

1 The **Transylvania County Board of Education (the “board”)** recognizes the importance of  
2 incorporating current technology tools, including new methods of electronic communication, into  
3 the classroom to enhance student learning. It further recognizes the importance of employees,  
4 students, and parents engaging, learning, collaborating, and sharing in digital environments as  
5 part of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning. The board strives to ensure that electronic communication tools  
6 incorporated into the school curriculum are used responsibly and safely. As practicable, the  
7 board will provide access to secure social media tools and board approved technologies for use  
8 during instructional time and for school-sponsored activities in accordance with policies 3220,  
9 Technology in the Educational Program, and 3225/4312/7320, 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. **In addition, all school employees must comply with policy 4040/7310,**  
17 **Staff-Student Relations, when communicating with individual students through other electronic**  
18 **means, such as through voice, email, or text-messaging.**

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

## 28 29 **A. DEFINITIONS**

### 30 31 1. **Social Media**

32  
33 For the purposes of this policy, “social media” refers to the various online  
34 technology tools that enable people to communicate easily over the Internet to  
35 share information and resources. It includes, but it not limited to, personal  
36 websites, blogs, wikis, social networking sites, online forums, virtual worlds,  
37 video-sharing websites, and any other Internet-based applications which allow the  
38 exchange of user-generated content. For purposes of this policy, it also includes  
39 any form of instant or direct messaging available through such applications.  
40 Examples of social media include Web 2.0 tools, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn,  
41 Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Google+, and social media components of learning  
42 management systems such as Moodle or Edmodo.  
43

- 44 2. **School-Controlled Social Media**  
45  
46 “School-controlled social media” are social media networks, tools, or activities  
47 that are under the direct control and management of the school system and that  
48 create an archived audit trail.  
49
- 50 3. **Personal Social Media**  
51  
52 “Personal social media” means any social media networks, tools, or activities that  
53 are not school-controlled.  
54

55 **B. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS INVOLVING STUDENTS**  
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57 Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times in  
58 accordance with policies 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations, and 7300, Staff  
59 Responsibilities. **The use of electronic media for communicating with students and**  
60 **parents is an extension of the employee’s workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the**  
61 **board expects employees to use professional judgment when using social media or other**  
62 **electronic communications and to comply with the following:**  
63

- 64 1. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the  
65 school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees’  
66 professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy **or policy**  
67 **4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.** ~~School personnel may use only school-~~  
68 ~~controlled technological resources and social media tools to communicate directly~~  
69 ~~with students or to comment on student matters through use of the Internet. An~~  
70 ~~employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled social media~~  
71 ~~website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior written~~  
72 ~~approval from the Superintendent or designee and principal and meet any~~  
73 ~~applicable requirements of policies 3220, Technology in the Educational~~  
74 ~~Program, 3225/4312/7320, Technology Responsible Use, and 3227/7322, Web~~  
75 ~~Page Development.~~  
76

77 ~~The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an~~  
78 ~~extension of the employee’s workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the board~~  
79 ~~expects employees to use professional judgment when using social media or other~~  
80 ~~electronic communications.~~  
81

- 82 2. **School employees may use only school-controlled social media to communicate**  
83 **directly with current students about school-related matters. (For information**  
84 **regarding communication with students through other forms of electronic**  
85 **communication, e.g., email or texts, see policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student**  
86 **Relations.)**

87 3. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students  
88 through a personal social ~~network page~~ **media without parental permission**. An  
89 Internet posting on a personal social media website intended for a particular  
90 student will be considered a form of direct communication with that student in  
91 violation of this policy **unless the parent has consented to the communication**.  
92 However, an employee may communicate with a student using personal social  
93 media ~~networks~~ to the extent the employee and student have a family relationship  
94 or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school  
95 setting. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or  
96 nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of  
97 the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social,  
98 recreational, sport or religious organization.  
99

100 4. **An employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled social**  
101 **media website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior**  
102 **written approval from the principal and the superintendent or designee and must**  
103 **verify that the social media application's terms of service meet the requirements**  
104 **of policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program, 3225/4312/7320,**  
105 **Technology Responsible Use, and 3227/7322, Web Page Development. If the**  
106 **website collects personal information from students under the age of 13, the use**  
107 **will not be approved unless the applicable requirements of the Children's Online**  
108 **Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) are met. The employee shall ensure that the**  
109 **website does include or link to the employee's personal social media footprint.**  
110 **The site must be used for school-related purposes only.**  
111

