



**Regional School District #4
Chester – Deep River – Essex – Region 4**

Via Google Meet
Dial +1 (617) 675-4444
PIN: 189 175 876 8683#
March 10, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.

Supervision District Communications Strategy ad hoc Subcommittee

To: Members of the Supervision District Communications Strategy Subcommittee
Subject: Supervision District Communications Strategy Subcommittee Meeting – Wed., March 10, 2021
Time: **6:00 p.m.**
Place: **Via Google Meet – To listen remotely please dial (US) +1 (617) 675-4444 PIN: 189 175 876 8683#**
(We kindly ask that you **please mute your phone immediately** upon connecting to the meeting as this will improve the audio quality for all participants. Google Meet may do this automatically, depending on the number of people already connected to the call. If so, pressing *6 will unmute your phone when it's time to speak)

Please contact Jennifer Bryan at Central Office email jbryan@reg4.k12.ct.us if you are unable to attend.

Mission Statement

We, the communities of Chester, Deep River, Essex and Region 4, engage all students in a rigorous and collaborative educational program. We prepare our learners to be respectful citizens who are empowered to contribute in a globalized society.

AGENDA

- 1. Call to order - meeting facilitator, Lon Seidman**
- 2. Verbal roll call**
- 3. Update since last meeting**
- 4. Next Steps**
- 5. Adjournment**

Cc: Town Clerks: Chester, Deep River, Essex

DISTRICT-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA

(Background information for Policy Sub-committee)

As the use of social networking sites and other online technologies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, or blogs) continues to grow, school districts must balance the advantages of using such technologies as important communications and educational tools with concerns about the potential for inappropriate use of the sites.

School districts may use social media, along with their websites, to share news and information with students, parents, staff and the community. However, the public nature of such sites creates additional challenges that districts should consider before deciding to sponsor a site and when establishing user guidelines. The biggest challenge is the inability to control the content in the same manner that a website can be controlled.

It is recommended that policies and administrative regulations distinguish between sites that are approved and officially sponsored by the district and those that may be created by students, staff or members of the public which may discuss school issues but which the district cannot control. Any official site should clearly express the purpose of the site, contain a disclaimer that the views and comments expressed on the site do not necessarily reflect the views of the local educational agency (LEA), and advise users that the site will be monitored. The LEA may prohibit content that is obscene, libelous, and defamatory or so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, violation of school rules or substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school. Any such postings, and any postings not related to the stated purpose of the site, may be removed.

Increasing numbers of LEAs are using social media platforms to support their community outreach and public relations efforts. Such sites allow greater interaction and collaboration with individuals in the school community and thus can be useful communications tools. Many school districts nationwide have created an official district (i.e., district-sponsored) social media platform. "Social media" is defined as an online platform for collaboration, interaction, and active participation, including social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, or blogs.

To minimize liability to the district, it is important that the district's social media policy clearly define the official social media platforms over which it has control, and to specify the standards, guidelines, and protocols for their use. An "official district social media platform" is defined as a site authorized by the Superintendent or designee. Sites that have not been authorized by the Superintendent or designee but that contain content related to the school district or comments on district operations, such as a site created by a parent-teacher organization, booster club, or other school-connected organization or a student's or employee's personal site, are not considered official district social media platforms.

DISTRICT-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA

(continued)

Moreover, because of the open accessibility of social media, content will be posted by members of the public on the district's official platform without prior approval by district staff. By allowing the public to post comments, some legal analysts have opined that a "limited public forum" is created which grants individuals certain freedom of speech rights and limits the district's ability to remove comments or posts. In order to protect against possible constitutional challenges, any removal of content by the district should be based on view-point neutral considerations, such as prohibitions on posts that violate laws against discrimination or harassment or that are unrelated to the purpose of the site. In addition, in order to help maintain the district's ability to remove content, users should be informed of the purpose of the site and the limited nature of the discussion and district staff should regularly monitor sites so that materials are removed in an even-handed and consistent manner. This issue is handled in the accompanying administrative regulation. It is recommended that the district legal counsel be consulted prior to adopting the policy and regulation pertaining to this topic in order to ensure that any provisions related to the removal of posts or discipline of students or staff is consistent with law.

Staff and students who post prohibited content on official district social media platforms are subject to discipline in accordance with district policies and regulations. A student may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, if he/she engages in an act of bullying by means of an electronic posting. When staff and students misuse the district's technological resources, they also may be subject to cancellation of user privileges in accordance with the district's Acceptable Use Policy.

