

## SOCIAL NETWORKING - PERSONNEL

The Board of Education recognizes the importance of social media for its employees, and acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern. However, the Board will regulate the use of social media by employees, including employees' personal use of social media, when such use:

- 1) interferes with, or disrupts, the work of the school district;
- 2) is used to harass coworkers or other members of the school community;
- 3) creates a hostile work environment;
- 4) breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees;
- 5) harms the goodwill and reputation of the school district in the community; or
- 6) violates the law, Board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

The Board of Education therefore adopts the following guidelines for the use of social media by Board of Education employees.

### **Definitions:**

Social Media includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, MySpace, blogs, other electronic communications systems, and future or newly developed sites and networking media.

Board of Education includes the Board of Education itself and its members as well as all names, logos, buildings, images and entities under the authority of the Board of Education.

### **Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity**

1. An employee may not mention, discuss or reference the Board of Education, the school district or its individual schools, programs or teams on personal Social Media in a manner that could reasonably be construed as an official school district communication, unless the employee also states that the post is the personal communication of the employee of the school district and that the views posted are the employee's alone and do not represent the views of the school district or the Board of Education. Employees are solely responsible for their personal communications and posts. The Board of Education is not responsible for employees' personal communications, posts, and conduct when using Social Media.
2. Employees must use caution in mentioning other Board of Education employees or other members of the school community (*e.g.*, parents or others) on personal social networking sites without such individuals' express consent, unless the employee is addressing an issue of public concern and the employee's speech falls under applicable constitutional protections pertaining to same. Such postings are outside of the employee's job responsibilities, and employees are subject to potential liability as described in Section 6 below. In no case may a

Board of Education employee mention specific students, or post student photographs, on personal Social Media unless there is an unrelated special relationship (e.g. relative or family friend). For the purposes of this Section, “specific” shall mean the identification of a student by name (first, middle, or last) or the mention of information that could reasonably lead to the identification of the student.

3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, colleagues, and other employees. For example, absent an unrelated special relationship (e.g. relative or family friend), it is not appropriate for a teacher, administrator, or other staff to “friend” a student or his/her parent or guardian or otherwise establish special relationships with selected students through personal Social Media, and it is not appropriate for an employee to give students or parents access to personal postings unrelated to school. Nothing herein would prohibit a teacher, administrator, or other staff member from “friending” a student who is no longer enrolled in the Weston Public Schools so long as professionalism is maintained.
4. Unless given written consent, employees may not use the Board of Education’s logos or trademarks on their personal posts. Please note that this prohibition extends to the use of logos or trademarks associated with individual schools, programs or teams of the school district. This provision does not apply to photographs of: (a) the employee or other adults wearing clothing bearing the Board of Education’s logos or trademarks; (b) facilities (ex. athletic fields, gyms) where the logos or trademarks were previously in place or displayed as part of the event, and (c) students wearing clothing bearing the Board of Education’s logos or trademarks where an unrelated special relationship exists with the employee (e.g. relative or family friend).
5. Employees shall refrain from (a) harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, or threatening communications, and (b) other inappropriate communications where such communications substantially interfere with an employee’s ability to fulfill his/her job responsibilities. Such posts 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. (See also Board of Education Civility Policy, No. 1255).
6. Employees are individually responsible for their personal posts on Social Media. Employees may be sued by other employees, parents or others, and any individual that views an employee’s Social Media posts as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. As such activities are outside the scope of employment, employees may be personally liable for such claims.
7. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including employee blogging and social networking activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any personal communication or post made through Social Media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other electronic data devices.

8. All posts on personal Social Media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is unsure about the confidential nature of information the employee is considering posting, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to making the post.
9. An employee may not link a personal Social Media site or webpage to the Board of Education's website or the websites of individual schools, programs or teams; or post Board of Education material on a Social Media site or webpage without written permission of his/her building administrator.
10. 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.
11. The Board of Education may, as necessary, report violations of this Policy to the appropriate authorities.

### **Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity**

1. If an employee seeks to use Social Media sites as an educational tool or in relation to extracurricular activities or programs of the school district, the employee must seek and obtain the permission of his/her building administrator prior to setting up the site.
2. If an employee wishes to use Facebook or other similar Social Media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements etc., for a school-based club or a school-based activity or an official school-based organization, or an official sports team, the employee must also comply with the following rules:
  - o The employee must set up the club, etc. as a group list which will be "closed and moderated."
  - o Members will not be established as "friends" or similar designations but as members of the group list.
  - o 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 or coach). Persons desiring to access the page may join only after the employee invites them and allows them to join.
  - o Parents shall be permitted to access any Social Media site that their child has been invited to join. Parents will be notified when their child is invited to join a Social Media site. Any user who is disruptive may have their access and privileges modified appropriately with administrative approval.
  - o Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization or team.
  - o The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly.

- The employee's building administrator(s) shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose.
  - Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all such district-sponsored Social Media activity.
3. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech in their Social Media posts on district-sponsored sites; and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications.
  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 blogging and social networking 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.
  6. All posts on district-sponsored Social Media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is unsure about the confidential nature of information the employee is considering posting, the employee shall consult with his/her building administrator prior to making the post.
  7. An employee may not link a district-sponsored Social Media site or webpage to any personal Social Media sites or sites not sponsored by the school district.
  8. An employee may not use district-sponsored Social Media communications for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing, or solicitation purpose.
  9. An employee may not use district-sponsored Social Media communications 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 reasonably be construed as such.

### **Disciplinary Consequences**

Violation of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment consistent with state and federal law, existing collective bargaining agreements, and Board policies.

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

#### Policy References

Civility, Policy No. 1255  
Electronic Mail Communications – Certified Personnel, Policy No. 4118.4  
Student Use of the District’s Computer Systems and Internet Safety  
Policy No. 6182, Administrative Regulation 6182  
Web Site Policy, Policy No. 6183  
Policy Regarding Unexpected Broadcast, Policy No. 6184

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