

# ISLAMIC CENTER OF AMERICA

## Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah

215 North Orton Parkway  
East Orange, N.J. 07017  
(973) 672-6690  
www.thesunnah.org/school



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## Use of Technology and Social Media Policy

### Purpose

This policy has been created to ensure that information disclosed by Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah (MAS) and its employees is timely, accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and relevant to all aspects of Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah. In accordance with MAS, this policy will provide the framework to facilitate the timely dissemination of information. Adherence to this policy will reinforce its current non-discriminatory practices based on sex, race, color, national origin, religion, weight, marital status, handicap, age, political affiliation, disability, or any other status covered by federal, state, or local law.

### Who does this policy apply to?

This social media policy applies to all Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah employees, teachers, students, Board Members, and auxiliary personnel. This policy covers all social media and media platforms, social networks, blogs, photo sharing, wikis, online forums, and video sharing.

### FACULTY AND STAFF GUIDELINES

#### 1. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

##### Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Digital Images & Video

- Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah employees are personally responsible for the hosted content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish on social media channels will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
- When posting online, please remember that you are an employee of Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah and a representative of your colleagues, students, parents, and the school community.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face.
- Blogs, wikis, and podcasts are an extension of your classroom and considered official content. What is inappropriate in the classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- Do not post photos or movies of fellow employees without their permission. Do not use photos or movies taken at school without permission. Do not post photos or movies that contain Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah students without parental consent.
- There are many websites that allow users to share personally created movies. You are responsible for all you do, say, and post online, including videos. Anything posted online should represent you

in a professional manner, as others will see you as connected to MAS. It disrupts learning when teachers, employees, and staff post videos with questionable content.

- When posting online, be sure not to post confidential student information.
- Cyberbullying is not to be tolerated. Any incidence of cyberbullying should be reported to the Principal immediately. All cyberbullying incidents are to be taken seriously.

### **Personal Use of Social Networking Sites, Including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram**

- Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah staff and employees are personally responsible for all comments/information and hosted content they publish online. Be mindful that things such as Tweets and Status Updates will be visible and public for a long time.
- By posting comments or having online conversations, etc., on social media sites, you are broadcasting to the world. Be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings, what you 'say' online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.
- Comments related to MAS, its employees, staff, and events related to MAS should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even on the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.
- Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject where possible. This is especially the case where photographs of professional colleagues are concerned.
- Before posting personal photographs, consider whether the images reflect on Islam and/or your professionalism.
- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use are deemed inappropriate. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality and an extension of your professional life and classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall, then it should be considered inappropriate to post online.
- Microblogging (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.) comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and refrain from any comment and/or hashtags that could be deemed unprofessional. Hashtags that tag students and provide personal financial gain are prohibited. Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah students are not to be used as promotional audiences.
- MAS employees are not permitted to solicit or accept "Friend" Requests from enrolled MAS students on any personal social media account. This includes students' accounts and MAS employee personal accounts.
- MAS employees are not permitted to encourage any students (K-12) enrolled at MAS to create social media accounts of any kind.
- All MAS employees who choose to utilize Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any other social media platform to provide classroom information to students and parents must create a "teacher" page. Posts must be exclusively about classroom or school activities.

## **2. STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONS**

- Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students; this is unprofessional and inappropriate. Examples of unprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers, such as writing personal letters or emails; "texting" students; calling students on cell phones or allowing students to make personal calls to them unrelated to homework or classwork; sending inappropriate pictures to students; discussing or revealing to students personal matters about their private lives or inviting students to do the same (other than professional counseling by a school counselor); and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet, or in writing.
- Employees who post information on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar websites that include inappropriate personal information such as, but not limited to: provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, or use of alcohol or drugs must understand that if students, parents, or other employees obtain access to such information, their case will be investigated by school and district officials and, if warranted, will be disciplined up to and including termination, depending on the severity of the offense. The case may also be forwarded to the appropriate state department for review and possible further sanctions.
- The Superintendent or designees reserve the right to periodically conduct internet searches to determine if employees have posted inappropriate materials online. If inappropriate use of computers and websites is discovered, the Superintendent's designees will download the offensive material and promptly bring misconduct to the attention of the Superintendent.

