

# DIOCESE OF JOLIET – CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

## 6745 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Catholic Schools Office recognizes that the use of social media is being used in a variety of methods as an important evangelizing, educational and marketing tool to promote school and ministerial programs. However, those using the Internet should bear in mind that certain comments and information may have a harmful effect on the school, parish, the Diocese of Joliet, its reputation and its employees. In light of this possibility employees and volunteers are required to adhere to the following policy regarding the use of social media sites, networks and blogs.

This Social Media Policy (the “policy”) applies to all online or mobile-based tools for sharing content and discussing information, whether controlled by the diocese, local school or local parish or hosted on other platforms (such as Facebook), on which employees/ volunteers of the school /parish engage in activities relating to the school, parish or diocese. The term “social media” refers to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction through the use of words, images, video or audio tools. Examples include, but are not limited to, social websites, blogs, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, live webcasting and real-time communities. Because this is a constantly evolving area, this policy applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this policy.

### General Guidelines

- **Be selective** –due to the availability of a variety digital tools, be selective in the type of medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended only for a small group.
  
- **Be responsible** – social media are individual interactions, not official diocesan/parish/school communications. All employees and volunteers at the parish/school are personally responsible for their posts. Official statements of policy may only be made by the Superintendent/ Pastor/ Principal or designee. A blog or community post is visible to the entire world. Remember that what you write will be public, and potentially for a long time. In the event you identify yourself as,( or is manifestly understood to be) an employee of the local school, parish or diocese on a personal blog (or other website with a similar purpose), to help reduce the potential for confusion, the employee is required to put the following notice in a reasonably prominent place on the site:  
**“The views expressed on this site are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer, or the Diocese of Joliet.”**
  
- **Identify yourself** – authenticity and transparency are driving forces behind social media. Use real identities to the greatest extent possible rather than anonymous posts and comments.

- **Honor the privacy of others** – do not publish the personal information of others without their permission or, in the case of minors, written permission of their parents. All guidelines for the Protection of Children as outlined in all agreements and policies are to be followed.

- **Be respectful** – if you disagree with others, do so with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the Church and its teachings.

-**Comply to-** all guidelines of the Employee/Staff Acceptable Use Agreement and all aspects of the Safe Environment Policy of the Diocese of Joliet.

## **Specific Policies**

### **1. Use of Official Name and Logo.**

Any use of the parish/school name or logo for branding or titling pages, blogs, or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing prior to use. Requests for prior consent to use such names or logos will be made to the Pastor/Principal or designee. Any uses in existence at the time of adoption of this policy are not grandfathered and would be authorized pursuant to this policy. Permission to use the name or logo of the parish or school may be revoked at any time.

**2. Duties of Moderators.** Moderators of official parish/school social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy statement. If there is official parish/school social media, there will be an employee /volunteer of the parish/school designated as the moderator. All content, comment and blog response areas must be moderated. Those responsible for such areas must review and approve comments prior to posting, and should not post any comments that do not meet our standards for civility, misrepresent the position of the Church or diocese/ parish/school , or that include profanity, defamatory language or speech that is otherwise inappropriate or off-topic. Anonymous comments will not be permitted. All moderation functions reserve the right to ban repeat offenders. Moderators who permit users to post materials such as documents or photographs will make clear to users that the site will not archive those materials and will delete e them after a published period of time (typically 12 months, except in cases where a project needs to be preserved for a longer period of time). Moderators must provide login in access to social media to pastor/principal.

### **3. Prudent Judgment.**

A. **Personal Use – Possible Negative Impact.** Even when engaging in social media for personal use, the comments of employees or volunteers of the parish/school may be viewed as a reflection on diocese/parish/school. Users will use their best judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm children, the interests of the diocese/parish/school or be subject to question as inappropriate by parents or school/parish administration.

## **B. Contact With Students**

Employees and volunteers of the School cannot engage with current and prospective students on social media sites unless the site is school-sanctioned. Also knowingly interacting with students on a third-party social media page (such as a fan page for a local sports team) is prohibited.

Caution and prudence should be used if there are communications with students who are 18 and have graduated.

The School will strictly limit friendly/engagement with parents to only school-sanctioned sites.

## **4. Copyright Laws.**

Anyone who submits content must comply fully with copyright law. Any posting of materials to official parish/school social media must adhere to all copyright laws. Images and other materials from the parish or school websites will not be copied and uploaded to other forums without the prior written consent of the Pastor/Principal or designee.

**5. Privacy.** All users of social media within parish and school communities will take care to safeguard the privacy interests of other community members. In particular, personally identifiable information (that is, information that can identify a particular person, including name, photo, phone number, address or email address) will not be disclosed without the prior written consent of the person identified. In cases where a user has consented to the publication of such information, appropriate privacy settings and levels will be utilized.

**6. Minors.** Public social media maintained by the parish/school are not intended for the use of children under the age of 13. Any site operated by parish/school that is oriented toward youth between the ages of 13 and 18 must require registration for all users and must be password-protected so that only registered users may access the site. Users of such a site may not post images of minors without the prior written consent of a parent or legal guardian of any minor depicted.

**7. Enforcement.** Any use of social media that does not comply with this policy should be brought to the attention of the appropriate party: the Pastor or the Principal or designee immediately. Failure to follow the social medial policy may result in the loss of privileges and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for an employee or removal from position, if a volunteer.

**8. Social Networking Website Passwords:** Illinois School Code 105 75/15. Illinois Public Act 098-0129 Students and their parents or guardians are advised that the Diocese of Joliet Catholic Schools may not request or require a student to provide a password or other related account information in order to gain access to the student's account or profile on a social networking website. The school **may** conduct an investigation and if the school has **reasonable** cause to

believe the content of a student's social media account has violated a disciplinary rule or policy of the school, the law requires the student to provide social networking website passwords or other related account information to gain access to the student's account or profile.

This policy may be updated and modified at any time at the sole discretion of the Diocese of Joliet Catholic Schools Office in light of changing circumstances and events.