

Regulation 4476/4890

Personnel - Certified/Non-Certified

Social Media

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** includes 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 micro-blogs (i.e. Twitter, Tumblr);
3. content-sharing sites (i.e. Scribd, SlideShare); and
4. imagesharing and videosharing sites (i.e. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Pinterest).

Board of Education includes all names, logos, buildings, images and entities under the authority of the Board of Education.

Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity

1. The Board understands that employees utilize social media and the web for personal matters in the workplace. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including a review of employee blogging and 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 data 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 so long as such use does not interfere with operations and 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 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 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. An example of such a disclaimer is: "the opinions and views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of the school district or Board of Education." For example, except as may be permitted by Board policy, employees may not provide job references for other individuals on social media that indicate that such references are made in an official capacity on behalf of the Board of Education.

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3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues. For example, it is not appropriate for a teacher or administrator to “friend” a student who is currently enrolled in Waterford Public Schools 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. 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.
5. 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 posts 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 may be personally liable for such claims.
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 personal social media sites through district computer 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.
7. 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 will consult with his/her supervisor prior to making the post.
8. 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 personal social media site or webpage without written permission of his/her supervisor.

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9. All of the Board of Education’s policies and administrative regulations apply to employee use of personal social media in the same way they apply to conduct that occurs in the workplace and off-duty conduct

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 prior permission of his/her supervisor prior to setting up the site.
2. If an employee wishes to use social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements etc., for a school-based club or an school-based activity or 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 site using the privacy settings that are most appropriate to the educational use of that social media platform (granting access to students, parents and appropriate school personnel), and that allow it to be “monitored” (e.g. the employee has the ability to access and supervise communications on the social media site). Because social media sites and their privacy settings are continuously evolving, employees who are unsure of the most appropriate privacy settings for a site will consult with their administrator prior to making a site available to student or parents.
 - b. Parents shall be permitted to access any site that their child has been invited to join.
 - c. Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization or team.
 - d. The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly.
 - e. The employee’s supervisor shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose.
 - f. 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.

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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 supervisor 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 be construed as such.

Disciplinary Consequences

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

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

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WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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