### 112 C. EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

113  
114 The board respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-  
115 expression on their personal time. As role models for the school system's students,  
116 however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not  
117 performing their job duties as employees of the school system. Employees will be held to  
118 the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic  
119 communications as they are for any other public conduct. Further, school employees  
120 remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, board policies, administrative  
121 regulations, and the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators, even if communicating  
122 with others concerning personal and private matters. If an employee's use of social  
123 media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties,  
124 the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of  
125 employment.  
126

127 Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content  
128 added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access  
129 the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site. Employees shall take

130 reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to ~~restrict~~ manage  
131 students' ~~from viewing their~~ access to the employees' personal information on social  
132 media websites and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-  
133 appropriate.

134  
135 School employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal  
136 use during instructional time ~~or with school system technological resources.~~

137

#### 138 D. POSTING TO SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

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140 Employees who use social media for personal purposes must be aware that the content  
141 they post may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents, and community  
142 members. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating  
143 through social media.

144

145 1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees, or  
146 school system business.

147

148 2. Employees shall not accept current students as “friends” or “followers” or  
149 otherwise connect with students on **personal** social media sites **without parental**  
150 **permission**, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other  
151 type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting.

152

153 3. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social  
154 media sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol, or drug use or other  
155 behaviors associated with the employees' private lives that would be  
156 inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.

157

158 4. Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their  
159 personal social media sites that are not accessible to the general public **without**  
160 **parental permission**, unless the employee and student have a family relationship  
161 or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school  
162 setting.

163

164 5. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing  
165 the school system, students **or their parents**, and other employees.

166

167 6. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar,  
168 or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that  
169 could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school  
170 environment.

171

172 7. Employees shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of

- 173 the system on a personal social media site without express, written consent from  
 174 the board.  
 175
- 176 8. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family on a  
 177 personal social media site without permission from the student and the student's  
 178 parent or legal guardian. Employees may post such images on a school-controlled  
 179 social media site only with prior permission of the employee's supervisor and in  
 180 accordance with the requirements of federal and state privacy laws and policy  
 181 4700, Student Records.  
 182
- 183 9. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the board, individual  
 184 board members, students, or other school employees.  
 185
- 186 10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully, or intimidate students  
 187 or other employees or students in violation of policy 1710/4021/7230, Prohibition  
 188 Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying, or state and federal laws.  
 189
- 190 11. Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their  
 191 ability to perform their jobs.  
 192
- 193 12. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that  
 194 violates board policy and or administrative procedures or state and federal laws.  
 195

#### 196 E. CONSEQUENCES

197  
 198 School system personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the  
 199 Internet using school technological resources. Additionally, the Superintendent or  
 200 designee may periodically conduct public Internet searches to determine if an employee  
 201 has engaged in conduct that violates this policy. Any employee who has been found by  
 202 the Superintendent to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up  
 203 to and including dismissal.  
 204

205 The Superintendent shall establish and communicate to employees guidelines that are consistent  
 206 with this policy.  
 207

208 Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; Children's Internet Protection Act, 47 U.S.C.  
 209 254(h)(5); Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational  
 210 Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 17 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*; 20 U.S.C. 6777; G.S. 115C-  
 211 325(e) (applicable to career status teachers), -325.4 (applicable to non-career status teachers); 16  
 212 N.C.A.C. 6C .0601, .0602; State Board of Education Policy TCP-C-014  
 213

214 Cross References: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy  
 215 1710/4021/7230), Technology in the Educational Program (policy 3220), Technology

216 Responsible Use (policy 3225/4312/7320), Web Page Development (policy 3227/7322),  
217 Copyright Compliance (policy 3230/7330), Staff-Student Relations (policy 4040/7310), **Student**  
218 **Records (policy 4700)**, Staff Responsibilities (policy 7300)  
219  
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221  
222 **Revised: [DATE]**  
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REVISED