

Policies

Westerly Public Schools Social Networking and Text Messaging

No. 2321
Page 1 of 1

PURPOSE:

Westerly Public Schools recognizes the increasingly important role that technology plays in the educational process as well as in the personal lives of the students, faculty and staff of Westerly Public Schools. Online discourse through social computing, including the use of networking sites, text messaging, and the like empowers educators and students in the scope of their respective interactions. Instead of “mass communication” this environment represents “masses of communicators.” Westerly Public Schools respects the importance of open exchange and learning related to enhancing the educational environments in Westerly and supports this process.

Within this context, it is important that all participants feel free to express their thoughts and ideas in a manner that does not disrupt the educational process, or create unnecessary distractions to, or adversely impact the interpersonal relationships between the students, faculty and staff. This Policy is intended to foster a thoughtful, responsible use of social networking and related technological communication tools that will minimize the risk and be appropriately professional and respectful.

POLICY GUIDELINES:

No student, employee, faculty or staff of Westerly Public Schools shall post, forward, or otherwise disseminate any data, documents, photos, images, videos, or other information using any technology medium, including social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Flickr, Form Spring) which might result in a disruption of classroom activity or the educational process. Fraternization, including, but not limited to, stalking, sexual harassment, and other objectively inappropriate behavior enabled by a position of authority, via the internet, instant messaging, text messaging, or otherwise between School Personnel and students (whether by mobile telephone, computer, or other communication medium) is prohibited. Students are prohibited from engaging in stalking, sexual harassment, and other objectively inappropriate behavior among and/or between fellow students, via the Internet, instant messaging, text messaging, or otherwise (whether by mobile telephone, computer, or other communication medium).

In addition, to this policy, all School Personnel are encouraged to attend an in-service training on Internet Safety for Students, Teachers and Administrators. The purpose of this Policy is to protect and maintain professionalism in the workplace for all School Personnel and to avoid, wherever possible, the appearance of impropriety in School Personnel-Student relationships.

Any violation of this policy by School Personnel will be subject to those disciplinary sanctions included in either the Employee Handbook or the Collective Bargaining Agreement applicable to said Personnel. Any violation of this policy by Students will be subject to those disciplinary sanctions included in the Student Handbook.

Nothing in this policy prohibits School Personnel or students from using educational websites or the Westerly Public Schools' website, since these sites are used solely for educational purposes. Access of social networking websites for personal use during school hours shall be reserved for School Personnel's authorized breaks or unassigned periods only and shall not be accessed during regular work hours, including classroom instructional time.

Adopted: July 13, 2011