

## Hot Topics Legal Workshop focusing on Transgender Students and "Unsocial" Media

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January 24, 2018

School Law attorney Michael P. McKeon presented at the Connecticut Association of Schools Hot Topics Legal Workshop on January 24. Mike's discussion focused on two separate topics including:

- Translating the Law of Transgender Students into Practical Application. The objective of this session was to review the current status of federal and Connecticut laws as they apply to students who identify themselves as transgender, and to translate those legal requirements into practical, school-based applications. This presentation featured a discussion of – as well as questions and answers pertaining to -- the steps school personnel must take to ensure that they are compliant with the law as it applies to school records, the use of bathrooms and locker rooms, participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities, including school trips, and disagreements between students and their parents regarding gender identification.
- Unsocial Media: Cyberbullying, Sexting and How to Regulate Communication in the Digital Age.

Social media pervades schools, whether the communications be student-to-student, staff-to-student, staff-to-staff, or administration-to-parents. While it can serve as a handy means of communicating information quickly, and can even prove to have pedagogical benefits, it also has the all-to-common potential to serve as the basis for the transmission of inappropriate images and text, as well as a vehicle for bullying and harassing other students, leading to a myriad of student-related disciplinary and mental health issues. What control do school officials have over social media as used by staff? Do traditional concepts of free speech apply? To what extent can school officials discipline students for inappropriate communications or cyberbullying, even when they occur off school grounds and outside the school day? Can school officials “search” student electronic devices? This presentation discussed these issues as well as sexting and the extreme care that school officials must take when dealing with images that could be deemed to constitute child pornography, including a review of the potential civil and criminal liability for mishandling them. Questions were encouraged.

**Wednesday, January 24, 2018**

**9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

**Connecticut Association of Schools**

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**Cheshire, CT**

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