

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES*

Social media and social networking sites (SNS) have great potential to connect people around the globe and enhance communication; however, they are also more informal, less structured and constantly changing. These guidelines are designed to establish some basic parameters on the creation and use of SNS and other social media for the BOCES and its personnel.

For purposes of this regulation, the definition of **public social media networks or Social Networking sites (SNS)** are defined to include: Web sites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers and which do not fall within the BOCES's electronic technology network (e.g., Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, blog sites and any future platforms approved by Southern Westchester BOCES.). The definition of **BOCES approved password-protected social media tools** are those that fall within the BOCES's electronic technology network or which the BOCES has approved for educational use. Within these internal forums, the BOCES has greater authority and ability to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within these internal forums.

Official BOCES Use

Official BOCES use is defined as the use of social media by an employee, on behalf of his or her department, program or school that has been authorized for the express purpose of communicating the BOCES's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests. The authorization may be granted by the District Superintendent or his/her designee. For example, the BOCES may decide to have its own official Facebook page. Or employees could be authorized to develop other pages dedicated to a single building, program, or sports team. There are also many official uses of social media that are not public, such as the use of internal blogs or wikis for collaboration among grade-level or project teams. Employees are prohibited from setting up public social networking sites for any official BOCES use related to their division, building or service unless they have obtained prior approval in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

Establishing a Social Networking Site for Official BOCES Use

- 1) Following approval from the appropriate Building Principal and/or public relations designee or Network Administrator, the public relations or technology staff will work with the department, building or service to properly set up an appropriate social networking site. All account names and log in passwords must be on file in the Technology Department.

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- 2) The District Superintendent/designee shall have the exclusive and final authority to determine whether individual buildings/facilities may initiate and maintain separate page(s) on the SNS.

Quality Control/Content Integrity

- 1) The BOCES shall provide general training for all applicable personnel, including training on ethical and legal considerations, and compliance with all applicable policies and regulations.
- 2) The official BOCES Web site will remain the primary source for all content. Any and all material on the BOCES SNS will only supplement information that exists on the BOCES's official Web site, when applicable.
- 3) All the material/content that is entered or posted to the BOCES SNS (e.g., Facebook) account/page should include a link back to the official BOCES Web site or relevant partner where appropriate. An occasional reminder or announcement without a link is permissible (for example, a "Save the Date" announcement).
- 4) Photos should only be posted on the BOCES-owned Web site that the SNS can link to. For control purposes, do NOT upload images of students directly on to a SNS.
- 5) Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the BOCES, its students, alumni or employees. Use good judgment and follow BOCES policies (i.e., FERPA).
- 6) Thoroughly spell check and grammar check your content before posting. Citizens expect that education employees will set a good example when they write and speak in public.
- 7) Remember you are writing for publication, even on social networks. Refrain from making unsubstantiated statements. Always provide full citations for laws or research.

Disclaimers

As a public entity, the BOCES should include disclaimers on their site regarding grounds for removal of comments and the frequency to which the site is monitored. Southern Westchester BOCES is an agency that is not liable for the content or comments posted to this site. Any inappropriate content may be removed. This site is monitored during normal business hours."

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SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES* (Cont'd.)**Professional or Classroom Use**

Professional use is defined as an employee's use of social media for the purpose of furthering his or her specific job responsibilities or professional duties through an externally focused site or a BOCES sponsored site. For example, many teachers across the country have signed up for discussion forums on EdWeek.org to engage with other teachers in a community of practice. While use for professional interests is beneficial to the work of the BOCES because it enables employees to stay informed on important issues or to collaborate with their peers, the social media tool or site the employee is using is not maintained or monitored by the BOCES itself. The employee is accessing sites and setting up accounts owned by private entities to consume and exchange information. Again, internally, professionals often collaborate through various technologies, but professional use of social media implies going outside of the internal network of the BOCES. Employees' participation in external social media for professional use, using BOCES technology, equipment and email addresses or during the school day requires prior approval and is subject to the procedures set forth below.

Classroom use is defined as use of SNS in a classroom for instructional purposes. An example of classroom use may be the creation of a forum for class discussion taking place in a password protected online environment. Students can interact with their peers and their teacher to discuss a current class topic, sharing what they have discovered on the internet and voicing their opinions. Teachers can upload homework, post school notices, moderate discussions and share materials. This online portal develops writing skills, encourages research skills and promotes intellectual discussion. Staff must also obtain prior approval for classroom use of these internal forums.

Establishing Access

- 1) If you are participating in a social network site and/or blog for BOCES-related professional use, it must be done with the approval of your supervisor or principal.
- 2) The BOCES does not permit any communication or contact between staff and students on non-BOCES based SNS (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Teachers are strongly encouraged to use existing BOCES or RIC established web tools such as teacher web pages within the BOCES Web site, Angel, Edmodo, etc. to communicate with students, to assign and collect student work, or to provide online feedback to students.

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- 3) The BOCES may establish an Alumni page within its BOCES SNS. Teachers and staff may interact with former students within this forum on the BOCES site. Staff interaction with former students outside of the BOCES controlled environment is highly discouraged. Realize that many former students have online connections with current students. Information shared between school staff and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well. Wherever possible, the allow follower function should be used in lieu of friending or the equivalent for any other social media platform.
- 4) The BOCES understands that 21st century learning is constantly changing and that many sites that are currently "blocked" by the BOCES internet filter may have educational significance for teacher and student use. If you would like to request that an online site be accessible to use for teaching and learning, submit a request to the Building Principal for review. Requests will be reviewed and the BOCES list of blocked sites will be updated throughout the school year. A description should be provided of the intended use of the site and what tools on the site match your needed criteria. A link to the privacy policy for such sites should also be included.

