Macon County Board of Education
5.19 Employee Social Media Policy

5.19.1 Purpose
This policy provides guidelines for employee use of social media to ensure that online conduct upholds the professional standards of the Macon County School District, protects the integrity of the school system, and complies with applicable laws and Board policies.

5.19.2 Scope
This policy applies to all employees of the Board, whether using personal or Board-issued devices, and whether social media activity occurs on or off duty, if such activity impacts the employee's ability to perform job duties or undermines the effectiveness of the school system.

5.19.3 Definitions
- **Social media** includes, but is not limited to, websites, applications, and platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, blogs, wikis, and other forms of online communication and content-sharing.
- **Official accounts** are Board- or school-sanctioned social media accounts created for communication with students, parents, or the community.
- **Personal accounts** are accounts created and maintained by individual employees for non-official purposes.

5.19.4 Acceptable Use
Acceptable use refers to responsible and professional use of social media that supports the educational mission of the district, complies with Board policies and legal requirements, and reflects conduct consistent with the role of an employee of the school system.
- Employees are expected to maintain the same professional standards online as in the workplace.
- Employees must comply with existing Board policies, including but not limited to:
    - Policy 4.8 Internet Safety and Use of Technology
    - Policy 5.1 Employee Qualifications and Duties
    - Policy 5.6 Employee Conflicts of Interest
    - Policy 5.14 Sexual Harassment (Title VII)
- Employees may use social media to communicate professionally with students and parents only through official, Board-approved platforms. Personal accounts must not be used for official communication.
- Employees may not use Board-owned technology, time, or resources for personal social media activity except for incidental, non-disruptive use.

5.19.5 Prohibited Conduct
Prohibited conduct refers to any online behavior or activity that violates Board policy, state or federal law, professional standards of conduct, or that undermines the integrity, safety, or reputation of the school system. Employees are prohibited from:
- Posting confidential or personally identifiable student information (FERPA).
- Posting confidential personnel information or internal Board matters.
- Making defamatory, obscene, threatening, harassing, or discriminatory statements online that would violate existing Board policies.
- Using social media to engage in conduct that undermines the employee's effectiveness, impairs professional judgment, or violates community trust (e.g., posting inappropriate photos, language, or commentary).
- Using Board affiliation to endorse or promote commercial products, political candidates, or causes, unless authorized by the Superintendent.
- "Friending," "following," or otherwise establishing personal social media connections with current students, unless such communication is through Board-approved platforms and for educational purposes.

5.19.6 Official School and District Accounts
Creation of official accounts requires approval from the Superintendent or designee. All content posted on such accounts must be professional, factual, and supportive of the school system's mission. Credentials for official accounts must be maintained by the Superintendent or designee rather than by an individual employee alone.

5.19.7 Reporting and Enforcement
Employees who observe or become aware of inappropriate online activity by colleagues must report their concerns to their immediate supervisor. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to investigate any alleged violations of this policy, and violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, consistent with Board policy, state law, and due process requirements.

5.19.8 Disclaimer
Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Employees should include disclaimers such as "views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of the Macon County School District" when discussing education-related matters on personal accounts.

5.19.9 Relationship to Other Policies
This policy supplements, but does not replace, existing policies regarding employee conduct, use of technology, and confidentiality. In cases of conflict, the more restrictive provision will apply.