



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

Board Policy Statement

4118.51 - Use of Social Media

Approved on May 19, 2014 | Revised on August 17, 2020

I. Overview

The New Britain 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.

The Board of Education also recognizes that inappropriate content created by employees can be disruptive to the educational environment, violate the Board's responsibilities regarding confidential information, and compromise the goodwill and reputation of the school district.

Therefore, Board of Education employees may be subject to disciplinary action (up to and including termination) when their personal use of social media does any of the following:

- Disrupts the operations of the school district
- Interferes with the educational process
- Breaches the confidentiality rights of students or employees
- Harasses co-workers or other members of the school community
- Creates a discriminatory or hostile working or learning environment
- Endangers or otherwise puts students at risk of harm
- Harms the goodwill and reputation of the school district in the community
- Violates the law, board policies, or other school rules and regulations.

II. Definitions

The term "social media" refers to online social interaction or other public display of personal information via electronic means. Current examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and other media platforms. The term "Board of Education" includes all names, logos, buildings, images, and entities under the authority of the New Britain Board of Education.

III. Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity

- A. Employees must refrain from mentioning other Board of Education 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.
- B. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues.

- C. It is not appropriate for an employee to "friend" or communicate with 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.
- D. Employee email communications with students should be through a district-approved email system not through personal email accounts.
- E. 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. Such posts reflect poorly on the school district's reputation, can affect the educational process and may substantially and materially interfere with an employee's ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.
- F. Employees are individually responsible for their personal posts on social media websites. 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. Such activities are outside the scope of employment. Employees may be held personally liable for such claims.
- G. All posts on personal social media must comply with the Board of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is unsure about the confidential nature of information the employee is considering posting, the employee shall consult with their supervisor prior to making the post.
- H. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and regulations with respect to the acceptable use of computer equipment, networks, and electronic devices when accessing the Internet. Use of technology must not interfere with an employee's duties at work.
- I. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication or post on any web site while using district computers, cellular telephones or other electronic devices.
- J. All Board of Education policies regulating 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.

IV. 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 the Superintendent prior to setting up the site. The Superintendent (or designee) will also be provided access to any site that is established.

- A. Use will be limited to specific academic and/or school-related purposes. Site activity must be moderated, monitored and supervised by the employee(s) who set(s) up the site.
- B. Any employee using a social media platform that is affiliated with the school district in any way must set up 2-Factor Authentication on the account that is used to access that platform.
- C. 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.

- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. 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 their supervisor prior to making the post.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.

V. Disciplinary Consequences

Violation of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment consistent with state and federal law.