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Board Member Use of Social Networks
Dec 17

[See POLICY ALERT No. 214]

0169.02 BOARD MEMBER USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

In accordance with the School Ethics Act - N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq., Board of Education members must avoid conduct which is in violation of the public trust or which creates a justifiable impression among the public that such trust is being violated. To avoid conduct that may be in violation or perceived to be in violation of the School Ethics Act, the Board of Education adopts this Policy to provide guidance to Board members in their use of social networks.

For the purposes of this Policy, "social network(s)" shall include, but not be limited to: Internet blogs, electronic bulletin boards, ~~emails,~~ social networking websites, ~~text messages,~~ or any other online platform where people may post or communicate interests, opinions, or any other information that may be viewed by others with or without permission from the person making such post or re-publishing such post. "Social networks" also means an Internet-based service that allows individuals to: construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system created by the service; create a list of other users with whom they share a connection within the system; and view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

For the purposes of this Policy, "use of a social network" shall include, but not be limited to: posting to a social network, reposting another person's post to a social network, messaging, or any other publication of material on a social network.

Nothing in this Policy prevents a Board of Education member from using a social network. However, a Board member must avoid conduct on a social network that would violate the School Ethics Act – N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq., which includes the Code of Ethics for Board Members. Board members should be advised communications, publications, photographs, and any other information posted by the Board member or reposted by the Board member on a social network could violate the School Ethics Act and be cause for sanctions in accordance with the law.

While this Policy respects the right of Board members to use social networks, Board members shall recognize they are held to a higher standard than the general public with regard to standards of conduct and ethics. A Board member's use of social networks shall not damage the reputation of the school district, employees, students, or their families. Board members who use social networks shall ensure their conduct is appropriate for a Board of Education member. Board members should exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between their personal and public online behavior,

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understanding what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public, even without their knowledge or consent.

Board members should carefully review the privacy settings on social networks they use and exercise care and good judgment when posting content and information. When using social networks, Board members are advised to:

1. Not post anything that would violate any of the district's policies for Board members;

2. Uphold the district's value of respect for any individual(s) and avoid making defamatory statements about the Board of Education, the school district, employees, students, or their families;

3. Not disclose any confidential information about the school district or confidential information obtained as a result of being a Board member, about any individual(s) or organization, including students and/or their families;

4. **Not disclose any inaccurate information about the Board of Education or the school district.**

4. **5.** Not use or refer to their Board of Education title or position when soliciting for a business organization that he or she or any immediate family member has an interest in, as well as posting or referencing any confidential information regarding the Board of Education or the school district obtained through their Board membership, unless authorized by law;

5. **6.** Refrain from having communications through social networks with **a majority of** other Board members regarding any Board of Education business to avoid any potential violation of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act;

6. **7.** ~~Not~~ **When** respond**ing** to any postings **or inquiries** regarding Board of Education or school district business **in which your opinions are being expressed, provide the appropriate disclaimer that those opinions are your own personal opinions and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Board as set forth in Bylaw 0146.** ~~or respond to any question or inquiry posted to the Board member or posted on any social network~~

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~~regarding Board of Education or school district business and shall refer any such questions or inquiries~~ **Refer call complaints regarding the school district** to the Superintendent of Schools to address, as appropriate; or

~~7.~~ **8.** Not post any information on a social network determined by the New Jersey School Ethics Commission to be a violation of the New Jersey School Ethics Act.

A Board member shall comply with all Board policies regarding acceptable use of computers and computer networks whenever a Board member is using a Board of Education electronic device.

If the Board or Superintendent believes a Board member's activity on any social network may violate the Board's policies or the New Jersey School Ethics Act, the Board or Superintendent may request the Board member cease such activity.

This Policy has been developed and adopted by this Board to provide guidance and direction to a Board member to avoid actual and/or a perceived appearance of inappropriate conduct or conduct prohibited by the School Ethics Act while using social networks.

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq.
N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.

Adopted: