

Series 4000 – Personnel – Certified & Non-Certified

1. Certified Personnel

A. Permanent Personnel

(8) Rights, Responsibilities and Duties

(f) Use of Social Media

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 Superintendent/or his/her designee will regulate the use of social media by employees, including employees' personal use of social media, when such use:

- interferes with or disturbs the work of the school district,
- is used to harass coworkers or other members of the school community,
- creates a hostile work environment,
- breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees,
- harms the goodwill and reputation of the school district in the community,
- or violates the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

The Superintendent with the administration will create and maintain administrative regulations to implement this policy.

Definitions:

Social Media includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat, etc.

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. 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 network sites, 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.
2. Employees must refrain from mentioning the Superintendent, Board of Education members, School district 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 the same.

3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues. If faculty and staff “friend” or “follow” parents and guardians, communications shall not interfere with the roles and responsibilities of staff. It is also 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 of 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.
5. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech in their personal social media posts, and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications.
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. All posts on personal social media must comply with the Board of Education’s policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information, which includes photographs of students. 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.
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 social media site or webpage without written permission of his/her supervisor.
9. 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 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 supervisor or the Director of Technology of the district prior to setting up the site.
2. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech on district-sponsored sites; and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications. Proper professional boundaries must be recognized at all times and all content and communication should be related only to the school purposes for which the site was established. Communication that is sensitive or personal in nature

is to be avoided. Employees must also supervise student speech to ensure that it complies with the criteria above.

3. An employee may not link a district-sponsored site or webpage to any personal social media sites or sites not sponsored by the school district. They will also inform students about the prohibited linking.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

An employee who seeks to use social media sites and related interactive technologies as an educational tool or in relation to extracurricular activities or programs of the school district may do so provided that the procedures below are followed and that the employee obtains the permission of his/her supervisor prior to setting up the site. The employee's supervisor will also be provided access to any site that is established.

1. Use will be limited to specific academic and/or school-related purposes. Sites used for these purposes must be closed in that the employee must set up password-protected access for the students and staff involved. Sites may not be publicly available. Site activity must be moderated, monitored and supervised by the employee(s) who set(s) up the site.
2. Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech on district-sponsored sites; and to refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications. Proper professional boundaries must be recognized at all times and all content and communication should be related to the educational purposes for which the site was established. Communication that is sensitive or personal in nature is to be avoided. Employees must supervise student speech to ensure that it complies with the criteria above.
3. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures including applicable laws with respect to the acceptable use of computer equipment, networks or devices when accessing district-sponsored sites. Employees must also supervise students use to ensure compliance.
4. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee and student use of district technology. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication or post while using district computers, cellular telephones, or other data devices.
5. All content and posts on district-sponsored sites must comply with the Board of Education's policies pertaining to confidentiality including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is unsure about the confidential nature of information being considered for posting by him/her or by students, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to making the post.
6. An employee may not link a district-sponsored site or webpage to any personal social media sites or sites not sponsored by the school district. They will also inform students about the prohibited linking.

7. An employee may not use district-sponsored sites for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing, or solicitation purpose. They must also supervise student use to ensure that it complies.

8. An employee may not use district-sponsored sites 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. They must also supervise student use to ensure that it complies.

Disciplinary Consequences

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Violation of the Board's policy concerning the use of social media or these administrative guidelines may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment consistent with state and federal law. Student discipline will align with BOE Policy 5144.

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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SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Suffield, Connecticut