

VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

SUPERINTENDENT'S

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION NO. 1114

ADOPTED: 01/05/15

CLASSIFICATION: Community Relations

REVISED:

SUBJECT: VCOE SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA

The Ventura County Office of Education, hereinafter referred to as VCOE, recognizes the value of technology such as social media platforms in promoting community involvement and collaboration. The purpose of any official VCOE social media platform shall be to further the VCOE's vision and mission, support student learning and staff professional development, and enhance communication with students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members. Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications.

DEFINITIONS

“Social media” means any online platform for collaboration, interaction, and active participation, including, but not limited to, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest or blogs.

“Official VCOE social media platform” is a site authorized by the Superintendent or designee. Sites that have not been authorized by the Superintendent or designee but that contain content related to VCOE or comments on VCOE operations, such as a site created by a parent-teacher organization, booster club, or other VCOE-connected organization or a student's or employee's personal site, are not considered official VCOE social media platforms.

The policies herein will apply to these and all other official VCOE social media platforms that may be developed in the future.

AUTHORIZATION FOR OFFICIAL VCOE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Official VCOE social media platforms include only those sites authorized by the Superintendent or designee, such as the VCOE Communications Manager. VCOE employees shall obtain approval from the Superintendent or designee before creating any social media platform for a school, department or program.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTENT

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that official VCOE social media platforms provide current information regarding VCOE programs, activities, and operations, consistent with the goals and purposes of this policy and regulation. Official VCOE social media platforms shall contain content that is appropriate for all audiences.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that copyright laws are not violated in the use of material on official VCOE social media platforms.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that official VCOE social media platforms are regularly monitored. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to monitor content and may remove inappropriate content (defined below).

Each official VCOE social media platform shall prominently display:

1. The purpose of the site along with a statement that users are expected to use the site only for those intended purposes.
2. Information on how to use the security settings of the social media platform.
3. A statement that the site is regularly monitored and that any inappropriate content will be promptly removed. Inappropriate content includes, but is not limited to, those that:
 - a. Are defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, bullying, intimidating, hateful, libelous, obscene or so incite students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, violation of VCOE or school rules, or substantial disruption of the orderly operation of VCOE programs.
 - b. Are not related to the stated purpose of the site, including, but not limited to, comments of a commercial nature, political activity, and comments that constitute discrimination or harassment.
4. Protocols for users, include expectations that users will communicate in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner.
5. A statement that users are personally responsible for the content of their posts and that the VCOE is not responsible for the user-generated content on social media platforms or external online platforms.
6. A disclaimer that the views and comments expressed on the site are those of the users and do not necessarily reflect the views of VCOE.
7. A disclaimer that any user's reference to a specific commercial product or service does not imply endorsement or recommendation of that product or service by VCOE.
8. Contact information to report violation of VCOE guidelines in the use of official VCOE social media platforms.

POLICIES AND DISCIPLINE

VCOE employees who participate in official VCOE social media platforms shall adhere to all applicable district policies and procedures, including, but not limited to the Acceptable Use Policy and professional standards related to interactions with students. Violation of this Policy may result in discipline in accordance with collective bargaining agreements, Board and Superintendent Policies, and state law.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND STANDARDS

Employees using official VCOE social media platforms shall identify themselves by name and VCOE title and, where appropriate, include a disclaimer stating that the views and opinions expressed in their post are theirs alone and do not necessarily represent those of VCOE. All staff shall receive information about appropriate use of the official district social media platforms. All content associated with staff use of social media within the educational environment must be consistent with the VCOE's goals and professional standards.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDENTS

Staff members are discouraged from communicating with current VCOE students through social media sites which are personal to staff members or students, and which do not have an instructional or educational purpose, or those not relevant to school-related activities.

Staff members should be mindful about maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with students. Should a student directly or indirectly communicate to a staff member about known or suspected child abuse or neglect, a threat of harm to the student or others, or evidence of a crime, the staff member must immediately notify the appropriate authorities and Superintendent or designee.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Communications through social media are not private. Consequently, staff members must ensure they are not sharing confidential information concerning VCOE staff, students, or families. Social media may not be used to publish student information including, but not limited to, names, assignments, grades, attendance data, photographs, videos, or other likenesses, without permission of the student's parent or guardian.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

Staff members are responsible for their social media use and may be subject to liability if such use is found defamatory, harassing, discriminatory, threatening, or in violation of any applicable law, policy, or regulation. Staff members may also be liable if they use confidential or copyrighted information (such as music, videos, or text) belonging to others. All such postings are prohibited under this policy.

If a staff member's social media use violates a law, the staff member may be subject to legal remedies and penalties including, but not limited to, any criminal law sanctions or penalties, if a criminal law is violated. VCOE shall not be liable, under any circumstances, for staff use of social media, and shall not reimburse employees for any errors, omissions, loss, or damage claimed or incurred due to any social media use.

PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

VCOE employees must be mindful that any Internet information is ultimately accessible to the world. To avoid jeopardizing their professional effectiveness, employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the privacy policies, settings, and protections on any social networking websites to which they choose to subscribe and be aware that information posted online, despite privacy protections, is easily and often reported to administrators or exposed to VCOE students.