

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 21st 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, or video-conferencing platforms.

19 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. **The use of video-conferencing
34 platforms such as Zoom, Webex, and Google Meet is subject to policy 4040/7310,
35 Staff-Student Relations.**

36 37 2. School-Controlled Social Media

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

42 43 3. Personal Social Media

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45 “Personal social media” means any social media networks, tools, or activities that
46 are not school-controlled.
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48 **B. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS INVOLVING STUDENTS**
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50 Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times in
51 accordance with policies 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations, and 7300, Staff
52 Responsibilities. The use of electronic media for communicating with students and
53 parents is an extension of the employee’s workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the
54 board expects employees to use professional judgment when using social media or other
55 electronic communications and to comply with the following:
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- 57 1. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the
58 school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees’
59 professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy or policy
60 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.
61
- 62 2. School employees may use only school-controlled social media **or approved**
63 **video-conferencing platforms** to communicate directly with current students about
64 school-related matters. (For ~~information~~ **expectations** regarding communication
65 with students through **video-conferencing platforms** or other forms of electronic
66 communication, e.g., email or texts, see policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student
67 Relations.)
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- 69 3. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students
70 through personal social media without parental permission. An Internet posting
71 on a personal social media website intended for a particular student will be
72 considered a form of direct communication with that student in violation of this
73 policy unless the parent has consented to the communication. However, an
74 employee may communicate with a student using personal social media to the
75 extent the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of
76 appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting. For
77 example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student
78 who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee’s
79 child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, sport or
80 religious organization.
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- 82 4. An employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled social
83 media website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior
84 written approval from the principal and the superintendent or designee and must
85 verify that the social media application’s terms of service meet the requirements
86 of policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program, 3225/4312/7320,
87 Technology Responsible Use, and 3227/7322, Web Page Development. If the
88 website collects personal information from students under the age of 13, the use

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

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3. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social media sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol, or drug use or other behaviors associated with the employees' private lives that would be inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.
 4. Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their personal social media sites that are not accessible to the general public without parental permission, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting.
 5. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing the school system, students or their parents, and other employees.
 6. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar, or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment.
 7. Employees shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of the system on a personal social media site without express, written consent from the board.
 8. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family on a personal social media site without permission from the student and the student's parent or legal guardian. Employees may post such images on a school-controlled social media site only with prior permission of the employee's supervisor and in accordance with the requirements of federal and state privacy laws and policy 4700, Student Records.
 9. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the board, individual board members, students, or other school employees.
 10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully, or intimidate students or other employees in violation of policies 1710/4020/7230, **Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law, 1725/4035/7236, Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Process, 4329/7311, Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited, and 7232, Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace**, ~~1710/4021/7230, Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying~~, or state and federal laws.
 11. Employees shall not post content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs.

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178 12. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that
179 violates board policy or administrative procedures or state and federal laws.
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181 **E. CONSEQUENCES**

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183 School system personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the
184 Internet using school technological resources. Additionally, the Superintendent or
185 designee may periodically conduct public Internet searches to determine if an employee
186 has engaged in conduct that violates this policy. Any employee who has been found by
187 the Superintendent to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up
188 to and including dismissal.
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190 The Superintendent shall establish and communicate to employees guidelines that are consistent
191 with this policy.
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193 Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; Children’s Internet Protection Act, 47 U.S.C.
194 254(h)(5); Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational
195 Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 17 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*; 20 U.S.C. 6777; G.S. 115C-
196 325(e) (applicable to career status teachers), -325.4 (applicable to non-career status teachers); 16
197 N.C.A.C. 6C .0601, .0602; State Board of Education Policy EVAL-014
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199 Cross References: **Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law (policy**
200 **1710/4020/7230)**, **Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Process**
201 **(policy 1725/4035/7236)**, ~~Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy~~
202 ~~1710/4021/7230)~~, Technology in the Educational Program (policy 3220), Technology
203 Responsible Use (policy 3225/4312/7320), Web Page Development (policy 3227/7322),
204 Copyright Compliance (policy 3230/7330), Staff-Student Relations (policy 4040/7310), **Bullying**
205 **and Harassing Behavior Prohibited (policy 4329/7311)**, Student Records (policy 4700),
206 **Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace (policy 7232)**, Staff Responsibilities (policy
207 7300)
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209 Adopted: June 15, 2015
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211 Revised: November 19, 2015; February 19, 2018 (legal references only); [DATE]