

Personnel - Certified/Non-Certified

Rights, Responsibilities and Duties

Acceptable Computer Network Use (Employee Use of Technology)

Use of Social Media

The Board of Education recognizes the importance and utility of Social Media for its employees. The laws regarding Social Media continue to evolve and change. Nothing in the Board's policy or these administrative regulations is intended to limit an employee's right to use Social Media under applicable law, as it may evolve. The Board acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern. The Board will resolve any conflict between the Board's policy or these regulations and applicable law in favor of the law.

Ordinarily, the use of Social Media by employees, including employees' personal use Social Media, will not be a legal or policy issue. While a policy or regulation cannot address every instance of inappropriate Social Media use, employees must refrain from having an online presence that:

1. Interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;
2. Is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications about students, coworkers or other members of the school community;
3. Creates a hostile work environment;
4. Breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees;
5. Disrupts the work of the school district;
6. Harms the goodwill and reputation of the school district in the community; or
7. Violates the law, Board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

Definitions:

The rapid speed at which technology continuously evolves makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify all types of Social Media.

Thus, the term **Social Media** indicates a variety of online tools and services that allow users to publish content and interact with their audiences. By way of example, Social Media includes:

1. Social-networking sites (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+);
2. Blogs and microblogs (i.e., Twitter, Tumblr);

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Definitions: (continued)

3. Websites (i.e., TeacherWeb, Google Sites);
4. Content-sharing sites (i.e., Scribd, SlideShare); and
5. Image-sharing and video-sharing sites (i.e., Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Pintrest).

The term **Board of Education** includes all names, logos, images and entities under the authority of the Board of Education.

Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity

1. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including a review of employee personal Social Media activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any personal communication made through Social Media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other electronic devices. While the Board reserves the right to monitor use of its computer systems, employees may engage in incidental personal use of Social Media in the workplace as long as such use does not interfere with operations, productivity, and does not violate other Board policies.
2. An employee may not mention, discuss or reference the Board of Education, the school district or its individual schools, programs, clubs or teams on personal Social Media sites in a manner that could reasonably be construed as an official school district communication.
3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues. For example, it is not appropriate for an employee to “friend” a student or otherwise establish special relationships with selected students through personal Social Media and it is not appropriate for an employee to give students access to personal postings unrelated to school.
4. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with parents/guardians and colleagues. For example, if there is no established relationship to the parent/guardian or colleague other than an online relationship (e.g., relative, family friend, or personal relationship unrelated to school), it is not appropriate for an employee to “friend” a parent/guardian or colleague or otherwise establish special relationships with selected parents/guardians or colleagues through personal Social Media and it is not appropriate for an employee to give parents/guardians or colleagues, with whom the employee does not have an established relationship other than an online relationship, access to personal postings unrelated to school.

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Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity (continued)

5. In accordance with the public trust doctrine, employees are advised to refrain from engaging in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications through personal Social Media. Such communications reflect poorly on the school district's reputation, can affect the educational process and may substantially and materially interfere with an employee's ability to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities.
6. Employees are individually responsible for their personal communications through personal Social Media. Employees may be sued by other employees, parents or others, and any individual that views an employee's communication through personal Social Media as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. In addition, employees should consider refraining from posting anything that belongs to another person or entity, such as copyrighted publications or trademarked images. As all of these activities are outside the scope of employment, employees must be personally liable for such claims.
7. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures with respect to the use of computer equipment, networks or electronic devices when accessing personal Social Media sites through district computer or data systems. Any access to personal Social Media activities while on school property or using school district equipment must comply with those policies, and may not interfere with an employee's duties at work.
8. All communications through personal Social Media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student and colleague information. If an employee is considering sharing information and is unsure about the confidential nature of the information, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to communicating such information.
9. An employee may not link a personal Social Media site to the Board of Education's Social Media sites or the Social Media sites of individual schools, clubs, programs or teams or post official Board of Education material on a personal Social Media site without written permission of his/her supervisor.
10. All of the Board of Education's policies and administrative regulations apply to employee use of personal Social Media in the same way that they apply to conduct that occurs in the workplace and off-duty conduct.
11. All Board of Education policies that regulate off-duty conduct apply to Social Media activity including, but not limited to, policies related to public trust, illegal harassment, code of conduct, and protecting confidential information.

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Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity (continued)

12. Unless given written consent, employees may not use the Board of Education's logo or trademarks on their personal posts. Please note that this prohibition extends to the uses of logos or trademarks associated with individual schools, programs or teams of the school district.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

1. In order for an employee to use Social Media sites as an educational tool or in relation to extracurricular activities, clubs, events or programs of the school district, the employee must seek and obtain the prior written permission of his/her supervisor.
2. If an employee wishes to Social Media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements, etc. for a school-based extracurricular activity, club, event, team or program of the school district or official school-based organization, the employee must also comply with the following rules:
 - The employee must set up the Social Media as a group list, which will be "closed" (e.g., membership in the group is limited to students, parents and appropriate school personnel) and "monitored" (e.g., the employee has the ability to access and supervise communications on the Social Media site).
 - Parents shall be included in the group list in order to access any site that their child has been invited to join.
 - Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the extracurricular activity, club, team, or program of the school district, or official school-based organization.
 - The employee responsible for the Social Media site will monitor it regularly.
 - The employee's supervisor shall be permitted access to any district-sponsored Social Media site established by the employee.
 - Anyone who has access to the communications conveyed through the site may only gain access by the permission of the employee (e.g., teacher, administrator, supervisor). Persons desiring to access the page may join only after the employee invites them and allows them to join.
 - Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all such district-sponsored Social Media sites and activities.

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Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity (continued)

3. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech in their Social Media on district-sponsored sites and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate statements in Social Media communications on district-sponsored sites.
4. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures and all applicable laws with respect to the use of computer equipment, networks or devices when accessing district-sponsored Social Media sites.
5. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including employee Social Media activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication or post made through Social Media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other data devices that are the property of the school district.
6. All posts on district-sponsored Social Media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student and employee information. If an employee is considering sharing information on Social Media and is unsure about the confidential nature of information, the employee responsible for the district-sponsored Social Media shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to communicating such information.
7. An employee may not link a district-sponsored Social Media site to any personal Social Media sites or sites not sponsored by the school district.
8. An employee may not use district-sponsored Social Media site communications for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing or solicitation purposes.
9. An employee may not use district-sponsored Social Media communication in a manner that misrepresents personal views as those of the Board of Education, individual school or school district, or in a manner that could be construed as such.

Disciplinary Consequences

Violation of the Board's policy or administrative regulations concerning the use of Social Media may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment consistent with state and federal law.

(cf. 4118.24/4218.24 - Staff/Student Non-Fraternization)

(cf. 4118.4/4218.4 - E-Mail - Electronic Monitoring)

(cf. 4118.5/4218.5 - Acceptable Computer Network Use)

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(cf. 4118.6/4218.6 - Cellular Telephones/District Issued Communication Devices)

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

(cf. 6141.32 - Computer Literacy)

(cf. 6141.321 - Student Acceptable Use of the Internet)

Legal References: U.S. Constitution, Amend. I
 Conn. Constitution, Article I, Sections 3, 4, 14
 Conn. Gen. Stat. §31-48d
 Conn. Gen. Stat. §31-51q
 Conn. Gen. Stat. §§53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-250
 Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 28 U.S.C. §§2510 through 2520