

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Use of Social Media

Statement

The Board of Education recognizes that social media can enhance employee performance by offering effective tools to assist in facilitating communications with parents/guardians, students and the community, supporting District and school operations and improving access to and exchange of information. The Board also acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern. In accordance with the provisions of the First Amendment, 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;
3. Creates a hostile work environment;
4. Breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; and/or
5. Violates the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

The misuse of social media can substantially interfere with the effective operation of the school district and can impinge significantly upon the rights of others. Given the importance of using social media in a proper, effective manner, the Board has developed the following provisions regarding the use of social media by employees.

Definitions

Social Media – also referred to as social networking, is a form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook.

Rules and Guidelines Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

1. District-sponsored social media may only be used for the purpose of sharing district-related information with families, students and the community.
2. If an employee seeks to use district-sponsored social media sites to communicate information with families, students and the community, the employee must seek and obtain the written permission of his/her supervisor prior to setting up and/or utilizing the site by submitting a "social media request form," which shall include a written description of the proposed use of the site.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Use of Social Media

Rules and Guidelines Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity (continued)

3. If an employee wishes to use district-sponsored social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, announcements, etc. for a school based club, school based activity, an official school based organization or an official sports team the employee must also comply with the following rules:
 - a. The employee must set up the district-sponsored social media site as a group page which will be “closed” (e.g. membership in the group is limited to students, parents and appropriate school personnel).
 - b. The employee must set up the district-sponsored social media site to block any new posts from members, block any lewd, profane or obscene language from being posted and monitor all communications being posted to the site.
 - c. When Facebook or similar social media sites are used as a district-sponsored social media site, members will not be established as “friends” but as members of the group list.
 - d. The district-sponsored social media site must be established in a manner such that anyone who has access to the communications conveyed through the site may only gain access by the permission of the Board employee responsible for that social media site.
 - e. Parents shall be permitted to access any site that their child has been invited to join.
 - f. The employee responsible for the site shall monitor it regularly.
 - g. The employee’s supervisor shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school related purpose.
 - h. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the use of district-sponsored social media activity at all times.
4. Employees are required to refrain from making harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, or threatening, or similarly inappropriate, statements in their social media posts on district-sponsored sites.
5. Employees are required to comply with all Region 14 Board of Education (BOE) policies and procedures and all applicable laws when accessing district-sponsored social media sites.
6. The Board reserves the right to monitor any and all district-sponsored social media sites. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy with regard to any communication or post made or accessed through a district-sponsored social media site.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Use of Social Media

Rules and Guidelines Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity (continued)

7. All posts on district-sponsored social media must comply with Region 14 BOE's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is unsure about the confidential nature of the information the employee is considering posting, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to making the post. Directory information (as defined in Board of Education Policy 5145.15) shall not be posted, publicized or otherwise communicated through any district-sponsored social media site if a student's parent/legal guardian has objected to the release of directory information under Board of Education Policy 5125.
8. No personal social media site or webpage shall be linked to a district-sponsored social media site at any time.
9. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media communications for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing or solicitation purposes.
10. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media communications in a manner that misrepresents personal views as those of the Board, individual school or school district, or in a manner that could be construed as such.

Rules and Guidelines Concerning Personal Social Media Activity

1. Personal social media accounts must be kept separate from district-sponsored social media accounts. Accepting invitations to non-school related social networking sites from parents or students, or from alumni under the age of 18, is prohibited, absent a prior or special relationship (relative or family friend).
2. 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 networking sites in a manner that could reasonably be construed as an official school district communication, unless the employee also states within the communication that such communication is the personal view of the employee of the school district and that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not represent the views of the school district or the Board of Education.
3. Use of District logos or images on one's personal social networking sites is prohibited.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Use of Social Media

Rules and Guidelines Concerning Personal Social Media Activity (continued)

4. Any employee may not link a personal social media site or webpage to a district-sponsored social media site, the BOE's website or the websites of individual schools, programs or teams.
5. All communications through personal social media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student 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.
6. 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.
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 made through social media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other electronic data devices.
8. Employees are individually responsible for their personal communications through social media. Employees may be sued by other employees, parents or others, and any individual that views an employee's communication through social media 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.
9. Employees must 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.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Use of Social Media (continued)

Disciplinary Consequences for Inappropriate, Unauthorized and Illegal Use

Violation of the Board's policy 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)
- (cf. 4118.51/4218.51 – Social Networking)
- (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.
 - P.A. 98-142 An Act Requiring Notice to Employees of Electronic Monitoring by Employers.
 - 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.

Policy adopted: April 9, 2018

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 14
Bethlehem and Woodbury, Connecticut