Quality Control/Content Integrity

- 1) When using social media for professional purposes, always identify yourself and your position with the BOCES. Use your actual name - never create an alias or post as anonymous. Misidentifying yourself or providing false information may result in disciplinary action. The BOCES email address attached to your name implies that you are acting on behalf of the BOCES.
- 2) While engaged in professional use of social media, do not post confidential or proprietary information about the BOCES, its students, alumni or employees. Use good judgment and follow BOCES policies.
- 3) Thoroughly spell check and grammar check your content before posting. Citizens expect that education employees set a good example when they write and speak in public.
- 4) Remember you are writing for publication, even on social networks. Refrain from making unsubstantiated statements. Always provide full citations for laws or research.
- 5) BOCES personnel acknowledge and agree that when they create or post material on the BOCES SNS they are in effect "content publishers" and as such are subject to a host of ethical and legal obligations including, but not limited to, compliance with the federal Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES* (Cont'd.)**Personal Use and Responsibility**

Personal use is defined as use that is not related to an employee's job duties for the BOCES or his or her professional interests. For example, outside of work hours, an employee might create or maintain a blog related to a hobby, or a personal Facebook page containing news about his or her family and friends. An employee checking his or her personal Facebook page, sending out a personal Tweet, or watching the latest viral YouTube video are examples of personal use of social media during the work day.

- 1) The BOCES does allow limited personal use of social media during work hours and on BOCES owned hardware. However, limited personal use of social media during the work day may be permitted on non-BOCES owned personal computers or devices. Such use should be conducted only during non-student contact times and/or during approved break times and may not interfere with the employee's duties and responsibilities.
- 2) BOCES employees are personally responsible for all comments/information they publish online. Be mindful that what is published will be public for a long time. Be sure to protect privacy.
- 3) Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that are used in face-to-face contact, and be in accordance with the highest professional standards. BOCES employees are expected to behave honorably in online spaces. Online activities or communications which are improper, unethical, illegal, or which cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents, or other members of the school community should be avoided.
- 4) Posting comments and having online conversations on social media sites makes those comments public and available to anyone who has any online access. Please be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what is said online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social media under the impression of a 'private conversation' could end up being shared in a larger, more public domain.
- 5) Comments related to the BOCES should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, employees should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain. Remember that posted information could be interpreted as an extension of your office or classroom. What is inappropriate in your office or classroom is also inappropriate online. If posting comments or viewpoints on topics related to the BOCES using any online medium be sure you state that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the BOCES.
- 6) Before posting personal photographs or avatars that represent you, consider how the images reflect on your reputation and professionalism. Also, remember not to use copyrighted images.

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- 7) Due to the evolving nature of social web sites, BOCES personnel should not use personal SNS to create or maintain personal relationships with students. For purposes of these guidelines, "personal relationships with students" shall mean any behavior or conduct that is unrelated to course work or official school matters. Such behavior may erode the professional authority and traditional roles of teacher and student within the BOCES and may violate BOCES policies and/or regulations.

BOCES personnel should not "friend" current students or any student currently enrolled in any school within the BOCES Pre-K through 12, Adult Education Students, or their parents. It is too easy for genuinely-intentioned and innocent comments and situations to be misinterpreted, resulting in potentially damaging consequences for everyone involved. If your position within the BOCES calls for communication with students or parents and is educationally justifiable, the use of the BOCES network, email, teacher web pages within the BOCES website, and school-provided/owned equipment are suggested for use when communicating on-line. Wherever possible, the allow follower function should be used in lieu of friending or the equivalent for any other social media platform.

- 8) While mindful of employees' First Amendment free speech rights, BOCES personnel who participate in social networking web sites, including the BOCES SNS, shall not post any material which may result in the disruption of classroom or BOCES activities. The BOCES is entitled to make such a determination based on the facts surrounding the material as the BOCES reasonably believes them to be.

Employees are encouraged to seek permission from the subject before posting photographs and videos of fellow employees taken on school property or at school-sponsored events. Due to the sensitive nature and potentially damaging consequences, posting photographs or information about currently enrolled students in any capacity is prohibited. Realize that many former students have online connections with current students. Information shared between school staff and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.

School Logos

Within your personal social mediums, do not use any BOCES or school logo without written permission from BOCES officials. For official pages, the BOCES will provide you with a profile image to use.

Reporting Requirements

BOCES personnel shall be required to report known or suspected violations of the BOCES SNS Guidelines to their Building Principal or immediate supervisor.

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SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES* (Cont'd.)**Disciplinary Sanctions**

BOCES personnel who violate any provision of the SNS guidelines shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment in accordance with legal guidelines, BOCES policy and regulations, and the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Compliance with Other Applicable Policies and Regulations

BOCES personnel who participate in social networking web sites, including the BOCES SNS, shall be subject to all applicable policies and regulations including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Sexual Harassment of BOCES Personnel;
- 2) Student Records: Access and Challenge (FERPA);
- 3) Staff Use of Computerized Information Resources and Regulations;
- 4) Students Use of Computerized Information Resources (AUP) and Regulations;
- 5) Children's Internet Protection Act: Internet Content Filtering/Safety Policy; and
- 6) Use of Copyrighted Materials; and
- 7) Southern Westchester BOCES Standards and Guidelines for Web Page Publishing

Adopted
09/28/2016