



## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY POLICY (Final 2.27.2013)**

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### **Introduction**

The Shrewsbury Public Schools are committed to the strategic priority of enhancing learning through technology, and educators have embraced the opportunities that technology provides to strengthen teaching and learning in ways that were not previously available. Employee use of technology, including social media, can be a highly effective educational tool; given the way our society now communicates, employees also use technology to share their life and opinions with family, friends and co-workers. In order to assist employees in making responsible decisions about their use of technology and social media, this policy provides guidelines for responsible employee use that address both the challenges and the benefits inherent in the use of technology and social media as they apply to both professional and personal use. This policy applies to all employees of the Shrewsbury Public Schools, regardless of role.

### **Guidelines**

In our rapidly expanding world of electronic communication *social media* or *enhancing learning through technology* can mean many things. This policy refers to all ways of communicating or posting electronic information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to our employees' own or others' web log or blog, journals or diaries, personal web sites, social networking or affinity web sites, web bulletin boards, chat rooms, or public forums, whether or not associated with Shrewsbury Public Schools, as well as any other form of electronic communication, including email.

Ultimately employees are responsible for what they post or email. Before creating online content, whether for oneself,

students, friends, colleagues, or family, employees need to consider the risks and rewards involved. They should keep in mind that their conduct can enhance or adversely affect their reputation, effectiveness, and/or the public perception of the Shrewsbury Public Schools, and that inappropriate or offensive conduct could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

### **Know and Follow the “Rules”**

Employees should read and review other policies that may have an impact on their decision-making regarding responsible use of social media and technology. For example, employees should review the Sexual Harassment policy and be aware of Massachusetts General Laws and other state and federal laws that protect the rights of citizens. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence or similarly inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated. Employees are asked to be aware of how criminals and hackers, as well as law-abiding organizations and individuals, could use information about them to affect not only their privacy and security, but also the privacy and security of others. If employees are using a social network or other electronic communications to communicate with students for educational purposes, they should make sure that the minimum age required by the social network or electronic tool matches the ages of their students. They are expected to research the means of communication and consider platforms that are “ads free” or will only display ads that are age appropriate. Employees should also be aware of any family restrictions on publishing information that might apply to an individual student. Employees are expected to think about any potential unintended consequences of their use of social media and technology, including their personal information potentially being available to students and parents. Employees should utilize their official district e-mail address for all work-related e-mail communications. If an employee intends to provide students or parents with a way to

communicate with them via text message for school-related communications, they should consider utilizing a separate cell number other than the one they use for their personal interactions. Similarly, employees should not utilize a personal social network site for work-related communications with students and families, but should create a separate site for those purposes if warranted. In general, employees are asked to be considerate of their colleagues' privacy.

### **Be Respectful**

All employees are asked to be fair, respectful and courteous to other staff members, parents, students and other members of the school community. Employees are encouraged to use established methods to resolve work-related complaints including speaking to their principal, human resources, other members of administration, or their Association representatives. If an employee does decide to post complaints or criticism, they must avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that could be reasonably viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by federal or state law or school department policy. At the same time all employees should be respectful of shared resources such as wifi access or bandwidth and be thoughtful about their use of these resources. The primary use of school desktop computers, tablets, laptops, or any other technology should be for educationally relevant purposes. Employees are reminded that they serve as role models for each other, for students, and for the community.

### **Be Honest and Accurate**

Employees are asked to be honest and accurate when posting

information or news, and if an employee makes a mistake, to correct it quickly. Employees should always pay attention to copyrights and properly attribute their comments, if applicable, and be open about any previous posts they have altered. The Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Employees should not post information or rumors that they know to be false about Shrewsbury Public Schools or anyone associated with Shrewsbury Public Schools.

## **Confidentiality**

Employees must maintain the confidentiality of students and colleagues while complying with all student record laws. Employees should not forward or print out internal emails to individuals who should not have them. However, please note that all files on school hardware, servers, cloud storage, email, voicemail, and any other district-governed electronic storage method, as well as any school business-related communications regardless of where they are stored, are governed by the “public record” statute and could therefore be requested at any time, and that administrators may view content at any time. Employees are expected to be thoughtful about the content of their electronic communications, with the understanding that any communication may be requested and viewed by other parties, subject to public and student record laws and regulations. Employees should not view email or other information that is clearly not intended for them. If an employee receives an email in error it is their responsibility to make sure it gets to the appropriate individual. No employee should represent himself or herself as a spokesperson for Shrewsbury Public Schools unless designated as such. All media inquiries should be referred to the Office of the Superintendent.

## **Retaliation is Prohibited**

Shrewsbury Public Schools prohibits taking negative action

against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for one of these reasons could be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

**For More Information or When in Doubt...**

Employees are encouraged to communicate with their school or department administrator or the Director of Human Resources.

This policy shall be reviewed within five years of published date.