

RUTHERFORD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES, REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: Use of Social Media for school communications

Purpose for using Social Media

More families are choosing to use social media as a way to receive information. As such, Rutherford County Schools' purpose for utilizing social media is to add another layer of communication to reach parents. In addition, social media enables the district to have a communications and web presence in the event of a disaster or emergency situation.

Social media should not be used to replace existing communications channels, such as websites, parent newsletters, phone calls and e-mails, but should be used as a supplement. Examples of appropriate social media messages include public service announcements, important calendar dates, media releases and special event listings.

The following provides guidelines for the district's acceptable use of social media.

Facebook

At this time, Director of Schools Don Odom has not authorized the use of Facebook by the district or individual schools. No district administrator, school principal, teacher, employee or volunteer should create a Facebook account representing the district, any schools, athletic teams or any other student or employee group.

Twitter

Rutherford County Schools utilizes Twitter as a part of a comprehensive communications plan. The content of the Twitter page should mimic the content found on the district's website, www.rcschools.net.

The Communications Department will have sole control of the district account and will maintain login credentials for security reasons. Individual departments are not authorized to create separate Twitter accounts without permission from the Communications Department. The Communications Department will use TweetDeck to monitor all school Twitter feeds.

School Twitter accounts

The choice to establish a school Twitter account is fully at the discretion of each principal, who is ultimately responsible for the content. No school employee should establish a school account without explicit permission of the school's principal.

When a school wishes to establish a Twitter account, the principal should notify the Communications Department for tracking purposes. The Communications Department can assist the school with the initial set-up of the page, if requested.

YouTube

Rutherford County Schools has created its own YouTube channel as a part of a comprehensive communications plan. The channel will include videos about the district, individual schools or student groups, and School Board meetings. The channel will be linked to the official RCS website.

The Communications Department will have sole control of the district channel and will maintain login credentials for security reasons. Individual departments are not authorized to create separate YouTube channels. Schools wishing to create a YouTube Channel should contact the Communications Department for tracking purposes.

Other Guidelines

Use RCS e-mail addresses only

All social media accounts will be used only for official RCS purposes, and as such, no personal e-mail addresses should be displayed. Only RCS email addresses should be used for any contact or account set-up purposes.

Who may work on school social media accounts?

School principals are the only school staff authorized to request access to a school social media account. The principal may designate a faculty or staff member to access, develop and maintain the school account.

At no time should students, parents, vendors or anyone other than authorized employees be given access to post any information on any district or school social media account.

Appropriate messages, “Tweets,” and followers

Any messages disseminated from an RCS social media account must pertain to official school business or educational matters. Any personal messages representing an individual sent from these accounts will be considered a violation of this procedure. Keep in mind that these pages are official representations of schools and the district in general. As such, all “tweets” and messages should fall within the guidelines of good taste and must support the mission of Rutherford County Schools.

Schools should closely monitor fans and followers for any inappropriate content and immediately prohibit inappropriate followers of your social media accounts. Inappropriate followers may include, but are not limited to, accounts that represent commercial spam, business listings, vendor advertising, adult content or followers who

use inappropriate language. Principals who need assistance blocking a user should contact the Communications Department.

How To Guide for Schools Using Twitter

Setting Up a Twitter Account

Schools wanting to establish a Twitter page should first notify Community Relations Coordinator James Evans in the Communications Department for tracking purposes and for assistance setting up the initial account, if needed. The initial set-up will include creating a Twitter name, or handle, that will be used for a school, setting the authorized user email address, security settings and logo images. The account will be kept unpublished during the initial set-up phase.

Basic overview of Twitter

(NOTE: For a complete "New Users Guide," visit support.twitter.com)

Twitter is a service for friends, family and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short updates, often called "Tweets" of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers and are searchable on Twitter search.

Common terms and actions used on Twitter

(NOTE: For a comprehensive Twitter glossary, go to support.twitter.com)

Tweet: Tweet, tweeting, tweeted. The act of posting a message, often called a "Tweet," on Twitter.

ReTweet: To retweet, retweeting, retweeted. The act of forwarding another user's Tweet to all of your followers. Abbreviated "RT"

Mention: Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention." Also refers to Tweets in which your username was included.

Direct Message: Also called a DM and most recently called simply a "message," these Tweets are private between the sender and recipient. Tweets sent over SMS become DMs when they begin with "d username" to specify who the message is for.

Hashtag: The # symbol is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users.

@ symbol: The @ sign is used to call out usernames in Tweets, like this: Hello @Twitter! When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile.

Followers: A follower is another Twitter user who has followed you.

Tiny URL: Because Twitter only allows 140 characters per Tweet, it is difficult to post long URLs to a specific website. The site tinyurl.com is a free redirect service that allows users to post shorter URLs in tweets. Registration is not required. Another similar service is available at bitly.com, but users must register.

Approved by Director of Schools on January 25, 2013