# PUBLIC CRITICISM OF DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

Where Free Speech Becomes Harassment

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Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) has replaced face-to-face meetings and public board meetings as the primary means for parents and students to express dissatisfaction with school employees.

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### **Bullying of School Employees**

According to the 2010 National Survey of Violence Against Teachers, 50% of K-12 teachers were victimized by students, parents, or colleagues in the past year.

Many of these attacks came in the form of cyberbullying or harassment through social media.

A 2006 National School Boards Association study reported that 26 % of teachers and principals in the U.S. have been targeted by online attacks.

A more recent study in the UK found that 1 in 5 teachers had unwarranted, negative and harassing comments posted about them or directed towards them online.

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The four most commonly cited forms of online harassment are: (1) negative reviews on RateMyTeacher.com; (2) Facebook school/teacher "hate groups"; (3) "Tweets"; and (4) embarrassing YouTube videos.









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#### **WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON**

Parents using Facebook to attack school staff



PARENTS are using Facebook and other social networks to attack principals ar feachers they distille or believe have wronged them or their children.

#### **Cost to School Districts**

- Psychological harm
- Decreased morale
- Lost wages
- Lost instructional time/productivity
- Increased workman's compensation payments
- Litigation costs
- Negative publicity / Lost levies
- Negative student behavioral and academic outcomes

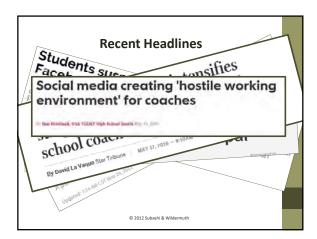
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### **First Amendment Implications**

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### **Duties of the Employer**

- Laws requiring employers to maintain safe workplaces
- Collective bargaining agreements



# Duties of the employer if the harassment is based upon:

- Race
- Gender
- Sex
- National Origin
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability

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What if the online chatter alleges abuse or misconduct:

Physical/mental harm to students
Sexual improprieties by staff
Alcohol/illegal substance use

# What if the online chatter is threatening or criminal:

- Threats of harm
- R.C. 2917.01 Telecommunications
  Harassment
- R.C. 2903.211 Menacing by Stalking

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Other ways the Board and/or administrators can help cyber-bullied employees ...

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## How employees can help themselves

#### Some advice Administrators can offer:

- Follow Board policy on use of social media and reporting of bulling or harassment!
- Regularly search your own name online. Google yourself, search for Facebook pages and Twitter accounts which include your name.
- Do not connect with ("friend") current and potential future students and parents on social networks.

<ul> <li>Password protect everything online.</li> </ul>
Keep all accounts set on the most private
settings. Also, password-protect your
mobile phone.

- Keep your private life private. Don't share too much about your family, home, and background to your students and their parents.
- Consider speaking with an attorney to file a defamation or other cause of action.

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