

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.

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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.

#### 20 **A. DEFINITIONS**

##### 21 22 **1. Social Media**

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

##### 34 35 **2. School-Controlled Social Media**

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37 “School-controlled social media” are social media networks, tools, or activities  
38 that are under the direct control and management of the school system and that  
39 create an archived audit trail.

##### 40 41 **3. Personal Social Media**

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43 “Personal social media” means any social media networks, tools, or activities that  
44 are not school-controlled.

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**B. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS INVOLVING STUDENTS**

Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times in accordance with policies 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations, and 7300, Staff Responsibilities. The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an extension of the employee's workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the board expects employees to use professional judgment when using social media or other electronic communications and to comply with the following:

1. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees' professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy or policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.
2. School employees may use only school-controlled social media to communicate directly with current students about school-related matters. (For information regarding communication with students through other forms of electronic communication, e.g., email or texts, see policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.)
3. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students through personal social media without parental permission. An Internet posting on a personal social media website intended for a particular student will be considered a form of direct communication with that student in violation of this policy unless the parent has consented to the communication. However, an employee may communicate with a student using personal social media to the extent the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, sport or religious organization.
4. An employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled social media website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior written approval from the principal and the superintendent or designee and must verify that the social media application's terms of service meet the requirements of policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program, 3225/4312/7320, Technology Responsible Use, and 3227/7322, Web Page Development. If the website collects personal information from students under the age of 13, the use will not be approved unless the applicable requirements of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) are met. The employee shall ensure that the

88 website does include or link to the employee's personal social media footprint.  
89 The site must be used for school-related purposes only.  
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91 **C. EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**  
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93 The board respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-  
94 expression on their personal time. As role models for the school system's students,  
95 however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not  
96 performing their job duties as employees of the school system. Employees will be held to  
97 the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic  
98 communications as they are for any other public conduct. Further, school employees  
99 remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, board policies, administrative  
100 regulations, and the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators, even if communicating  
101 with others concerning personal and private matters. If an employee's use of social  
102 media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties,  
103 the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of  
104 employment.  
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106 Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content  
107 added by the employee, the employee's "friends," or members of the public who can  
108 access the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site. Employees shall  
109 take reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to manage students'  
110 access to the employees' personal information on social media websites and to prevent  
111 students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.  
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113 School employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal  
114 use during instructional time.  
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116 **D. POSTING TO SOCIAL MEDIA SITES**  
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118 Employees who use social media for personal purposes must be aware that the content  
119 they post may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents, and community  
120 members. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating  
121 through social media.  
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- 123 1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees, or  
124 school system business.  
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- 126 2. Employees shall not accept current students as "friends" or "followers" or  
127 otherwise connect with students on personal social media sites without parental  
128 permission, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other  
129 type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting.  
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- 131 3. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social

- 132 media sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol, or drug use or other  
133 behaviors associated with the employees' private lives that would be  
134 inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.  
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- 136 4. Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their  
137 personal social media sites that are not accessible to the general public without  
138 parental permission, unless the employee and student have a family relationship  
139 or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school  
140 setting.  
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- 142 5. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing  
143 the school system, students or their parents, and other employees.  
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- 145 6. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar,  
146 or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that  
147 could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school  
148 environment.  
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- 150 7. Employees shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of  
151 the system on a personal social media site without express, written consent from  
152 the board.  
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- 154 8. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family on a  
155 personal social media site without permission from the student and the student's  
156 parent or legal guardian. Employees may post such images on a school-controlled  
157 social media site only with prior permission of the employee's supervisor and in  
158 accordance with the requirements of federal and state privacy laws and policy  
159 4700, Student Records.  
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- 161 9. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the board, individual  
162 board members, students, or other school employees.  
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- 164 10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully, or intimidate students  
165 or other employees in violation of policy 1710/4021/7230, Prohibition Against  
166 Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying, or state and federal laws.  
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- 168 11. Employees shall not post content that negatively impacts their ability to perform  
169 their jobs.  
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- 171 12. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that  
172 violates board policy or administrative procedures or state and federal laws.  
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**E. CONSEQUENCES**

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

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

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186 Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; Children’s Internet Protection Act, 47 U.S.C.  
187 254(h)(5); Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational  
188 Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 17 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*; 20 U.S.C. 6777; G.S. 115C-  
189 325(e) (applicable to career status teachers), -325.4 (applicable to non-career status teachers); 16  
190 N.C.A.C. 6C .0601, .0602; State Board of Education Policy ~~TCP-C-014NCAC-6C-0601~~ EVAL-  
191 014

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193 Cross References: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy  
194 1710/4021/7230), Technology in the Educational Program (policy 3220), Technology  
195 Responsible Use (policy 3225/4312/7320), Web Page Development (policy 3227/7322),  
196 Copyright Compliance (policy 3230/7330), Staff-Student Relations (policy 4040/7310), Student  
197 Records (policy 4700), Staff Responsibilities (policy 7300)

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201 Revised: November 19, 2015; [DATE]