

1 The Board recognizes the importance of incorporating current technology tools, including new  
2 methods of electronic communication, into the classroom to enhance student learning. It further  
3 recognizes the importance of employees, students, and parents engaging, learning, collaborating,  
4 and sharing in digital environments as part of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning. The Board strives to ensure  
5 that electronic communication tools incorporated into the school curriculum are used responsibly  
6 and safely. As practicable, the Board will provide access to secure social media tools and Board  
7 approved technologies for use during instructional time and for school-sponsored activities in  
8 accordance with policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program, and 3225/4312/7320,  
9 Technology Responsible Use.

10  
11 The Board acknowledges that school employees may engage in the use of social media during  
12 their personal time. School employees who use social media for personal purposes must be  
13 mindful that they are responsible for their public conduct even when not acting in their capacities  
14 as school system employees. All school employees, including student teachers and independent  
15 contractors shall comply with the requirements of this policy when using electronic social media  
16 for personal purposes.

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18 For the purposes of this policy, “social media” includes, but is not limited to: personal websites,  
19 web logs (blogs), wikis, social network sites, online forums, virtual worlds, video-sharing  
20 websites, and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers that does not  
21 fall within the Board’s technologies network (e.g., Web 2.0 tools, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter,  
22 LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube). In addition, this policy applies to any form of instant or direct  
23 messaging available through social media. Other forms of one-to-one electronic  
24 communications with students including voice, email and text-messaging are subject to the terms  
25 of policy 4040, Staff-Student Relations.

26  
27 **A. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS INVOLVING STUDENTS**

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29 Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times in  
30 accordance with policies 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations, and 7300, Staff  
31 Responsibilities. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled  
32 in the school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees’  
33 professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy. School  
34 personnel may use only school-controlled technological resources and social media tools  
35 to communicate directly with students or to comment on student matters through use of  
36 the Internet. An employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled  
37 social media website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior  
38 written approval from the Superintendent or designee and principal and meet any  
39 applicable requirements of policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program,  
40 3225/4312/7320, Technology Responsible Use, and 3227/7322, Web Page Development.

41  
42 The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an extension  
43 of the employee’s workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the Board expects employees

44 to use professional judgment when using social media or other electronic  
45 communications.

46  
47 Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students through  
48 a personal social network page. An Internet posting on a personal social media website  
49 intended for a particular student will be considered a form of direct communication with  
50 that student in violation of this policy. However, an employee may communicate with a  
51 student using personal social media networks to the extent the employee and student have  
52 a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of  
53 the school setting. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or  
54 nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the  
55 employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, sport  
56 or religious organization.

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58 **B. EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

59  
60 The Board respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-  
61 expression on their personal time. As role models for the school system's students,  
62 however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not  
63 performing their job duties as employees of the school system. Employees will be held to  
64 the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic  
65 communications as they are for any other public conduct. Further, school employees  
66 remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, Board policies, administrative  
67 regulations, and the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators, even if communicating  
68 with others concerning personal and private matters. If an employee's use of social  
69 media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties,  
70 the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of  
71 employment.

72  
73 Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content  
74 added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access  
75 the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site. Employees shall take  
76 reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to restrict students from  
77 viewing their personal information on social media websites and to prevent students from  
78 accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

79  
80 School employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal  
81 use during instructional time or with school system technological resources.

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83 **C. POSTING TO SOCIAL MEDIA SITES**

84  
85 Employees who use social media for personal purposes must be aware that the content  
86 they post may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents, and community

87 members. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating  
88 through social media:

- 89
- 90 1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees, or  
91 school system business.
- 92
- 93 2. Employees shall not accept current students as “friends” or “followers” or  
94 otherwise connect with students on social media sites, unless the employee and  
95 student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which  
96 originated outside of the school setting.
- 97
- 98 3. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social  
99 media sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol, or drug use or other  
100 behaviors associated with the employees’ private lives that would be  
101 inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.
- 102
- 103 4. Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their  
104 personal social media sites that are not accessible to the general public, unless the  
105 employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate  
106 relationship which originated outside of the school setting.
- 107
- 108 5. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing  
109 the school system, students, and other employees.
- 110
- 111 6. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar,  
112 or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that  
113 could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school  
114 environment.
- 115
- 116 7. Employees shall not use the school system’s logo or other copyrighted material of  
117 the system without express, written consent from the Board.
- 118
- 119 8. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student’s family  
120 without permission from the student and the student’s parent or legal guardian.
- 121
- 122 9. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the Board, individual  
123 Board members, students, or other school employees.
- 124
- 125 10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully, or intimidate other  
126 employees or students in violation of policy 1710/4021/7230, Prohibition Against  
127 Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying, or state and federal laws.
- 128
- 129 11. Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their

130 ability to perform their jobs.

131

132 12. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that  
133 violates Board policy and administrative procedures or state and federal laws.

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135 **D. CONSEQUENCES**

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137 School system personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the  
138 Internet using school technological resources. Additionally, the Superintendent or  
139 designee may periodically conduct public Internet searches to determine if an employee  
140 has engaged in conduct that violates this policy. Any employee who has been found by  
141 the Superintendent to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up  
142 to and including dismissal.

143

144 The Superintendent shall establish and communicate to employees guidelines that are consistent  
145 with this policy.

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147 Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; Children’s Internet Protection Act, 47 U.S.C.  
148 254(h)(5); Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational  
149 Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 17 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*; 20 U.S.C. 6777; G.S. 115C-  
150 325(e) (applicable to career status teachers), -325.4 (applicable to non-career status teachers); 16  
151 N.C.A.C. 6C .0601, .0602; State Board of Education Policy TCP-C-014

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153 Cross References: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy  
154 1710/4021/7230), Technology in the Educational Program (policy 3220), Technology  
155 Responsible Use (policy 3225/4312/7320), Web Page Development (policy 3227/7322),  
156 Copyright Compliance (policy 3230/7330), Staff-Student Relations (policy 4040/7310), Staff  
157 Responsibilities (policy 7300)

158

159 ADOPTED:

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