

## **RCSS Social Media Guidelines for Employees**

It is reasonable to expect that RCSS employees may engage in the use of social media on their personal time. Employees are reminded that they will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of social media as they are for any other public conduct. Also, employees are subject to applicable state and federal laws, board policies [7335-Use of Social Media by the School System](#) and [3225/4312/7320-Technology Responsible Use](#), and [The Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators](#).

Employees are encouraged to keep their personal lives personal, especially in the digital world where personal and professional can become blurred. Information produced by RCSS employees reflects upon the entire school district. Free speech protects individuals who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including personal online postings, disrupts school operations.

By accessing, creating or contributing to any social media, employees agree to abide by board policy. Among the guidelines in place to ensure the safe and responsible use of social media by employees are the following:

- Employees must not accept current students as “friends” or “followers” or otherwise connect with students on personal social media accounts, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship that originated outside of the school setting.
- Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student’s family without the permission from the student and the student’s parent or legal guardian, and shall not post identifiable images of an employee without permission from the employee.
- Employees must not post confidential information about students, other employees, or school system business.
- School personnel may use only school-controlled technological resources and social media tools to communicate directly with students or to comment on student matters through use of the Internet.
- Employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal use during the school day or with school system technological resources.

It’s important to note that board policy makes a distinction between personal social media accounts (which prohibit direct communication with students) and school-controlled social media accounts (which allow direct communication with students). To establish a school-controlled social media account, the account owner must:

- Use his/her RCSS email address when setting up the account.
- Complete the school system’s “Social Media Account Request Form” and submit it to his/her principal. All such requests by principals and central service staff members should be submitted to the school system’s Public Information Officer, using the same form. No employee is permitted to create a school-controlled social media account until his/her receipt of written approval by the person to whom the “Social Media Account Request Form” was submitted. Also, a copy of all approved forms will be maintained in the Public Information Officer’s office for all employees as well as the principal’s office for school-based employees.