

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

REGULATION 4080

Personnel—Certified/Non-Certified

Public Communications

Use of Social Media

Employees are to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. For example, it is not appropriate for a teacher or an administrator to “friend” a student or otherwise establish special relationships with selected students through personal social media. It is not appropriate for an employee to give students access to personal postings unrelated to school. There can be no preferential relationship for some students and not others.

An employee in mentioning, discussing or referencing the Board of Education, the school district or its individual schools, programs or teams on personal social networking sites, should be aware of Board Policy 4080, which states *“The Board of Education recognizes and respects the First Amendment Rights of its employees and acknowledges that its employees have the right to speak out on matters of public concern through any and all media, including social media. The Board of Education also recognizes that inappropriate content authored by employees can interfere with the educational process. Therefore, West Hartford Public school employees who engage in any public communication, including social media, should be aware that any use which interferes with the educational mission of the district, breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees, or harms the goodwill and reputation of the school district in the community is not acceptable.”*

Employees are required to use appropriately respectful speech in their personal social media posts and to refrain from inappropriate communications. Such posts reflect poorly on the school district’s reputation and can affect the educational process.

All posts on personal social media must comply with the Board of Education’s policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. Employees must refrain from mentioning students by name on personal social networking sites.

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.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

If an employee wishes to use Facebook or other similar social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements, etc., for a school-based club, a school-based activity, an official school-based organization, or an official sports team, the employee must also comply with the following rules:

- Approval for the establishment of such a site must be obtained from the district.
- The employee must set up the club, etc., as a group list which will be "closed and moderated."
- Members will not be established as "friends," but as members of the group list.
- Anyone who has access to the communications conveyed through the site may only gain access by the permission of the employee (e.g. teacher, administrator, supervisor or coach). Persons desiring to access the page may join only after the employee invites them and allows them to join.
- Parents shall be permitted to access any site that their child has been invited to join.
- Access to the site may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization or team.
- The employee responsible for the site will monitor it regularly and will report any violation to a supervisor immediately.
- The administration shall be permitted access to any site established by the employee for a school-related purpose.

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.

An employee may not use district-sponsored social media communications for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing or solicitation purposes.

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 this policy may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment.