval in accordance with this policy.

A school employee who desires to use social media for school-related purposes shall submit a proposal and request for approval to their building principal/supervisor and superintendent/designee. Proposals for the school-related use of social media should include: the name of the social media service; information about what, if any, information the service collects and/or what would be provided to the service; an articulated educational purpose for the service. Applications must also indicate how use of the social media is appropriate to the students' ages, level(s) of understanding, and range(s) of knowledge. Use of social media with students is limited to grades six and higher.

The building principal/supervisor and superintendent or designee may approve, deny, or approve with modification of the proposal. The decision of the building principal/supervisor and superintendent or designee will be in writing and shall be final. Any later modifications to a proposal that has been approved must also be pre-approved by the building principal/supervisor and superintendent or designee. The building principal/supervisor and superintendent or designee may withdraw his or her approval at any time for any reason.

Approved proposals for the school-related use of social media shall be re-submitted for review annually.

School-related social media does not create, nor is it intended to create a public or limited public forum.

B. Terms of Use

The school-related use of social media approved in accordance with this policy shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Content on approved social media shall at all times comply with school unit policies, procedures as well as with any applicable state and federal laws (including confidentiality laws).
2. School employees shall only use their district-provided (i.e. work-issued) email addresses (and not their personal email address(es)) for approved social media. Employees must use a district-approved texting service to text students. If a district- approved texting service is unavailable, then employees may use personal texting services to text students for school-related events (e.g. athletics or class trips), with the supervisor of the activity included in the message. The Superintendent will annually review the availability of texting services.
3. The Principal or designee may monitor student use of the approved social media and shall remove content that violates school unit policies, procedures and/or state or federal laws. Any inappropriate use of approved social media shall be reported to building administration/and Technology Director.
4. The school unit, including, but not limited to, the Superintendent or designee, may monitor any approved social media for compliance with applicable policies, procedures, and/or laws, and take action in the event of non-compliance, including, but not limited to, removing offending information and/or posts and/or prohibiting users from continuing to use the social media at issue. Employees have no expectation of privacy in approved social media, which may be searched at any time in accordance with applicable laws and policies/procedures.
5. All approved social media, and uses thereof, must protect student and employee privacy as required by applicable state and federal laws and Rangeley Lakes Regional School policies and procedures.
 - a. At no time shall personal information about students or any other information that is confidential under state or federal law appear on approved social media unless a signed Parent/Guardian Agreement to Publish Student Information Form is on file for the student for the current school year.
 - b. Approved social media will also not include any information that indicates a physical location of students that is not otherwise publicly available information (e.g., scheduled and publicized interscholastic sports contests) at any given time.
 - c. The only personal information about employees that should appear on approved social media are the employee work-issued email addresses and/or telephone numbers.

6. All use of approved social media must follow any terms of use for the particular social media being used.
7. All approved social media must provide a link back to the official Rangeley Lakes Regional School website if providing forms, documents, access to online services available through the Rangeley Lakes Regional School website, school policies, and procedures, and/or other information needed to conduct business with Rangeley Lakes Regional School.
8. Approved social media must clearly provide that it is monitored by Rangeley Lakes Regional School and that any use must comply with all applicable district policies, procedures, and rules.

C. Prohibited Uses and Content

A list of unacceptable uses and content guidelines for approved social media are included in the “Prohibited Uses” section of the Acceptable Use Policy IJNDB.

D. Personal Use of Social Media

The Board understands that many school employees use social media for personal purposes on personal time. Employees shall keep their professional social media presence separate from their personal social media. Employees shall not use work time, school unit technology, or their work-issued email address for the personal use of social media.

When using personal social media, employees shall, in no way, claim to represent the school, school activity, club, district, or unit.

School employees are expected to exhibit professional decorum on social media and shall not engage in conduct that violates Board policies, procedures, and guidelines; which adversely affects their capacity to serve as a role model for students; or which distracts substantially from or disrupts the educational process or the operations of the schools.

E. Staff-Student Relations

School employees are prohibited from “friending” students (other than their own children, children with whom they have a family relationship, children that they work with through an outside organization such as Scouts or a church group) or engaging in any other interactions on social networking sites or through any digital applications (outside of any school-approved activity).

Employees are prohibited from texting students below the 9th grade or students whose parents or legal guardians have opted the student out of texting as a means of staff-student communication, except where the staff believes it’s necessary for the safety or well-being of the student.

Employees are prohibited from establishing inappropriate personal relationships with students. Examples of inappropriate relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers; texting students from personal phones or calling students on personal cell phones or allowing students to make personal calls to them unrelated to homework, classwork or school activities (such as sporting events, clubs, etc.); sending inappropriate pictures to students; and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet or in writing.

F. Violations

Violations of this policy may result in the withdrawal of approval to utilize social media for school purposes and/or disciplinary action, depending on the circumstances of each case.

G. Training of Staff

The Superintendent/Designee will be responsible for communicating the content of this policy to staff annually and providing appropriate training on this policy

Cross Reference: GCSA – Employee Computer and Internet Use
 GCSA-R – Employee Computer and Internet Use Rules
 IJND – School Website
 IJND-R –School Website Guidelines
 IJNDB – Student Computer and Internet Use
 IJNDB-R – Student Computer and Internet Rules
 JRA – Student Education Records and Information

Adopted: 10.11.2022