



Rutland County Schools

District Operating Procedures

Rutland County Schools (RCS) respects the right of employees to use social media and networking sites, message boards and forums, as well as personal websites and blogs, but it is important that employees' personal use of these sites does not damage the reputation of RCS, its employees, its students or their families. Social media, audiovisual media, and networking sites may be accessed through the RCS network, with for the purpose of maintaining RCS-sponsored online communities, school marketing, and instructional purposes. Personal usage of social media sites is limited to duty-free breaks and lunch hours.

Employees should exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between their personal and public online behavior, understanding what is private in the digital world is easily searchable, shareable, and often has the possibility of becoming public, even without their knowledge or consent. RCS strongly encourages all employees to carefully review the privacy settings on any social media and networking sites they use and exercise care and good judgment when posting content and information on such sites.

When posting on message boards or forums, including social media and networking sites, be honest about your identity. Never pretend to be someone else and post about RCS or a school. If you are authorized to represent RCS or your school in social media, say so. If you choose to post about RCS on your personal time, identify yourself as an RCS employee. In personal posts, be clear that your views are your own, not a representation of RCS. A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss education or other matters relating to RCS, you may include a sentence similar to this: *"The views expressed on this [blog, forum, website] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of RCS."*

Tracking tools enable anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. There's no such thing as a "private" website or social media service. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information and even deleted posts. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's

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Employee Social Media Policy

wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed. Employees' online behavior should not call into question their suitability to work with children.

When using a social media site, an employee is strongly discouraged from including current, minor students as "friends," "followers," or any other similar terminology used by various sites without written permission from the students' parents. Employees are also required to follow all applicable privacy laws when referencing students or posting photos and video of students on private or RCS-affiliated social media accounts. Though it may seem appropriate to celebrate or publicly recognize student successes, posting identifying information or media is prohibited.

If an employee maintains or participates in a RCS-sponsored online community that extends to persons who are parents, alumni, or other constituents, s/he must exercise good judgment about any content that is shared on the site.

Additionally, employees should adhere to the following guidelines, which are consistent with RCS' workplace standards on harassment, student relationships, conduct, professional communication, and confidentiality:

- An employee shall not make statements that would violate any of RCS' policies, including its policies concerning discrimination, harassment, or obscene material;
- The employee shall uphold RCS' value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about RCS, schools, employees, students, or a student's family;
- An employee will not disclose any confidential information of the District or school or confidential information obtained during the course of his/her employment, about any individuals or organizations, including students and/or their families.

Social media accounts affiliated with a school, school-sponsored group, or District department must be approved in writing by the Director of Communications or his/her designee. It is also strongly recommended that social media accounts affiliated with school parent groups be clearly marked as parent-run, not RCS-sponsored.

If RCS believes that an employee's activity on a social networking site, blog, or personal website may violate RCS' policies, RCS may request that the employee cease such activity. Depending on the severity of the incident, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.