

# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

## EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

4126

Procedure No.

August 12, 2021

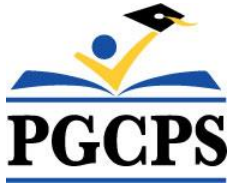
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- I. **PURPOSE:** Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) recognizes that schools and employees may be interested in developing a social media presence to communicate with students and parent(s)/guardian(s) beyond the normal school day, to improve the school’s ability to reach out to students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the local community, or to provide reasonable or necessary updates on school programs, course offerings, and extra-curricular activities. Employees are required to comply with the following guidelines in creating or developing a social media presence for professional use purposes.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of authorized social media used by PGCPS employees is for conducting school system business only and the fostering of the legitimate exchange of information among and between staff, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the community at large regarding instruction, programs, services, and activities. As role models for students and the community, PGCPS expects that employees will maintain a professional tone in content posted on authorized social media sites.

PGCPS reserves the right to remove inappropriate content posted on any PGCPS regulated social media site at the school system’s discretion at any time. PGCPS may further make insertions disclaiming opinions or authorship of any statement posted on any PGCPS regulated social media site.

III. **DEFINITIONS:**

- A. Social Media Site – Any online or Internet-based platform that allows interactive communication between persons or entities on social networks, blogs, websites, application software, Internet forums, and wikis.
- B. Professional Social Media Presence – Access and use of social media sites for a bona fide work-related purpose, whether school-based or non-school based.
- C. Personal Social Media Presence – Access to and use of social media sites by employees for non-work-related purposes, including establishing the employee’s own personal presence on social media sites. In these instances, the employee’s presence is not as a representative of PGCPS. Further, the employee is not authorized to communicate in his or her employee capacity with PGCPS students, vendors or contractors with PGCPS, parent(s)/guardian(s), volunteers or other stakeholders on social media sites in the employee’s personal capacity.
- D. Improper or Inappropriate Communication – Any communication by an employee with or concerning a student or the student’s parents/guardians -



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regardless of who initiates the communication - that may be viewed as derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, fraternizing or suggestive in nature, or unlawful. Photos or symbols exchanged between employees and students conveying the same message are also improper or inappropriate even if no words are used.

E. Misuse of Social Media – Whether on or off school grounds, the use of social media in a manner that:

- demeans, condemns or berates others, including students, parents/guardians and staff;
- incites violence of any kind;
- disrupts the operation and/or instructional program of the school;
- embarrasses, defames, harasses or bullies others, including students, parents/guardians and staff (as “harass” and “bully” are defined by Administrative Procedure 4170 Discrimination and Harassment, and Administrative Procedure 5143 Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation);
- suggests dating, a sexual relationship or any inappropriate interactions with students, as defined and prohibited by Administrative Procedure 4218 and 4219; or
- includes any other conduct that violates the Student Code of Conduct, Board Policy, Administrative Procedure, or local, state or federal laws.

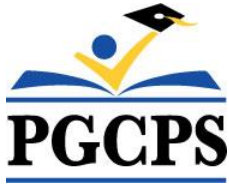
F. Students – Current PGCPS students or students in any school system.

G. Staff or Staff Member – includes any full or part-time employee, temporary employee, substitute, contractor, coach, advisor or volunteer of PGCPS.

#### IV. **PROCEDURES:**

##### **A. Approved Sites**

PGCPS acknowledges the rapid change and advancement of technology, which can be used in productive and innovative ways for instructional purposes. As the Chief Executive Officer’s designee, the Chief Information Officer shall:



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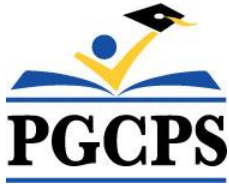
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1. Identify the social media sites, applications and software deemed appropriate for instructional purposes on the PGCPS network or on PGCPS devices (see Attachment); and
2. Discontinue access to any designated social media site, application or software deemed inappropriate for instructional purposes.

### **B. Professional Use of Social Media**

1. Professional Social Media sites must adhere to all federal, state and local laws, policies, regulations, and procedures for employees of PGCPS. Employees must not violate any PGCPS policy or administrative procedure when using social media, including those listed in Section V below.
2. Employees interested in developing a PGCPS-related professional social media presence - whether accessed from a PGCPS computer, tablet, mobile device, or not - must receive permission from their administrators or supervisors in developing the site and are required to provide their supervisor with administrative rights to access the professional social media site. The site may be regularly monitored by supervisors and administrators to ensure compliance with Administrative Procedure 0700 Information Technology – Acceptable Usage Guidelines and all other applicable laws, policies and procedures.
3. Professional Social Media sites developed by school-based employees for schools shall offer parent(s)/guardian(s) and students general access to the site and the school shall provide annual notifications to parent(s)/guardian(s) and students about the site's existence along with the kind of materials that may be accessed via the site.
4. Employees are prohibited from using engaging in misuse of social media, as defined on page 2 of this Procedure, whether inside or outside of the professional work environment.
5. Employees using Professional Social Media sites are required to maintain the privacy of personal student records consistent with Administrative Procedure 5125 Individual Student School-Based Records, and confidential employee information.



