**EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**  *Policy Code:* **7335**

The board recognizes the importance of incorporating current technology tools, including new methods of electronic communication, into the classroom to enhance scholar learning. It further recognizes the importance of employees, scholars, and parents engaging, learning, collaborating, and sharing in digital environments as part of 21st Century learning. The board strives to ensure that electronic communication tools incorporated into the NERSBA curriculum are used responsibly and safely. As practicable, the board will provide access to secure social media tools and board approved technologies for use during instructional time and for school-sponsored activities in accordance with policies 3220, Technology in the Educational Program, and 3225/4312/7320, Technology Responsible Use.

The board acknowledges that NERSBA employees may engage in the use of social media during their personal time. NERSBA 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 NERSBA employees. All employees, including scholar teachers and independent contractors, shall comply with the requirements of this policy when using electronic social media for personal purposes. In addition, all employees must comply with policy 4040/7310, Staff-Scholar Relations, when communicating with individual scholars through other electronic means, such as through voice, email, or text-messaging.

1. **Definitions**
2. Social Media

For the purposes of this policy, “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, 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. The use of video-conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Webex, and Google Meet is subject to policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.

1. School-Controlled Social Media

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

1. Personal Social Media

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

1. **Social Media Communications Involving Scholars**

Employees are to maintain professional relationships with scholars at all times in accordance with policies 4040/7310, Staff-Scholar Relations, and 7300, Staff Responsibilities. The use of electronic media for communicating with scholars 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 scholars who are currently enrolled in NERSBA must be school-related and within the scope of the employees’ professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy or policy 4040/7310, Staff-Scholar Relations.
2. School employees may use only school-controlled social media to communicate directly with current scholars about school-related matters. Faculty and staff may use their personal text messaging accounts to communicate with scholars for school related purposes. Employees are prohibited from using text messages to send personal messages to scholars. (For information regarding communication with scholars through other forms of electronic communication, e.g., email or texts, see policy 4040/7310, Staff-Scholar Relations.)
3. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current scholars through personal social media without parental permission except as addressed in paragraph 2. above. An Internet posting on a personal social media website intended for a particular scholar will be considered a form of direct communication with that scholar in violation of this policy unless the parent has consented to the communication. However, an employee may communicate with a scholar using personal social media to the extent the employee and scholar 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 scholar who is the child of an adult friend, a scholar 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 executive director 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 scholars 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.
5. **Employee Personal Use of Social Media**

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

Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content added by the employee, the employee’s “friends,” or members of the public who can access the employee’s site, and for Web links on the employee’s site. Employees shall take reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to manage scholars’ access to the employees’ personal information on social media websites and to prevent scholars from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

NERSBA employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal use during instructional time.

1. **Posting to Social Media Sites**

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

1. Employees shall not post confidential information about scholars, employees, or NERSBA business.
2. Employees shall not accept current scholars as “friends” or “followers” or otherwise connect with scholars on personal social media sites without parental permission, unless the employee and scholar have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting.
3. Employees shall not knowingly allow scholars 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 scholar at school.
4. Employees may not knowingly grant scholars 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 scholar 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 NERSBA, scholars 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’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 scholar or scholar’s family on a personal social media site without permission from the scholar and the scholar’s parent or legal guardian. Employees may post such images on a NERSBA-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, Scholar Records.
9. Employees shall not use Internet postings to libel or defame the board, individual board members, scholars, or other NERSBA employees.
10. Employees shall not use Internet postings to harass, bully, or intimidate scholars or other employees in violation of policy 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.
12. Employees shall not use Internet postings to engage in any other conduct that violates board policy or administrative procedures or state and federal laws.
13. **Consequences**

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

The executive director shall establish and communicate to employees guidelines that 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 TCP-C-014

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

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