



# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

## STUDENT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS

5180

Procedure No.

August 17, 2016

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish guidelines for students related to the use of social media in schools, to differentiate between the appropriate and inappropriate use of social media and to articulate consequences when the inappropriate use of social media disrupts the educational environment, constitutes cyber bullying and/or creates a hostile learning environment.
- II. **INFORMATION:** Social media has become a powerful tool for the transmission of information. When used appropriately, social media is a valuable educational tool enabling students to begin to build a positive digital footprint. When misused, however, social media may substantially disrupt opportunities for learning and negatively affect the student’s future career and college aspirations. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their child’s use of social media in and out of school, which may impact their child’s or other student’s educational opportunities.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**
- A. “Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation” (BHI) are anti-social behaviors that are carried out repeatedly over time with the intent to cause harm and are characterized by an imbalance of power.
  - B. “Cyber Bullying” is a form of indirect or social bullying that uses technology via text or images to humiliate, harass, embarrass, tease, intimidate, threaten, or slander one or more students. Cyber bullying is the act of being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material (including compromising photographs) online or through a cell phone or other electronic device.
  - C. “Social Media” is an electronic medium where users may create and view user generated content such as, uploaded or downloaded videos, photographs, blogs, podcasts, wikis, instant messages, texts, tweets and/or email content. Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around content on the website. Examples of social media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ etc.
- IV. **PROCEDURES:**
- A. **Approved Social Media 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



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Information Officer shall:

1. Identify the social media sites, applications and software deemed appropriate for instructional purposes on the PGCPS network or on PGCPS devices (see Attachment to Administrative Procedure 4126, Employee Use of Social Media);
2. Provide updates to the list on the PGCPS website at appropriately designated times during the school year; and
3. Discontinue access to any designated social media site, application or software deemed inappropriate for instructional purposes.

### B. **Appropriate Use of Social Media by Students in the School Environment**

1. Under the supervision of a teacher as a part of the instructional program, students may be required to access and use social media in school. Such activity must be aligned to the curriculum standards, educational goals and objectives of the lesson or unit of study.
2. Students may only access information they are authorized to use and that they will need for assignments and/or other school related activities.
3. Students **MUST** protect and keep their passwords confidential.
4. Student should keep their email addresses and phone numbers private at all times.

### C. **Inappropriate Use of Social Media by Students**

Students are prohibited from inappropriately using social media, which includes, but is not limited to:

1. Accessing or linking to websites that contain material deemed vulgar or offensive. This includes, but is not limited to: websites containing any text, graphic, audio, or visual representation of sex, acts of perversion, or any vulgar or obscene material, containing images or representations of full frontal or partial nudity lacking in any educational, scientific or artistic value. Users **MUST** avoid



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these websites and should under no circumstances possess any of these materials in the school setting.

2. Accessing websites promoting hatred, racial, religious, sexual discrimination, use of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco and/or criminal activities.
3. Using abusive or otherwise objectionable language in either public or private messages.
4. Posting anonymous or signed messages that are defamatory.
5. Identifying one's self with another person's name or any misrepresentation of one's true identity.
6. Posting libelous, inflammatory, purposely disruptive statements or similarly inappropriate material, obscene language, serious threats or gestures, defamatory audio, visual or written content.
7. Targeting one or more students, parents/guardians, teachers or staff using negative comments, photographs, or threats.
8. Attempting to interact with or monitor the activities of administrators or other PGCPS employees on social networking sites.

#### D. Student Responsibilities

1. Each student has a responsibility not to interfere with the education of other students.
2. Students are expected to adhere to the Information Technology Services Acceptable Use Guidelines.
3. Students are to refrain from using electronic devices in a manner deemed inappropriate by the Prince George's County Public Schools.
4. Students should report any inappropriate electronic content received on school equipment to their classroom teacher.
5. Students should not accept personal invitations from staff members or volunteers to use social media or personal/private email



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addresses, and should immediately report any such invitation to their principal.

6. During non-school hours students receiving inappropriate, threatening or harassing electronic communication/imagery that will impede their ability or that of their peers to participate in their educational program **MUST** immediately inform their parents. On the next business day, students must inform the school administration and/or their grade level counselor for appropriate intervention.

#### **E. School System Responsibilities**

The school system does not control the personal use of the aforementioned technology outside of the school. However, in instances where students are found to have used social media in ways that create an actual or potential threat to students, staff or administration, or could reasonably be expected to materially interfere with the school environment, the school will apply disciplinary action in accordance with the *Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*.

Therefore, parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their child's use of social media outside of school, which may impact their child's or other student's educational opportunities.

#### **V. RELATED PROCEDURES:**

Administrative Procedure 0700, Information Technology Services Acceptable Usage Guidelines;  
Administrative Procedure 4126, Employee Use of Social Media;  
Administrative Procedure 4170, Discrimination and Harassment;  
Administrative Procedure 4218, Dating and Inappropriate Relationships Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors and Volunteers;  
Administrative Procedure 5132, Cell Phones and other Portable Electronic Devices;  
Administrative Procedure 5142, Gangs and Similar Destructive Group Behaviors;  
Administrative Procedure 5143, Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation; and  
Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct.

- VI. MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This procedure originates with the Division of Student Services, Department of Student Engagement and School Support and will be updated as needed.



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**VII. CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure supersedes the version dated August 1, 2013.

**VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 17, 2016

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11