

REGULATION ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: GAOO, GAGG, GAGG-RA, JCCA, JCCA-RA, JCC-RAA, JCCC, JCCC-RA

Responsible Office: OFFICE OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A. PURPOSE

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recognizes that schools and employees may be interested in developing a social media presence to communicate with students and parents/guardians beyond the normal school day, to improve the school's ability to reach out to students, parents/guardians 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.

B. BACKGROUND

The purpose of authorized social media used by AACPS employees is for conducting school system business and the fostering of the legitimate exchange of information among and between staff, parents/guardians and the community at large regarding instruction, programs, services, and activities. AACPS reserves the right to remove inappropriate content posted on any AACPS regulated social media site at the school system's discretion at any time. AACPS may also disclaim opinions or authorship of any statement posted on any AACPS regulated social media site.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. ***Social Media Site*** – any electronic, online, or Internet-based platform that allows interactive communication between persons or entities in online communities, including social networks, blogs, websites, application software, Internet forums, and wikis.
2. ***Professional Social Media Presence*** – access and use of social media sites for a bonafide work-related purpose, whether school-based or non-school based.
3. ***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 shall not act as a representative of AACPS.
4. ***Improper or Inappropriate Communication*** – any communication between employee and student, 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. This includes any use of improper photos or symbols.

5. **Misuse of Social Media** – the use of social media, whether originating on or off school property, in a manner that demeans, condemns or berates others, including students and staff, incites violence of any kind, embarrasses, defames, harasses, bullies or wrongfully impersonates others, including students and staff (“harass” and “bully” are defined by Regulation JCCA-RA – Bullying/Cyber-bullying/Harassment and Intimidation/Hazing/Bias Behavior), or in any manner that violates the *Student Code of Conduct*, Board policy or administrative regulations, *Employee Handbook*, or local, State or federal laws.
6. **Students** – current AACPS students.
7. **Staff or Staff Member** – any AACPS full-or part-time employee, coach, volunteer coach, or club advisor.

D. PROCEDURES

1. Professional Use of Social Media

- a. Professional social media sites shall adhere to all federal, State and local laws, policies, regulations, and procedures for employees of AACPS. Employees shall comply with Policy GAGG – Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment and Regulation GAGG-RA – Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment at all times when using social media.
- b. Staff interested in developing an AACPS-related professional social media presence, whether or not accessed from an AACPS computer, tablet, or mobile device, shall receive permission from their administrator or supervisor in developing the site, and are required to provide their supervisor with administrative rights to access the professional social media site, which may be regularly monitored by supervisors and administrators to ensure compliance with the Regulation JCC-RAA – Technology Resource Use By Students and all other applicable laws, policies and regulations.
- c. Professional social media sites developed by school-based employees for schools shall offer parents/guardians and students general access to the site and the school shall provide annual notifications to parents/guardians and students about the site’s existence along with the kinds of materials that may be accessed via the site.
- d. AACPS staff members are prohibited from using professional social media sites in any manner to demean, condemn or berate others, including other employees and students, incite violence of any kind, embarrass, defame, sexually harass, harass, bully or wrongfully impersonate others, including other employees and students (“harass” and “bully” are defined in Regulation JCCA-RA – Bullying/Cyber-bullying/Harassment and Intimidation/ Hazing/Bias Behavior) or to, in any manner, violate Board policy or regulation, whether inside or outside the professional work environment.

- e. AACPS staff members using professional social media sites are required to maintain the privacy of personal student records consistent with Policy/Regulation JH/JH-RA – Student Records, and confidential employee information.
- f. Employees who use social media to communicate with students may only communicate with students whose parents/guardians have given written authorization of and have access to their child’s use of the social media sites. Employees may not use their professional social media presence to communicate improper or inappropriate messages with or about AACPS students.
- g. Staff, schools, and offices within AACPS creating a professional social media site are required to monitor the site for compliance with Policy GAOO – Employee Use of Social Media and this regulation.

2. Personal Use of Social Media

AACPS 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 regulations in their personal use of sites. An AACPS staff member’s personal social media presence shall never create a hostile, disruptive, or unsafe learning, or work environment. Employees may, on a limited and infrequent basis, use AACPS technology for personal use, provided such use does not interfere in any way with school system duties or operations. The following guidelines shall apply.

- a. Employees may not use their personal social media presence to communicate improper or inappropriate messages or content with or about AACPS students or employees.
- b. Employees may 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.
- c. Employees may not post photos of any AACPS 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.
- d. Employees may not use their personal social media presence to act as a representative of AACPS or the Board.
- e. Employees may not post photos of other employees of AACPS without the consent of the other employees. In all cases, an employee may not use the employee’s personal use of social media to embarrass, harass, annoy, wrongfully impersonate, or intimidate another employee of AACPS.
- f. Employees are expected to monitor their own sites.

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 who shall notify the Office of Investigations, unless the incident involves the safety or security of a student or staff member, in which case the Office of School Security shall be called.
2. If it is determined that the incident is a direct result of cyberbullying, the school administrator shall refer to Regulation JCCA-RA – Bullying/Cyberbullying/Harassment and Intimidation/ Hazing/Bias Behavior and complete the investigation as outlined therein.
3. Students are encouraged to report the misuse of social media to AACPS administrators and/or supervisors, including communications or invitations to communicate with staff members over social media.
4. Staff shall report the misuse of social media to AACPS administrators, including communications or invitations to communicate with staff members over social media.
5. Administrators and or supervisors shall report all incidents of misuse of social media to the Office of Investigations for appropriate action unless the incident involves the safety or security of a student, in which case, the Office of School Security shall be called.
6. The school administrator or the school administrator's designee shall be aware that some acts pertaining to the misuse of social media could also be delinquent acts. If they are delinquent acts, they shall be reported promptly to the responsible law enforcement agency.

F. VIOLATION

The professional and personal use of social media by AACPS staff may be monitored and investigated for violation of this regulation. Threats discovered on social media sites shall be reported to the Office of School Security and other supervisory personnel as appropriate. AACPS staff found to be in violation of this regulation may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense.

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