CSD 13 SCHOOL BOARD
POLICY NUMBER: 2.01LA NEPN/NSBA Code: BEB
Adopted: 9/3/19
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BOARD MEMBER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Board recognizes that many, if not most, of its members are active users of social media, including but not limited to, online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and other digital media such as blogs and personal websites. The Board understands that while social media can be a positive tool for supporting schools and encouraging community engagement, Board members need to be aware of the legal and ethical considerations that arise when they post, "message," or otherwise interact with others on social media platforms.

It is not the intent of this policy to interfere with or restrict a Board members' freedom of speech, but to set standards for social media conduct that are consistent with law and Board policy, including the Board's Code of Ethics.

Board members shall comply with the following provisions:

- Board members shall not post on social media or engage in online discussions as a substitute for deliberations at Board meetings. Board members should be aware that social media activity can be perceived as a meeting if a sufficient number (a quorum) of Board members are involved on the site to influence or determine the course of action that will be taken by the Board, even if other people are posting to the site as well.

- Board members should be aware that any posting that pertains to school unit matters may create a "record" that is subject to laws and regulations pertaining to the retention and disposition of local government records, and to discovery in legal proceedings involving the Board or the school unit.

- Board members shall avoid disclosing confidential or personally identifiable information about students (including images), school unit employees, or Board matters or discussions that have taken place in executive sessions. Board members shall comply with the same standards as school employees with regard to confidential information.

Board members should adhere to the following ethical guidelines when using social media in their role as public officials:

A Board member should:

- Recognize that he/she has no authority to speak on behalf of the Board unless specifically designated to do so, and make it clear that he/she is speaking in his/her individual capacity;

- Feel free to invite the public to upcoming school district events, share information about public hearings on bills that affect the schools, and share links to public information about the district (e.g. the proposed budget), and the like, but be clear that he/she is doing so as an individual and not in any official capacity;

- Conduct himself/herself on social media in a manner that reflects well on the Board and on the school unit, and with the decorum expected of an elected official;

- Avoid posting in anger, even when provoked;

- Refrain from harassing, defaming, or disparaging fellow Board members or others based on racial, religious, or other personal characteristics;

- Keep deliberations within meetings of the Board;

- Take care to avoid disclosing confidential or personally identifiable information about students (including images), school unit employees, or Board discussions that have taken place in executive sessions;

- Avoid posting information that is misleading or inaccurate or which is has not been released to the public;

- Not make any promise that he/she will vote in a particular way;

- Avoid posting content that indicates he/she has reached an opinion on a pending matter;

- Direct persons presenting concerns or complaints through social media to follow the Board's policy pertaining to public concerns and complaints;

- When summarizing discussion or action that took place at Board meetings, share only information from open meetings and make it clear that the posting is not an official record of the meeting. A Board member should never disclose discussions that have occurred in executive session.

- Retain electronic records, including the Board member's own posts and content others post to the Board member's account when required to do so by law, regulations, or legal process.

- Comply with the school unit's acceptable use rules, as applicable to school unit employees, when using school-unit owned devices or technology resources, or when accessing the Internet through school unit's network using a personal device.

Legal reference: 1 MRSA § 401 et seq.
20-A MRSA § 6001-6002
20 USC § 1232g

Cross Reference: 2.01A Board Member Authority and Responsibilities (BBAA)
2.03 Board Member Code of Ethics (BCA)
2.01J Executive Sessions (BEC)
GBJ–Personnel Records and Files
JRA–Student Education Records and Information
11.02 Community Concerns (KE)