## **3. EMAILS**

Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah, in accordance with the Policy on Student Education Technology Acceptable Use and Safety, expects that all electronic or any other communications by employees to students or parents at any time, from any email system, shall be professional, acceptable in content to any reasonable person, and limited to information that is school-related or acceptable to both student and parent. Email communication between employees, students, and parents should be conducted through the school-provided email application. Emails must conform to school email policies.

## **4. CYBERBULLYING**

Cyberbullying by a Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah student directed toward another MAS student or school staff member disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and the school's ability to educate its pupils in a safe environment.

Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah prohibits acts of cyberbullying by MAS students through the use of any MAS-owned, operated, and supervised technologies. The school principal or designee may report allegations of cyberbullying to law enforcement authorities.

Any act online, on the Internet, or through electronic devices (cellular phones, tablets) that deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual's property;

or has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school is considered cyberbullying. Any student or school staff member who believes they have been subjected to cyberbullying, or who has reason to believe that a student or school staff member is being subjected to or has been subjected to cyberbullying, shall immediately report the incident to the school principal or designee.

Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah has a zero-tolerance policy against cyberbullying, and each reported instance will be handled in accordance with district, local, and state rules, policies, and guidelines.

## **5. MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND FILM**

- A reporter, producer, or other news media may contact you for various reasons, such as:
- To get information about Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah, teachers, or employees.
- To get information about a recent, unexpected event such as natural disasters, thefts or arrests, accidents or injuries; parent or teacher complaints; federal, state, or local regulatory actions; etc.
- To get information or comment about an action or event that could impact our school district, teachers and/or staff, students, or changes in school or government policies.
- To get general information on a topical story in our community, such as changes to local or state government officials or policies, or issues specific to the academic community.

### **Protocol when dealing with media:**

- Refer all media calls to the Principal. Please do not say you are not allowed to talk to a reporter or need permission to do so. Instead, tell the reporter: "Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah's policy is to refer all media inquiries to the Principal."
- When taking a call from the media, display the same courtesy and professionalism as you would with students and parents. Act quickly to ensure that the reporter's deadline is met. This is important because how this call is handled may be the reporter's first impression of Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah, and that first impression may end up in the story published or the news segment broadcast. To promote our MAS image, it is crucial to respond quickly, courteously, and professionally to all media calls.
- Remember to contact the Principal if and when you have been approached by the media. Even though you have referred the media, the Principal will need to prepare a response. Do not let a reporter compel you to answer questions on the spot. It is always beneficial to prepare in advance to provide accurate and relevant information.
- A similar process will be used when someone from the media requests permission to take photographs or film inside our facility. Refer the caller to the Principal. No one will be given access to the facility/school for a photo or filming without approval from the Principal. Equally important, the Principal will not give approval without consulting with the District Superintendent and/or Imam.
- The Principal will not send the media to any facility and/or building without prior approval from the District Superintendent and/or Imam. When dealing with reporters and camera crews who may show up unannounced, staff and employees should act with the same courtesy and professionalism as we do with parents and students.
- For school phone numbers and the Principal's name, please see the last page of this document.

## 6. BLOGGING GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah continues to explore how online discourse through social media channels can empower teachers, students, parents, and staff. We understand the importance of these interactions in communicating the highlights of academic collaboration and achievement. MAS is committed to continuing to explore new technologies and their best practices.

These Blogging Guidelines and Best Practices will help you make appropriate decisions about your MAS-related blogging, blog content curation, and responses to comments and blogs. The lines between public and private, personal and professional are often blurred in the digital world.

By identifying yourself as a Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah employee online, you are connected to colleagues, students, parents, and the school community. Ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah.

- All blogs and other media will be posted at the discretion of the Principal. Any blog or other social media involving MAS can be posted and/or removed at the Principal's discretion.
- All blogs and other social media sites are communication channels of Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah and should be maintained consistently throughout the school year.
- Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time. Remember to protect your privacy.
- As with all online interactions, your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face.
- Blogs are an extension of your classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- Do not share information that is confidential and proprietary about MAS, its employees, students, and/or staff.
- When blogging, be respectful of your colleagues. Be thoughtful and accurate in your writing, and respectful of how other Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah members may be affected.
- Blogs should be brief and not exceed 500 words. Be concise and know your audience.
- Do not comment on school-related legal matters unless approved by the Principal. Additionally, when blogging about School Board decisions, financial information, or other controversial issues, contact the Principal before publishing your post.
- When blogging online, do not post confidential student information, including grades, awards, and/or disciplinary action. If you are unsure of what is considered confidential, contact the Principal.
- Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah employees should include disclaimers in their personal blogs stating that the views are their own and do not reflect those of the school.
- Classroom blogs do not require a disclaimer, but teachers are encouraged to moderate content contributed by students.
- Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Avoid plagiarism and give credit when it is due.

