

## **Policy Code: 5180 EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Given the open nature of the Internet, creating, maintaining, or posting information on a publicly accessible website, blog, or social media platform is considered a form of communication accessible to students, parents, and co-workers. Moreover, inappropriate use of social media and other forms of electronic communication may breach laws and policies governing confidentiality and privacy and/or cause disruptions in the workplace or school environment. Accordingly, all employees must adhere to the following rules in their use of social media and other forms of electronic communications.

The board acknowledges that school employees may engage in the use of social media during their personal time. School employees who use social media for personal purposes must be mindful that they are responsible for their public conduct even when not acting in their capacities as school system employees. All school employees, including student teachers and independent contractors, shall comply with the requirements of this policy when using electronic social media for personal purposes. In addition, all school employees must comply with policy [5135](#), Staff-Student Relations, when communicating with individual students through other electronic means, such as through voice, email, or text-messaging.

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

### **A. RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Employees shall use the Edenton-Chowan Schools' communications networks communicating electronically in their roles as employees with students, parents, and/or other employees.
2. Employees shall maintain appropriate and professional relationships with students at all times, including but not limited to any electronic communications. Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times in accordance with policy [5135](#), Staff-Student Relations.
3. 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:
  - a. 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 [5135](#), Staff-Student Relations.
  - b. School employees may use only school-controlled social media **or approved video-conferencing platforms** to communicate directly with

current students about school-related matters. (For **expectations information** regarding communication with students through **video-conferencing platforms** or other forms of electronic communication, e.g., email or texts, see policy [5135](#), Staff-Student Relations).

c. 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.

d. 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 [3340](#), Acceptable Internet Use, and [5175](#) Internet Acceptable Use by Employees. 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 website does not include or link to the employee's personal social media footprint.

The site must be used for school-related purposes only.

4. Employees shall not knowingly permit students to access any words, images, or other content they have posted or maintained on social media that would not be appropriate to share or discuss with students at school. Employees shall take reasonable precautions, including but not limited to the use of available privacy or security settings, to keep students from accessing such content.
5. Employees shall not use social media to post or convey information about students that is deemed confidential under any applicable law or policy.
6. Employees shall not use social media to post or convey information about confidential personnel matters.
7. Employees shall be respectful and professional in all electronic communications directed to or referencing parents, students, and/or other employees, including but not limited to communications through social media.
8. Employees shall not use social media or other forms of electronic communication in violation of any other Board of Education policies or

administrative regulations, including but not limited to Board Policies [4405/5120](#), [Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law](#), [4406/5122](#), [Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Process](#), [4408/5124](#), [Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited](#), and [4409/5126](#), [Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace](#) ~~[4400/5125](#)~~, ~~Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying~~, [4100](#), Maintenance, Review, and Release of Student Records, [5100](#), Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct, and [5135](#) Staff-Student Relations).

9. Employees shall not use social media in a manner that adversely affects their ability to perform their job duties.

10. Employees shall not engage in any electronic communications with students, parents, supervisors, or co-workers, including but not limited to communications through social media, that adversely affect their ability to perform their job duties.

#### B. CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATION OF POLICY

1. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

2. Employee uses of social media or other electronic communications that violate one or more other Board Policies, including but not limited to any of the policies listed above, may result in disciplinary action under the terms of the applicable policies.

#### C. ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS AND ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

1. The superintendent is authorized to adopt regulations and procedures to implement this policy and apply it to changing technologies.

2. The superintendent is further authorized to provide other forms of written directives and guidance to employees on electronic communications and social media, provided such directives and guidance are consistent with this policy.

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

Cross References: [Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law \(4405/5120\)](#), [Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Process \(4406/5122\)](#), ~~Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy [4400/5125](#))~~, Maintenance, Review, and Release of Student Records (policy [4100](#)), General Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct (policy [5100](#)), Staff-Student Relations (policy [5135](#))

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