



## **Merit Academy Employee Social Media Policy**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to staff on use of social media when employed by Merit Academy. Regardless of privacy settings, there should be no expectation of privacy on social networking sites. The conduct of a staff member on a social networking site, when viewed by another member of the school community, can be considered a reflection of the school. Social media conduct can be cause for suspension or dismissal if the conduct diminishes instructional effectiveness or creates a disruption to the school environment.

### **Definition**

“Social media” means any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations. Social media includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing and email.

### **School-Created Social Media**

The Director of Development or designee may create social media pages or sites for the school. The sites shall be administered and managed by the Director of Development or his/her designee. Only staff designated by the Director of Development may post or administer the pages or sites on behalf of the school.

### **Employee Use Guidelines**

The following guidelines for social media should be followed by all employees:

1. Staff may not “friend” any child that is a current student at Merit Academy and should take appropriate steps to confirm that any friend requests they receive are not from a student before accepting. Friending students can appear to create an inappropriate student-teacher relationship and can put the teacher at risk.
2. Staff should keep in mind that everything they post can be seen as a reflection on the school. Do not circulate rumors or unsubstantiated information. As a general rule, if you would not want a post to be read by your supervisor or a parent, do not post it.



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3. Staff shall not refer to or post specific information about students. Any information that can be traced back to a specific student is a violation of FERPA. Staff members shall not reference assignments or assessments given to Merit Academy students.
4. Staff shall not use social media as a form of communication for school-related issues. School-related communications with students, parents, and colleagues should only come from school communication systems (i.e. school email). Staff members should never communicate with students using non-school social media or email.
5. Staff shall not post photos or movies of colleagues without their permission. Staff shall not post photos or movies taken at school, or photos or movies that contain students without written, current administrative and parent consent or a media release on file.

### Violations

Violations of these Employee Use Guidelines by Merit Academy staff will be dealt with by the Merit Academy administration. Actions in response to violations of the Employee Use Guidelines may include the following:

1. Documentation of violations in the employee's personnel file, to be considered during year-end performance-based evaluations and consideration of performance-based compensation;
2. Unpaid suspension; and
3. Termination of employment