

## OFF-DUTY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDENTS

### Definition

For the purposes of this policy:

- *Electronic communication* includes, but is not limited to, use of social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace), instant messaging, private email accounts (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo). Chatting (including, but not limited to, video and voice chat), online forums, online games, short messaging services (including, but not limited to, texting), and blogs/web feeds.
- *Student* is defined as any individual currently enrolled in district schools or any individual formerly enrolled in district schools who is under the age of 18.

### Restrictions Contained in Other District Policies

The Midway School District (District) has created policies governing student-staff relations, confidentiality, and employee speech. These policies govern on- and off- duty conduct, including when engaged in electronic communications. The District has also established policies governing staff's on-duty use of the internet and electronic devices. In addition, teachers are governed by the ND Code of Professional Conduct for Educators.

### Purpose of this Policy

This policy is created because the Midway School Board (Board) believes that staff access to students in an unmonitored environment has a detrimental impact on the professional relationship between students and staff; because the District strives to preserve the privacy of students and staff; and because electronic correspondence of District employees may be subject to open record laws and/or district record retention requirements.

This policy does not apply to electronic communications made by coaches/advisors/staff when acting in their official capacity for the purpose of informing students about school related activities.

### Restrictions

The District prohibits staff from corresponding electronically with students when off duty except through use of District email accounts, on Blackboard, through a district-administered social network and/or through school-sponsored applications. A violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination/discharge in accordance with district policy, law, and, if applicable, the negotiated agreement.

This policy does not apply to off-duty electronic communication with a student who is an employee's family member.

### **Enforcement**

The District will not actively monitor websites to ensure employee compliance with this policy but shall investigate any suspected or alleged violation of this policy.