

# POLICY

VERNON TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

SUPPORT STAFF  
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Staff Use of Internet, Social Networks, and  
Other Forms of Electronic Communication  
Jul 11

## P4119 STAFF USE OF INTERNET, SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND OTHER FORMS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

### Social Networking Websites

The Superintendent/designee will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. The orientation and reminders will give special emphasis to:

- A. Improper fraternization with students using social networking websites on the Internet:
  - 1. Teachers may not list currently enrolled VTSD students as “friends” on networking sites;
  - 2. All e-contacts with students should be through the district’s computer and telephone system;
  - 3. All contact by coaches with team members shall be sent to all team members;
  - 4. Teachers will not give out their private cell phone or home phone numbers without prior approval of the district;
  - 5. Inappropriate contact via e-mail or phone is prohibited;
- B. Inappropriateness of posting items with sexual content;
- C. Inappropriateness of posting items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs and alcohol;
- D. Examples of inappropriate behavior from other districts, as behavior to avoid
- E. Monitoring and penalties for improper use of district computers and technology;
- F. The possibility of penalties, including dismissal from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in on-line conduct.

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The Superintendent/designee will periodically conduct internet searches to see if teachers have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers and websites is discovered, the offensive material will be downloaded for review and action.

Cell Phones

School staff shall not contact parents'/guardians' or students' cell phones unless directed to do so by the parent/guardian or student. School district personnel shall limit cell phone interaction with students to contact that pertains to legitimate school business. Legitimate school business includes:

- A. Answering academic inquiries regarding homework, other classroom work or assignments;
- B. Scheduling appointments for school related conferences and/or extra help;
- C. Clarifying classroom expectations and/or assignments;
- D. Notifications related to classroom, club or sports schedules, events, trips, assignments; deadlines.

Cell phone contact with students shall be as brief and direct as possible. When brief contact is not sufficient or feasible to resolve the matter, teachers shall schedule face-to-face conferences during regular classroom and extra-help periods to confer with the students. No contact shall exceed three replies.

Staff shall not send messages that contain material that may be defined by a reasonable person as profane or obscene; messages that are racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity; or messages:

- A. That violate the district's affirmative action policy;
- B. That are personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
- C. That can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
- D. That contain confidential information to persons not authorized to receive that information.

Text Messages

No staff member, coach or volunteer shall text message any student individually. All text messages to students shall be sent to the class, team, club or organization.

Computer Communication

School district personnel shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via internal or external e-mail:

- A. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business;
- B. Personnel shall not reveal passwords to others. If a staff member believes that a password has been lost or stolen, or that e-mail has been accessed by someone without authorization, he/she should contact the IT Department immediately. E-mail windows should not be left open on the screen when the computer is unattended;
- C. Messages and e-mail files shall be deleted in a timely manner. The IT Department shall ensure that all e-mail records shall be retained for the period of time specified by law (retained 3 years for external correspondence and 1 year for internal correspondence)
- D. To ensure that federal copyright laws are not violated, staff shall not send messages that contain text without the author's permission;
- E. Staff shall not send messages that contain material that may be defined by a reasonable person as obscene; messages that are racist, sexist or promote illegal or unethical activity; or messages:
  - 1. That violate the district's affirmative action policy;
  - 2. That are personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
  - 3. That are broadcast to a large group of other personnel without supervisory permission;
  - 4. That contain confidential information to persons not authorized to receive that information.
- F. Personnel shall become familiar with the district's policies and regulation on staff and student access to networked information resources before initiating e-mail use;
- G. Employees learning of any misuse of the e-mail systems shall notify the IT Department immediately.

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When an employee, either within the schools or outside normal duties, creates conditions under which the proper operation of the schools is affected, the board upon recommendation of the superintendent and in accordance with statute shall determine whether such acts or lack of actions constitute conduct unbecoming a school employee, and if so, will proceed against the employee in accordance with the law.

Unbecoming conduct sufficient to warrant board review may result from a single flagrant incident or from a series of incidents. Disciplinary measures up to and including suspension, termination, and prosecution may be recommended. In severe cases of inappropriate conduct, action by the State Board of Examiners could result in the suspension or revocation of the offending staff member's certificate.

NJSA 18A:6-10; 18A:11-1; 18A: 27-4

Adopted July 2011