

## 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 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.

- I. Board members shall comply with the following whenever engaged on social media:
  - A. Do not post on social media or engage in online discussions as a substitute for deliberations at Board meetings. 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.
  - B. 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.
  - C. Do not knowingly disclose confidential or personally identifiable information about students and school unit employees. Board members shall comply with the same standards as school employees with regard to confidential information.  
*Note: Board members may act as parents and community members with regard to public events. E.g. Pictures from athletic/arts events, proms, and other school public events.*
  - D. Do not disclose matters or discussions that have taken place in executive sessions.
- II. The following **ethical guidelines** pertain to the aforementioned provisions. Board members should comply with the following whenever engaged in the use of social media regarding matters pertaining to school Board work:
  - A. Conduct themselves 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;
  - B. Recognize that they have no authority to speak on behalf of the Board unless specifically designated to do so, and make it clear that they are speaking in their individual capacity;
  - C. 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 they are doing so as an individual and not in any official capacity;

- D. Avoid posting or responding in anger about school unit matters;
- E. Refrain from harassing, defaming, or disparaging others for any reason, including racial, religious, or other personal characteristics;
- F. Refrain from deliberating outside of the Board meeting;
- G. Avoid disclosing confidential or personally identifiable information about students and school unit employees;
- H. Avoid disclosing Board discussions that have taken place in executive sessions, as all matters in executive sessions are completely confidential;
- I. Avoid posting information that is intentionally misleading or inaccurate or which has not been released to the public;
- J. Never make a promise to vote in a particular way;
- K. Direct persons presenting concerns or complaints through social media to follow the Board's policy pertaining to public concerns and complaints;
- L. 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; and
- M. Comply with RSU No. 5'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 the 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: BBAA–Board of Directors Member Authority and Responsibilities  
BCA–Board of Directors Member Code of Ethics  
BEC–Executive Sessions  
GBJ–Personnel Records and Files  
JRA–Student Education Records and Information  
KE–Public Concerns and Complaints

Adopted: January 27, 2021