- Blogs and comments related to MAS should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting or blogging, even on the strictest settings, staff should assume that all postings are in the public domain.

## 7. DANGERS OF STUDENT SEXTING

There is currently no specific legislation dealing with the issue of sexting, but students and guardians should be aware that sexting between teenagers can result in prosecution under state and federal child pornography laws. This carries very serious penalties. If a minor is convicted of any crimes associated with sexting (which includes creating, sending, or sharing with others), they could serve time in prison, face heavy fines, and be required to register as a sex offender. These penalties and charges can apply whether or not the sharing is consensual, and even if both students involved are minors.

If a student is found to be sharing or distributing such material on Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah property, they will be handled individually and in violation of the district's behavioral policies. Parents/guardians will be notified of the incident. Additionally, as all members of school staff are legal mandatory reporters of serious harm, and due to the fact that an offense of this type is categorized as child pornography, school officials will be required by law to report known occurrences to New Jersey law enforcement.

When discussing personal technology use with students, advise them that engaging in sexting (whether as the sender or recipient) could result in severe consequences. In addition to prison sentences and fines, current laws require those convicted to register as sex offenders in New Jersey's Sex Offender Registry. Being on this list can severely impact one's ability to live a normal life, including restrictions on living, working, or loitering near a school, and challenges in finding employment.

While discussing these challenging topics may feel uncomfortable, it is important to talk with students about the consequences of these behaviors. At Madrasatu Ahlis Sunnah, we aim to provide a safe and healthy environment for our students and share this information to ensure awareness, protection, and support for their successful futures.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Social Media Account:** A personalized presence inside a social networking channel, initiated at will by an individual, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, and other social networking channels allowing users to sign up for their own social media account, which they can use to collaborate, interact, and share content and status updates. When a user communicates through a social media account, their disclosures are attributed to their User Profile.
- **Social Media Channels:** Blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networks, social bookmarking services, user rating services, and any other online collaboration, sharing, or publishing platform, whether accessed through the web, a mobile device, text messaging, email, or other existing or emerging communications platforms.
- **Professional Social Media:** Professional social media is a work-related social media activity that is either school-based (e.g., a MAS staff member establishing a Facebook page for his/her school or

school department) or non-school based (e.g., an East Orange Department of Education establishing a Facebook page to facilitate the department's administration of certain regulations).

- **Social Media Disclosures:** Blog posts, blog comments, status updates, text messages, posts via email, images, audio recordings, video recordings, or any other information made available through a social media channel. Social media disclosures are the actual communications a user distributes through a social media channel, usually by means of their social media account.
- **Controversial Issues:** Issues that form the basis of heated debates, often identified in political campaigns as wedge issues, since they provoke a strong emotional response. Examples include political views, health care reform, education reform, and gun control.
- **Inbound Links:** An inbound link is a hyperlink that transits from one domain to another. A hyperlink that transits from an external domain to your own domain is referred to as an inbound link. Inbound links are important because they play a role in how search engines rank pages and domains in search results.
- **Hosted Content:** Text, pictures, audio, video, or other information in digital form that is uploaded and resides in the social media account of the author of a social media disclosure. If you download content off the Internet and upload it to your social media account, you are hosting it. This distinction is important because it is generally illegal to host copyrighted content publicly on the Internet without first obtaining the permission of the copyright owner.
- **Copyrights:** Copyrights protect the right of an author to control the reproduction and use of any creative expression that has been fixed in tangible form, such as literary works, graphical works, photographic works, audiovisual works, electronic works, and musical works. It is illegal to reproduce and use copyrighted content publicly on the Internet without first obtaining the permission of the copyright owner.
- **Official Content:** An online journal that contains entries or posts consisting of text, links, images, video, or other media and is usually between 300-500 words.
- **Microblogging:** Posting brief and often frequent updates online. Unlike traditional blogs, which are often hosted on a custom website, microblogs are typically published on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Facebook.
- **Cyberbully:** Cyberbullying is the use of electronic information and communication devices, including but not limited to email messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, Internet blogs, Internet chat rooms, Internet postings, and defamatory websites.