

**EMPLOYEE USE OF
SOCIAL NETWORKING
SITES**

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This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and student teachers working for or in the Orange County School System. The Board respects the right of employees to use social networking sites (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter), web sites, blogs, Wikis and other web tools (collectively, "Internet postings") as a medium of self-expression. Internet postings are considered a form of direct communication with students. Because observers/readers may view the employee as a representative or spokesperson of the board or the school system, employees are to maintain an appropriate relationship with students at all times. The superintendent or his designee may use any means available to request the removal of personal websites that substantially disrupt the school environment, contain confidential school-related information, or that utilize school district or individual school names, logos or trademarks without permission.

Because inappropriate Internet postings by employees can cause substantial disruptions to the school environment, the Board requires that employees observe the following guidelines for Internet postings, regardless of the location of the Internet access.

GUIDELINES:

1. All employees must use the OCS network or OCS sponsored websites if possible when communicating with students/parents about any school related matters. Employees may not use personal websites or on-line networking profiles to post information in an attempt to communicate with students/parents about school-related matters.
2. Employees are to maintain an appropriate relationship with students/parents at all times. Employees are encouraged to block students from viewing personal information on employee personal websites or on-line networking profiles in order to prevent the possibility that students could view materials that are not age-appropriate. If an employee creates and/or posts inappropriate content on a website or profile and it has a negative impact on the employee's ability to perform his or her job as it relates to working with students/parents, the employee will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. This section applies to all employees, volunteers and student teachers working in the school district.
3. Employees shall be respectful in all Internet postings related to or referencing the school system, students, and/or other employees. Employees are individually responsible for their personal posts on social media. As such activities are outside the scope of employment, employees may be personally liable for any claims of defamatory speech, pornographic, proprietary, libelous postings or creating a hostile work environment.
4. Employees are to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures with respect to the use of computer equipment, networks or electronic devices when accessing social media sites.
5. 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 his/her supervisor prior to making the post.
6. 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 without written permission of his/her supervisor.

7. All Board of Education policies that regulate 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.

Legal References: G.S. 14-27.7; G.S. 115C-325; 14-277.1; 14-190.1

Cross References: Technology in the Educational Program (policy 3220), Technology and Acceptable Use (policy 3225/7320)