Communication on social media platforms may also raise legal issues for users regarding public records laws. In addition, individual board of education members using social media platforms must be careful not to violate the Freedom of Information Act through engaging in a series of communications involving a majority of the board discussing, deliberating, or taking action on an item of district business outside of an authorized meeting. In addition posted information may also be considered a public record.

Policy Implications

A new policy, #1114, "District-Sponsored Social Media" with an accompanying administrative regulation follow for consideration. This is considered an "optional" policy for inclusion in the district's policy manual.

January 2012

An optional policy to consider.

Community Relations

District-Sponsored Social Media

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes the value of technology such as social media platforms in promoting community involvement and collaboration. The purpose of any official District social media platform shall be to further the District’s vision and mission, support student learning and staff professional development, and enhance communication with students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop content guidelines and protocols for official District social media platforms to ensure the appropriate and responsible use of these resources and compliance with law, Board policy, and regulation.

Guidelines for Content

Official District social media platforms shall be used only for their stated purposes and in a manner consistent with this policy and administrative regulation. By creating these official sites and allowing for public comment, the Board does not intend to create a limited public forum or otherwise guarantee an individual’s right to free speech.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the limited purpose of the official District social media platforms is clearly communicated to users. Each site shall contain a statement that specifies the site’s purposes along with a statement that users are expected to use the site only for those purposes. Each site shall also contain a statement that users are personally responsible for the content of their posts.

Official District social media platforms may not contain content that is obscene, libelous, or so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school’s orderly operation.

Staff or students who post prohibited content shall be subject to discipline in accordance with District policies and administrative regulations.

Users of official District social media platforms should be aware of the public nature and accessibility of social media and that information posted may be considered a public record subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The Board expects users to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner.

Privacy

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the privacy rights of students, parents/guardians, staff, Board members, and other individuals are protected on official District social media platforms.

Community Relations

District-Sponsored Social Media

Privacy (continued)

Board policy pertaining to the posting of student photographs and the privacy of telephone numbers, home addresses, and email addresses, as specified in other applicable Board policies shall also apply to official District social media platforms.

Social media and networking sites and other online platforms shall not be used by District employees to transmit confidential information about students, employees, or District operations.

All employees participating in the use of efficient District social media platforms and District endorsed social media shall follow the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators as stated in the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, Section 10-145d-400a.

- (cf. 1100 – Communications with the Public)
- (cf. 1110.1 – Parent Involvement)
- (cf. 1112 – News Media Relationships)
- (cf. 4118.5/4218.5 – Staff Acceptable Computer Use)
- (cf. 4118.51/4218.51 – Social Networking)
- (cf. 5114 – Suspension/Expulsion; Due Process)
- (cf. 5125 – Student Records)
- (cf. 5131 – Conduct)
- (cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)
- (cf. 5131.913 – Cyberbullying)
- (cf. 5142.2 – Freedom of Expression)
- (cf. 5144 – Discipline)
- (cf. 6141.321 – Acceptable Computer Use)
- (cf. 6141.323 – Filtering Access to Electronic Networks)
- (cf. 6141.324 – Posting of Student Work/Photographs)
- (cf. 6141.326 – Online Social Networking)
- (cf. 6145.5 – Student Organization and Equal Access)
- (cf. 9327 – Electronic Mail Communications)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-19(b)(11) Access to public records. Exempt records.

10-15b Access of parent or guardians to student's records.

10-209 Records not to be public.

11-8a Retention, destruction and transfer of documents.

Community Relations

District-Sponsored Social Media

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

11-8b Transfer or disposal of public records. State Library Board to adopt regulations.

46b-56(e) Access to Records of Minors.

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, Section 10-145d-400a, (Professional Responsibility for Educators)

Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (section 438 of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended, added by section 513 of PL 93-568, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1232g.).

Dept. of Education. 34 CFR. Part 99 (May 9, 1980 45 FR 30802) regs. implementing FERPA enacted as part of 438 of General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g)-parent and student privacy and other rights with respect to educational records, as amended 11/21/96.

Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (HR 4577, P.L.106-554)

Communications Act of 1934, as amended (47 U.S.C. 254[h],[I])

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6801 et seq., Part F)

Public Law 94-553, The Copyright Act of 1976, 17 U.S.C. 101 et. seq.

Reno v. ACLU, 521 U.S. 844 (1997)

Ginsberg v. New York, 390 U.S. 629, at 642, n.10 (1968)

Board of Education v. Pico, 457 U.S. 868 (1988)

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 620, 267 (1988)

Policy adopted:

cps 1/12
rev 3/15