

# Policy GBEBDE Social Media and Electronic Communications

*Issued 7/15*

JCHS supports the responsible use of social media by employees. Used appropriately, social media become tools to provide information and connections to learning experiences. This policy provides guidelines to assist employees to understand that the realm of social media is vast; for the safety of students and themselves, employees must understand needed controls and filters. While the school encourages the use of professional and educational social media accounts, employees must accept that they are public figures. This policy covers use of social media on and off school property, on and off work hours, using both school-owned and personal technologies.

## Definitions

“Social media” includes, but is not limited to, various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily over the Internet: text, audio, video, images, and other multimedia communications.

“Technology” includes, but is not limited to, computers, tablets, smart watches, electronic storage devices, and communication devices.

“School technology” includes that which is owned or provided by the school.

“Personal technology” is non-school-owned technology.

**Professional and personal social media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption in schools and/or the workplace and can be in violation of school policies.**

## Professional Social Media Communications

School employees initiating a professional social media communication shall include the following text: “This site includes user-created content that does not necessarily reflect the views of the school. The purpose of this site is [specify purpose].”

School employees may not use school-owned technological devices for inappropriate social media activity on or off school property and on or off duty hours. School employees should treat professional social media activities and communication like a classroom and/or professional workplace. The same standards expected in the classroom are expected on professional social media sites. If a behavior is inappropriate in the classroom, then that behavior is also inappropriate on professional social sites.

School employees should use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites to ensure that communications only reach the intended audience. Employees should be mindful that social media sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions at any time. As a result, employees have an individual responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being used. School administrators, or their designees, are responsible for monitoring employees’ professional

social media sites.

School employees are required to obtain approval from the principal or their designee, before setting up a professional social media presence.

School employees have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of professional social media, as the school will regularly monitor sites to protect the school community.

School administrators reserve the right to remove, disable, and provide feedback regarding professional social media sites that do not adhere to the law or school policies. Sites, accounts, or pages existing absent prior authorization will be subject to review. As a result, a recommendation for disciplinary action may result.

Professional social media communication must be in compliance with existing policies that prohibit harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory, or threatening language. Professional social media communications must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## **Personal Social Media Communication**

The use of personal technology devices for social media services during school hours, even for legitimate reasons, should be extremely limited.

In order to maintain appropriate professional relationships with students, school employees should not communicate with students currently enrolled in schools on personal social media sites.

As a recommended practice, school employees should use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media communications. Private communications published on the Internet can easily become public. Employees should be mindful that social media sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions at any time. As a result, employees have an individual responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being used.

*"Notwithstanding the other provisions of this policy, the school, coaches, parents/guardians, and athletes understand and recognize social media plays an integral and critical role in helping student athletes be noticed and possibly recruited by colleges and college coaches. JICHS coaches may use social media and social media communication to promote and facilitate JICHS student athletes' opportunity for college recognition and/or recruitment. Such social media communication and use shall respect appropriate boundaries between adult and student and shall be limited to the purpose of college recruitment and recognition in accordance with coaching duties. Coaches understand interactions with students through social media and online means shall have no expectations of privacy and are subject to review by the Principal and the JICHS Board of Directors."*

School employees shall understand that there is a significant risk in using personal devices for inappropriate social media activity on or off school property and on or off duty hours if such activity violates school policy and/or brings negative attention to the school or department and/or causes disruption in the educational environment.

School employees must remember that at all times they are seen in the community as an ambassador of the school and a mentor to students and must conduct themselves with

professionalism and common sense to remain effective as an educator.

Violations of this policy by employees may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate suspension and possible termination of employment.

***"This policy incorporates Policy GBEBB."***

~~The principal shall develop regulations to ensure compliance with the letter and the spirit of this policy.~~

**"The principal may develop regulations to ensure compliance with the letter and the spirit of this policy."**

Legal References:

Federal Cases

*Grutzmacher v. Howard County*, 851 F.3d. 332 (4th Cir. 2017).

Adopted 8/8/2022

**James Island Charter High School**