

POLICY – STAFF EXPRESSION

5254

The North Thurston Public Schools Board of Directors believes the district has an interest in maintaining an orderly and effective work environment while balancing employees' First Amendment rights to freedom of expression and diverse viewpoints and beliefs. When employees speak within their official capacity, their expression represents the district and may be regulated. The First Amendment protects a public employee's speech when the employee is speaking as an individual citizen on a matter of public concern. Even so, employee expression that has an adverse impact on district operations and/or negatively impacts an employee's ability to perform their job for the district may still result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Staff expression includes the performance of job responsibilities and how they represent the district in their use of district email accounts, school district buildings, district property, classrooms, and how they present themselves to students.

Employees who use social media platforms are encouraged to remember that the school community may not be able to separate employees as private citizens from their role within the district. Employee expression on social media platforms that interferes with the district's operations or prevents the district from functioning efficiently and effectively may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

The procedures that accompany this Policy will adhere to this policy and specify particular district standards for staff expression, including the conditions under which a staff member can participate in written or non-verbal expression. Any violation of this Policy or adopted Procedure may result in disciplinary action.

Legal Reference:	RCW 41.06.250 RCW 42.17A.555	Political Activities Use of public office or agency facilities in campaigns - Prohibition – Exceptions
	RCW 42.17A.635	Legislative activities of state agencies, other units of government, elective officials, employees
Adopted:	August 15, 2023	NTPS Board of Directors