

## **Personnel - Certified/Non-certified**

### **Use of Social Media by Employees**

The Board recognizes the importance and utility of social media for its employees, while also recognizing that misuse of social media may cause harm. Social media includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites or applications such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Snapchat. This policy applies to all employee expressive activity on social media platforms such as liking, commenting on, or sharing the post of another individual or entity.

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit an employee's right to use social media under applicable law, as it may evolve. The Board acknowledges, for example, that its employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern. Likewise, employees have rights to engage in concerted activities for their mutual aid and protection. The Board will resolve any conflict between this policy and applicable law in favor of the law.

Nonetheless, public employees are public servants and are entrusted with the public trust. Woodbridge Board of Education (Board) personnel are held to a higher standard of professionalism than private citizens as a result of this public trust. Board personnel must work hard to gain and maintain the trust and confidence of the community. Employees must give thoughtful consideration to their actions to avoid damaging the reputation and trust the Woodbridge District has with the community. Exercising good judgement in posting content on personal social media sites is critical.

Annually, employees should be reminded by Administration of the importance of proper decorum online in the digital world as well, as in person. The reminders will give emphasis to inappropriateness of communicating with students using personal social media networking websites, messaging, and accepting students and families as "friends" on personal social networking sites. While a policy cannot address every instance of inappropriate social media use, employees must refrain from social media use that:

- (1) interferes, disrupts, or undermines the effective operation of the Woodbridge District;
- (2) is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, discriminatory or threatening, or similarly inappropriate communications;
- (3) creates a hostile work or educational environment;
- (4) breaches Woodbridge District's confidentiality obligations;
- (5) harms the goodwill and reputation of the District in the community by use of inflammatory, exaggerated, and/or unsubstantiated information; or
- (6) violates the law, board policies, and/or other school rules and regulations.

The Board, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain administrative regulations to implement this policy. The Board also strongly encourages all staff members to carefully review the privacy settings on the social networking sites they use and exercise care and good judgement when posting content and information on such sites. Ordinarily, the use of social media by employees, including employees' personal use of social media, will not be a legal or policy issue.

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The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district technology devices. The effectiveness of the Woodbridge District depends on the respect and trust of the community and on the perception in the community that it acts fairly, even-handedly, and without bias. The Administration may take action with respect to social media activity to prevent disruption to its operations. The Administration may also act, if the speech substantially or materially interferes with the employee's bona fide job performance or the working relationship between the employee and the employer.

Finally, there is no expectation of individual privacy when utilizing district devices. Employees must use only the district's computer system and district email for communication with students and families. Personal social media must be kept separate from district sponsored social media accounts. Any use of District social media for commercial purposes, financial gain, product advertising, political lobbying, or attempt to disrupt the use of services by others is prohibited.

Legal References:      Connecticut General Statutes.  
                                  The Freedom of Information Act.  
                                  53A-182B Harassment in the first degree.  
                                  J.1-48d Employees engaged in electronic monitoring required to give prior notice to  
                                  employees. Exceptions. Civil penalty.  
                                  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.  
                                  U.S. Constitution, 1st Amendment.  
                                  Connecticut Constitution, Article I, Sections 3, 4, 14