

# **SCITECH ACADEMY**

## **EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **I. PURPOSE**

Various forms of electronic communication, and social networking including, but not limited to, text messaging, personal Web sites, Web logs (blogs), online forums and virtual worlds can provide a unique means of communication and education, but it must not be allowed to create unintended and/or improper communication between staff and students. It is the Skyline Math and Science Academy Board's intention to use these types of electronic communications as a way to further the goals of the School, while protecting staff members, students and the School from harmful incidents.

### **II. POLICY STATEMENT**

Skyline Math and Science Academy encourages staff use of social media provided it is used in a manner that does not violate state or federal law or school policies and does not create unintended and/or improper communication between staff and students. Public social media outside of those sponsored by SciTech Academy cannot be used for instruction or for school-sponsored activities without the prior written authorization of the Executive Director or designee and parental consent for student participation on social networks. When employees choose to join or engage with SciTech Academy students, families or fellow employees in a social media context outside of those approved by SciTech Academy, they must maintain their professionalism as employees of SciTech Academy and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on those networks, including requirements for mandated reporting.

### **III. GUIDELINES**

- A. SciTech Academy encourages all staff members to maintain active interest and engagement in a wide range of activities, intellectual pursuits, causes, etc., including social, political, religious and civic-oriented groups, organizations, blogs, publications, etc. At the same time, this must be balanced with SciTech Academy's right to manage public communications issued directly or indirectly in its name or on its behalf.
- B. Staff members will establish and maintain appropriate privacy settings and personal content to ensure that posted content does not reflect poorly on SciTech Academy or conflict with its educational philosophies in any way.
- C. Staff members are discouraged from posting messages indicating or implying a connection to SciTech Academy.
- D. Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means). Employees must not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media network or engage in communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous or defamatory or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity, or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment or bullying.
- E. Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of SciTech Academy. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for SciTech Academy or post comments as a representative of SciTech Academy except as authorized by the Executive Director or designee.
- F. Employees should not use their SciTech Academy email address for communication on public social media networks that have not been approved by SciTech Academy.
- G. When making personal, non-work related posts online, staff members may not use working time, SciTech Academy equipment or their SciTech Academy email addresses in the message or for reply purposes.

#### **IV. COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER STAFF MEMBERS**

- A. Staff members will use good judgment when making or accepting “friend” (or “link” or “connection”) requests to or from other Skyline Math and Science Academy staff members. Staff members in supervisor/subordinate work relationships are discouraged from making and/or accepting “friend” request with one another. This is due to the potential for both parties to feel awkward or pressured to accept the request and thus potentially impacting the work and social relationship.
- B. Staff members will be mindful of not only their own profiles, but those of their friends as well. Photographs and comments on the profiles of friends that reflect poorly on the staff member must be considered.

## **V. COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS**

- A. Other than familial relationships, staff members will avoid personal off-duty relationships with students. Staff members should be aware that, even when interacting with students outside of the school environment, these interactions have a direct impact on the professional relationship within the school environment.
- B. Staff members will refrain from sharing personal email addresses with students, text messaging students, using social network sites or engaging in other similar behavior for non-school related reasons that might compromise an appropriate and professional relationship in the classroom and within the School.
- C. Staff members will be diligent in maintaining the highest ethical standards when using social media and must ensure that they do not create inappropriate personal relationships with students.

## **VI. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Staff members must understand that they are responsible for their online presence and are accountable for all written or posted materials and are to exercise good judgment at all times. The permeating and permanent effect of social networking cannot be overstated.
- B. Confidential information is to be protected at all times and may only be disclosed pursuant to SciTech Academy policy or Minnesota statute. Accordingly, no electronic communication, including but not limited to text messages, blogs or social network posting may communicate any confidential information. If a staff member believes that

confidential information may have been revealed, he/she is required to notify his/her Supervisor immediately.

- C. Staff members will have no expectation of privacy when using online forums. Information posted on or exchanged through social media may be accessed by parents, students, co-workers and members of the public. Therefore, when communicating via online social media, staff will remember that their conduct represents Skyline Math and Science Academy and any information posted or exchanged should always be in the best interest of serving SciTech Academy and its students.
- D. Employees must not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-worker's consent.
- E. Employees must not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent, except for images of students taken in the public arena such as at sporting events or fine arts performances.
- F. Employees must not post any non-public images of the SciTech Academy premises and property, including floor plans.
- G. Staff members will not misrepresent themselves or any part of SciTech Academy in any social networking or blogging posts and will not be asked by supervisors or administrators to misrepresent themselves or their position with SciTech Academy.
- H. Staff members are not permitted to use official SciTech Academy photographs or photographs of students or student property without the written consent of SciTech Academy administration or IT Director.
- I. Staff members will not use media sites to harass, threaten, libel, malign, defame, disparage or discriminate against members of the school community including but not limited to students, parents and/or guardians, co-workers or the administration or Board. Employees may not write about, post pictures of or otherwise refer to any student, parent and/or guardians, co-workers or administrators without their permission.
- J. SciTech Academy recognizes that student groups or members of the public may create social media representing students or groups within SciTech Academy. When any employee

chooses to join or engage in these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of SciTech Academy. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing appropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

K. Non-compliance with this policy will result in disciplinary action, which may lead to termination.

**Legal References:** Minnesota Administrative Rule 8710.2100 (Code of Ethics for Minnesota Teachers)  
See Children's Internet Protection Act