



ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL  
Hickory, North Carolina  
ADOPTED/REVISED: November, 2012

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy 501

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29*

### Introduction

St. Stephens Lutheran School seeks to bring glory to Jesus Christ and make important contributions to the lives of students, families, staff and the community. Staff members are encouraged to use technology to support communication, instruction, collaboration, and learning in a Christ-honoring way. Social media should be used in a manner that adds value to the St. Stephens Lutheran School ministry. If the use of social media builds a sense of community; if it helps members, staff, students, and parents communicate and solve problems; if it honors Christ and His body; if it helps to improve knowledge or skills; if it contributes directly or indirectly to the improvement of instruction or student performance; or if it helps to promote the SSLS mission and ministry, then it adds value.

The social media principles and guidelines apply to staff members utilizing social media. Social media is defined as any website or medium that allows for communication that is made available to the general public. The following are examples and not intended to cover the range of current or future social media formats: online publishing and discussion, blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, virtual worlds, and social networks. It is important to know that posts on these sites and others may reach members of the general public and be brought to the attention of the administrative staff and School Board of St. Stephens Lutheran School.

### Social Media Principles and Guidelines

As a Christian ministry, St. Stephens Lutheran School expects its staff members to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. It is important for staff members to understand what is expected and required when they choose to participate, whether at work or on their own time.

- In general, it is expected that staff members will apply the teaching in Ephesians 4: 29 to any social media communication, “*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*”
- Staff members may use social media with current SSLS students (at any grade level) for the purpose of school or classroom-related information sharing.
- Staff members should not use social media with current SSLS students (at any grade level) for personal or non-school contact.
- Staff members may not speak on behalf of the school unless they have been officially designated to do so.
- When posting information related to work, staff members must identify themselves and their employment at St. Stephens Lutheran School. Staff members should ensure that content reflects positively on the school ministry.
- All staff members must follow copyright laws and educational fair use guidelines, keeping in mind that laws are different depending on the type of content being used.
- Confidential information about school staff, students or families must not be disclosed in any social media platform. Permission must be received before posting someone's picture or publishing a private conversation. Social media is not the appropriate place to communicate confidential matters.
- In order to contribute to the safety of staff members, students, parents, members, or other constituents, permission must be gained before they are cited, identified by name or referenced. Reference to St. Stephens Lutheran School activities must not include an individual's personal or identifying information.
- As a non-profit Christian ministry, St. Stephens Lutheran School does not endorse candidates for elected office. Employees who engage in political activity cannot represent on behalf of the church or school using the St. Stephens Lutheran School name, letterhead, website, or anything that gives people the impression that the political activity represents St. Stephens Lutheran School's view.

As is the case with all school policies, staff members who do not comply with the policy may face disciplinary action. The disciplinary action may involve a verbal or written warning or, in serious cases, termination of employment. Staff members who are found in violation of the law may also be personally liable.