

Personnel - Certified/Non-Certified

Rights, Responsibilities and Duties

Acceptable Computer Network Use (Employee Use of Technology)

Social Networking

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, 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.

The Board of Education therefore adopts the following guidelines for the use of Social Media by Board of Education employees.

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);
3. Webpages (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).

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Definitions: (continued)

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. 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 sites.
2. Employees must refrain from mentioning other Board of Education employees or other members of the school community (e.g., parents or others) on personal Social Media sites.
3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students. For example, it is not appropriate for an employee to “friend” a student or otherwise establish special relationships through personal Social Media, and it is not appropriate for an employee to give students access to personal postings unrelated to school.
4. Unless given written consent, employees may not use the Board of Education’s logo or trademarks on their personal Social Media. Please note that this prohibition extends to the uses of logos or trademarks associated with individual schools, programs or teams of the school district.
5. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech in their personal Social Media posts and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications. Such posts reflect poorly on the school district’s reputation, can affect the educational process and may substantially and materially interfere with the employee’s ability to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities.
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 hostile work environment. As such activities are outside the scope of employment, employees may 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 Social Media sites. 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 and during work.

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Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity (continued)

8. 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 personal communication or post made through Social Media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other electronic data devices that are the property of the school district.
9. All posts on personal 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 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.
10. 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, events, programs or teams; or post Board of Education material on a Social Media site without written permission of his/her supervisor.
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.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

1. If an employee seeks to use Social Media sites as educational tools or in relation to extracurricular activities, clubs, teams or programs of the school district, the employee must seek and obtain permission of his/her supervisor prior to setting up the site.
2. If an employee wishes to Social Media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements, etc. for a school-based extracurricular activity, club, 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 and moderated."
 - Members will not be established as "friends" but as members of the group list.

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Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity (continued)

- 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.
 - Parents shall be permitted 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 site will monitor the site regularly.
 - The employee's supervisor 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 Social Media activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication or post made through Social Media while using 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 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.
 7. An employee may not link a district-sponsored Social Media to any personal Social Media 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.

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Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity (continued)

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 this policy 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)
- (cf. 4131 - Staff Development)
- (cf. 5125 - Student Records)
- (cf. 6141.32 - Computer Literacy)
- (cf. 6141.321 - Student Acceptable Use of the Internet)
- (cf. 6141.322 - Websites/Pages)
- (cf. 6141.323 - Internet Safety Policy/Filtering)

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes

The Freedom of Information Act

53A-182B Harassment in the first degree.

31-48d Employees engaged in electronic monitoring required to give prior notice to employees. Exceptions. Civil penalty.

United States Code, Title 20

675 1-6777 Enhancing Education through Technology Act, Title II, Part D, especially: 6777 Internet safety

United States Code, Title 47

254 Universal service discounts (E-rate)

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 47

54.520 Internet safety policy and technology protection measures, E-rate discounts

U.S. Constitution, 1st Amendment

Connecticut Constitution, Article 1, Sections 3, 4, 14

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THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Thomaston, Connecticut