
The Shining Rock Classical Academy Board recognizes the importance of incorporating technological tools, including new methods of electronic communication, into the classroom to enhance student learning. It further recognizes the importance of employees, students, and parents engaging, learning, collaborating, and sharing in digital environments. The board strives to ensure that electronic communication tools incorporated into the school curriculum are used responsibly and safely.

The Shining Rock Classical Academy 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 a school employee. 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.

A. Definitions

a. Social Media

For the purposes of this policy, “social media” refers to the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate digitally 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, TikTok, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, and social media components of learning management systems such as Moodle or Edmodo.

b. School-Controlled Social Media

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

c. Personal Social Media

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

B. Social Media Communications Involving Students

Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times. 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.

1. 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.
2. School employees may use only school-controlled social media or approved video-conferencing platforms to communicate directly with current students about school-related matters.
3. 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.
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 Head of School or designee.

C. 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 school's students, however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not performing their job duties as employees of the school. 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, school 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 students' access to the employees' personal information on social media websites and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

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

D. 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 students, parents, and community members. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating through social media.

1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees, or school system business.
2. Employees shall not accept current students as “friends” or “followers” or otherwise connect with students on personal social media sites without parental permission, unless the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of school.
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.
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 school.
5. Employees shall be professional in all Internet postings related to or referencing the school, 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’s logo or other copyrighted material of the school 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.
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.
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.

E. Consequences

Shining Rock Classical Academy personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the Internet using school technological resources. Additionally, the Head of School 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 Head of School to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The Head of School shall establish and communicate to employees guidelines that are consistent with this policy.