

The Policy Committee approved changes in blue at its public work sessions on 12/13/23 and 1/11/24.

File: GBEE

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

I. Purpose

~~The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the use of social media by school system employees.~~ Policy GBEE and its accompanying administrative regulation set standards to guide school system employees in their use of social media in a manner that is consistent with the school system's educational mission, values, and expectations.

II. Background

~~The responsible use of social media can promote exceptional teaching, learning, and community interaction when used appropriately and in a professional manner. The Board of Education recognizes that schools and employees may be interested in developing/using a social media presence to communicate with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the local community during and/or beyond the normal school day; to improve the school's ability to communicate with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the local community; and/or to provide reasonable or necessary updates on school programs, course offerings, and extracurricular activities.~~ The Board of Education recognizes that social media can be a powerful tool for communication, collaboration, and professional development when used responsibly and ethically. Schools and employees may be interested in developing and using a social media presence to improve their ability to communicate with students, parents/legal guardians, and stakeholders during and/or beyond the normal school day, and/or to provide reasonable or necessary updates on school programs, course offerings, and extracurricular activities.

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records and gives parent(s)/legal guardian(s) certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when ~~he or she~~ they reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students." The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.
- B. Social Media: ~~Any Internet/web-based platform that allows interactive communication between individual persons, groups, entities, or organizations.~~ Applications or platforms that enable users to create, share, or consume content, and/or participate in social networking. For the purpose of this policy, there are two (2) types of social media accounts:
 - i. Personal Social Media Account: A social media account used by an employee for non-Washington County Public Schools ("WCPS") business; or
 - ii. WCPS Social Media Accounts: A social media account created and/or used by an employee or department for WCPS business or sponsored programs.

IV. Policy Statement/Procedures

- A. The Board of Education ~~promotes and encourages~~ expects the responsible use of social media in a safe teaching and learning atmosphere. ~~The Board of Education~~ expects that

schools and employees using social media and/or school technology will comply with the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and professionalism and will adhere to all applicable requirements of FERPA and laws and policies regarding confidentiality and student privacy.

- B. The use of social media may not interfere with student or employee work or cause disruptions to the school or work environment.
- C. Employees are required to comply with all applicable state and federal laws, policies established by the Board of Education, and administrative regulations and guidelines established by the Superintendent.
- D. In the course of their employment, employees shall not post photos and/or names of any WCPS student to any personal social media account. Prior to posting photos and/or names of students on a WCPS social media account, employees must verify the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not opted the student out of such communications. If the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not opted them out, they will be deemed to have given permission for the student to be included in such communications.
- E. The Superintendent is authorized to promulgate administrative regulations to implement this policy.