

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy—Revision 1

River Mill Academy recognizes the importance of technology in the educational setting and the value of new methods of electronic communication. Social media can be a positive and appropriate tool to enhance instruction, engagement and communication within the school community. River Mill Academy supports the use of social media and electronic communication so long as such use is consistent with the school's mission, policies and procedures and with any applicable state and federal laws.

River Mill may provide access to various technology resources including social media tools for use during instructional time and for school-sponsored activities in accordance with school policies. The Board acknowledges that school employees may also use social media during their personal time and for personal purposes. School employees must always recognize their responsibilities as professional educators and role models to students and must therefore exercise reasonable care and discretion even in their personal use of social media. All school employees shall comply with this policy when using social media and electronic communication.

Definitions

Social Media - the use of internet-based technology such as websites and applications that allow users to create and share content. This includes, but is not limited to personal websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking sites, online forums, virtual worlds, video or photo-sharing websites, and other internet-based applications which allow the exchange of user-generated content.

Electronic Communication – the transfer of information through electronic means. This includes, but is not limited to email, text messages, and instant messaging.

Personal Use

River Mill Academy recognizes that employees may choose to access social media for personal use. School employees are prohibited from accessing social media for personal use during instructional time. As with other technologies, it is expected that some incidental and occasional personal use of social media may occur at work. River Mill Academy permits such infrequent and brief personal use so long as it occurs on personal time, does not interfere with work responsibilities, and is not otherwise prohibited by school policy or applicable law.

Employees are responsible for the content on their personal 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 site.

Employees are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the appropriate security settings for any social media tools they use, ensuring that personal content may be viewed only by the intended audience. In particular, employees shall take reasonable precautions to manage students' access to the employee's personal information on social media platforms and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

Material that employees post on social media that is or may become publicly available to those in the school community must reflect the professional standards applicable to the employee's position and must not impair the employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents/guardians; or impair the employee's ability to serve as a role model for students. When communicating through social media, employees shall abide by the following rules:

1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees, or school business.
2. Employees shall not accept students or parents as "friends" or "followers" or otherwise communicate directly with students or parents on personal social media sites unless the employee and student or parent have a family relationship or other appropriate relationship which originated outside the school setting.
3. 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.
4. Employees should never use their school email account, address or password in conjunction with personal social media activity.
5. Employees are prohibited from using the school logo or any school images without written permission from the Principal.
6. Employees shall not use social media postings to libel or defame students, parents, other employees, the Board of Directors or individual Board members.
7. Employees shall not use social media postings to engage in any other conduct that violates board policy or procedure or state and federal laws.

Professional Use

Employees considering the use of any social media platform for school purposes must ensure that the platform and its use aligns with the school's mission and Board policies. All school-sponsored social media sites must be approved by the Principal before implementation.

Employees must adhere to the same standards of conduct on school-sponsored social media sites as they do elsewhere in the school setting. Professional social media communication should be in compliance with Board policies and applicable laws, including but not limited to prohibitions on disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language. No personally identifiable student information may be posted on school-sponsored social media sites, including student photographs, without the consent of the student's parents.

School-sponsored social media sites will be developed and utilized in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws including the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the North Carolina Public Records Law, and intellectual property laws.

Employees should consult with school administration if there are any questions or need for clarification related to professional use of social media platforms.

Staff-Student Relations

Employees must maintain professional relationships with students at all times in accordance with Board policies. All electronic communications with students must be school-related and within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities. Employees may only use school-controlled social media to communicate directly with current students about school-related matters unless otherwise provided in Board policy.

Employees are prohibited from using any web presence, social media, or electronic communication to establish personal relationships with students that are unprofessional or otherwise inappropriate. Examples of unprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers such as writing personal emails; texting students; calling students on cell phones or allowing students to make personal calls to the employee unrelated to school work or activities; sending inappropriate pictures to students such as those containing nudity, alcohol or drug use; discussing or revealing to students personal matters about their private lives or inviting students to do the same; and engaging in sexualized dialogue.

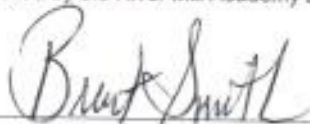
Appropriate discussions include a student's homework, class activity, school sport or club, or other school sponsored activity. Electronic communications with students are to be sent simultaneously to multiple recipients, not to just one student, except where the communication is clearly school related and inappropriate for persons other than the individual student to receive (e.g. emailing a message about a student's grades).

Consequences

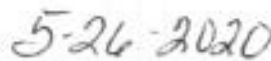
River Mill Academy will monitor employee use of social media and electronic communications on any school technology resources. River Mill Academy may also conduct public internet searches to determine if an employee has engaged in conduct that violates this Policy. Any employee found to be in violation of this Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

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Approved by the River Mill Academy Board of Directors



Chairperson



Date