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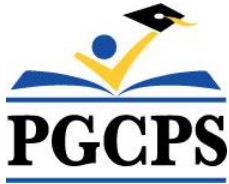
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6. Employees who use social media to communicate with students shall only communicate with students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) have given written authorization of and have access to their child's use of the social media sites. Employees shall not use their professional social media presence to communicate improper or inappropriate messages with or about PGCPS students.
7. Employees, schools, and offices within PGCPS who create a Professional Social Media site are required to monitor the site.
8. Employees may not use any social media platform utilizing a PGCPS device for the purpose of communicating with any student, parent/guardian or another employee that allows the anonymous posting of messages or the inability to trace the sender or recipient of messages.
9. Employees may only post pictures of students involved in school events on a professional social media site if the student's parent has provided written permission on the [PGCPS publicity release form](#) and the principal has approved the posting.
10. Each school is required to maintain a list of students whose parents have provided written permission for pictures of their child involved in school events to be posted on professional social media sites. The list must be utilized by school staff to ensure that only the pictures of those students whose parents have provided written permission on the [PGCPS publicity release form](#) are posted on a professional social media site.

#### C. Personal Use of Social Media

PGCPS recognizes that employees may also have a personal presence on social media sites and encourages employees who have such presence to continue to adhere to Board policies and Administrative Procedures in their personal use of sites. Employees are prohibited from conducting personal use of social media sites during work hours or on PGCPS devices. The following guidelines shall apply.

1. Employees shall not use their personal social media presence to communicate improper or inappropriate messages or content with or about PGCPS students, parents/guardians or other employees.



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2. Employees shall not disclose student or employee records or other personal information regarding students or employees over a social media website, whether using their personal social media presence or their professional social media presence.
3. Employees shall not post photos of any PGCPS student to any personal social media site for any reason. Exceptions will be permitted where the student is a relative by blood, adoption, or marriage of the employee, or the employee has received permission to post from the parents or guardians of the student, and provided the photos are not improper or inappropriate.
4. Employees shall not reference their relationship with PGCPS or use their personal social media presence as a representative of PGCPS or the Board of Education of Prince George's County.

However, employees are allowed to indicate their affiliation with PGCPS on professional social networking sites, such as LinkedIn.

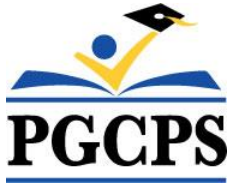
5. Employees shall not post photos of other employees of PGCPS without the consent of the other employees. In all cases, an employee is not authorized to use his or her personal use of social media to embarrass, harass, annoy, or intimidate another employee of PGCPS.
6. Employees are expected to monitor their own sites.

#### **D. Personal Use of Cellular Phones and Electronic Devices**

PGCPS recognizes that employees may have personal smart phones and electronic devices, and encourages those employees to adhere to Board policies and Administrative Procedures in their use of the devices. The following guidelines shall apply:

1. Employees may not use personal electronic devices - such as cell phones, tablets and computers - to text, email or otherwise communicate with students without a supervisor's, manager's, or principal's prior approval, or provide students with private cell phone numbers or email addresses.

Instead, employees should use one of the PGCPS-approved group applications, such as Remind, Class Dojo, Edmodo, etc., to communicate with students and parents via phone or email.



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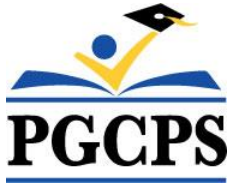
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2. Employees are strongly encouraged to take photographs of students and student activities with a school camera or school smart devices such as iPads. Professional School Social Media sites should be developed for educational and instructional purposes only.
3. Pictures of students taken on a school camera, iPad, or personal electronic device may be posted on professional social media sites as long as the students' parents have signed a [Publicity Release form](#) allowing the school to publish or post the students' pictures and the principal has approved the posting.
4. Employees should not use, or be required to use their personal electronic devices to collect artifacts of student performance and evaluation, or for any data collection purposes. Carrying artifacts of student performance and evaluation on employees' personal electronic devices increases the possibility of students' confidential information being distributed with others who do not have a legitimate educational interest in the student information, resulting in a breach of confidentiality and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

#### E. Reporting Misuse of Social Media

1. When a staff member becomes aware of an incident that involves the misuse of social media, the staff member shall immediately report the incident to a school administrator. The school administrator shall notify the Employee and Labor Relations Office. If the incident involves the safety or security of a student or staff member, the Department of Security Services shall also be called.
2. If it is determined that the incident is a direct result of cyber-bullying, the school administrator will refer to Administrative Procedure 5143 Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation and complete the investigation as outlined therein.
3. Students and staff shall report the misuse of social media, including communications or invitations to communicate with staff members over social media to PGCPS administrators/supervisors.
4. Any staff member who sees anything on social media that causes them to suspect child abuse, child sexual abuse or neglect shall call Child Protective Service as soon as possible to provide a report.



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5. The school administrator/designee should be aware that some acts pertaining to the misuse of social media could also be criminal acts and shall be reported promptly to the responsible law enforcement agency.

### V. **MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE:**

Employees' professional and personal use of Social Media may be monitored and investigated for violation of this Administrative Procedure. Any misuse of social media sites, including threats, should be reported to the Department of School Security Services, the Employee and Labor Relations Office and other supervisory personnel as appropriate.

Employees found to be in violation of this Administrative Procedure may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense.

### VI. **RELATED PROCEDURES:**

Administrative Procedure 0700, Information Technology Services Acceptable Usage Guidelines;  
Administrative Procedure 4170, Discrimination and Harassment;  
Administrative Procedure 4218, Dating and Sexual Relationships Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors and Volunteers;  
Administrative Procedure 4219, Inappropriate Interactions Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors and Volunteers;  
Administrative Procedure 5125 Individual Student School-Based Records;  
Administrative Procedure 5143, Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation;  
Administrative Procedure 5180, Student Use of Social Media

- VII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure originates with the Division of Human Resources and updates will be completed as needed.

- VIII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDES:** This Administrative Procedure supersedes the version dated August 27, 2018.

- IX. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 12, 2021

Attachment:  
List of PGCPS Approved Sites, Applications and Software for Instructional Use