

Consistent with policy 3230/7370, Technology Responsible Use, and in an effort to further the school system’s objectives, the board of education encourages the use of the Internet as a means of providing accessible, accurate, and timely information for employees, students, parents, and others in the larger community. The Internet affords the school system the opportunity to communicate with its communities by posting pertinent system and school information online. The school system has established its system website online at www.gaston.k12.nc.us. The school system website is the official website of the school system. ~~In addition to this website, individual schools and departments may create system-related school websites~~ **In addition to this website, the school system is responsible for providing a website for each school and web pages for departments, as deemed necessary, through the official website of the school system.** This policy provides the standards that must be followed for development of all system-related websites. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the removal of a web page or website from the Internet.

A. SYSTEM-RELATED WEBSITE

A “system-related website” is any Internet website that is established in one of the following ways:

1. by school system employees or students on behalf of the system;
2. by any school within the system;
3. by any school-sponsored club or organization within the system; or
4. by students as part of an educational assignment.

Only those websites that are created pursuant to this policy are considered system-related websites. The board does not endorse and is not responsible for websites created by employees, students, or others outside of the standards and guidelines of this policy. Students or employees who create personal websites that result in a substantial and material disruption to the school environment may be subject to disciplinary action.

B. STANDARDS FOR WEB PAGE DEVELOPMENT

1. Non-Public or Closed Forums for Expression

All system-related websites are “non-public” or “closed” forums for expression. This means that the system has control over information on such websites and is not required to allow students, teachers, or others to place material on system-related websites. The purpose of system-related websites is to disseminate curriculum-related information; to present the public with information about the system, its schools, and its programs; and to provide the community with each

school or department's mission, contact information, activities, organizational format, and instructional program. System-related websites are analogous to newsletters from the administration or the individual school. System-related websites are not analogous to a student newspaper or a non-school publication.

2. Administration and Editorial Control

All employees responsible for creating, developing, maintaining, editing, or approving a system-related website shall act legally, responsibly, and ethically in providing educational resources and information to support the mission and curriculum of the school system. Such persons shall abide by the generally accepted rules of website etiquette, board policy, and regulations established by the superintendent.

a. Superintendent Final Authority

The superintendent or designee may delegate authority to place information on a system-related website; however, the superintendent has the final authority to approve or disapprove any information in whatever form on any such system-related websites.

b. School System Official Website

The superintendent or designee has editorial control and responsibility for the content of the school system official website. The superintendent shall appoint a staff member to serve as the web manager/editor of the system website.

c. Individual School Websites

Each school will be provided with a web address and web design software ~~and disk space on the system server~~ through the official website of the school system. All system-related websites will be housed on the system web server. Each principal has editorial control and responsibility for the content of his or her individual school's official website, subject to review of the superintendent or designee. The principal may appoint a staff member to serve as the web manager of the school's website and a website committee to advise the web manager and principal regarding the content of the school's website. Individual school websites must comply with the additional guidelines provided below.

d. Teacher and Student Websites

Each teacher has editorial control over and responsibility for the content of his or her official website and for the content of his or her students' authorized websites, subject to review by the principal, the superintendent,

and the board. With the knowledge and written consent of a student's parent or guardian, a teacher may allow a student to create a website within or linked from a school's or teacher's website only for the following instructional purposes: (1) to teach a student how to create or maintain a website or (2) to facilitate a student's work on school assignments or research projects. No student pages may be posted or made accessible to the general public until approved by the principal or designee.

e. **Personal Websites**

The school system is not responsible for personal websites or web pages created or maintained by students, employees, parents, groups, or organizations. Personal websites or web pages are not considered system-related websites or web pages and are not covered by the provisions of this policy. (For further information regarding personal websites, see policy 7335, Employee Use of Social Media, and policy 3230/7370, Technology Responsible Use.)

The superintendent may use any means available to request the removal of personal websites or web pages that substantially disrupt the school environment or that use school system or individual school names, logos, or trademarks without permission.

3. **Website Appearance and Evaluation**

Web page content must be kept current and be maintained regularly. ~~All system-related websites must include the name of the web page author, the date produced or revised, and the e-mail address of the author.~~ The superintendent or designee (for the official system website) or the principal or designee (for individual school websites) must regularly review, proof, and evaluate all system-related websites.

4. **Copyright Laws**

No information or graphics may be posted on websites in violation of any copyright laws or policy 3240, Copyright Compliance. Copyright permission must be obtained for the use of any copyrighted material unless use is permitted as "fair use" under federal law. The superintendent or designee and each principal or designee is responsible for maintaining copies of permission granted for the use of copyrighted material.

5. **Links**

a. **Internal Links**

Each page of a system-related website must include a reference and hyperlink to the school system official website home page. In addition, all

system-related websites must include a link to this policy and to policy 3230/7370, Technology Responsible Use.

b. External Links

The superintendent and designee have editorial control over and responsibility for the linking of a system-related website to other sites on the Internet that are appropriate to the mission of the school system. Links to external sites (including externally hosted teacher classroom sites) must be approved by the principal. If required, web managers must obtain permission from external websites before links are established from any system-related website to external websites. To the extent possible, school personnel shall determine the extent to which a secondary site is linked to other sites on the Internet and whether such sites are appropriate for access through the school system websites. Web managers shall periodically check external links for accuracy and appropriateness of content. School employees must report any inappropriate links to the web manager.

Since the school system cannot control the content of other sites on the Internet and their linkages, the following disclaimer statement must be inserted in a prominent position on the official system website, on each school's web page and on other system-related websites that contain links to other websites or web pages that are not system-related websites:

The school system retains control over what links will be placed on system-related websites; however, the linked sites themselves are not under the control of the school system, its agents, or its employees. The school system is not responsible for the contents of any linked site, any link contained in a linked site, or any changes or updates to such sites. The school system provides links as a convenience, and the inclusion of any link does not imply endorsement of the site by the school system. The school system reserves the right to remove or restrict any links.

c. Links to Personal Pages

School websites or web pages may not contain links to personal web pages of students or employees or lists of personal web pages.

6. Behavior Standards

When using the Internet, employees and students are responsible for understanding and complying with board policies and administrative regulations, including policy 3230/7370, Technology Responsible Use; student behavior policies in the 4300 series; and policy 7300, Staff Responsibilities.

7. Accessibility of Website and Web Content

The web manager/editor, in consultation with the technology director, shall ensure that the school system website and web content meet required standards to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

C. GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL WEBSITES

Each school may promote itself by publishing an official school web page on the Internet only via the official school system website. In addition to the standards above, the following standards apply to individual school websites.

1. The content of school web pages must be approved by the school principal.
2. The safety of students and employees must be considered when constructing school web pages. To protect the safety of students and employees, the following precautions must be taken:
 - a. home addresses or telephone numbers will not be listed;
 - b. student e-mail addresses will not be listed;
 - c. photographs of students and student work will be used only with appropriate parental permission and/or as approved for release as directory information under policy 3470, Student Records. ~~and will include only the student's first name, with no other information about the student.~~

The principal or designee is responsible for maintaining records of permission granted for the release of information. The principal should implement other safety precautions, as necessary, to be followed when constructing web pages.

3. To protect a student's rights in his or her intellectual property, if a school or teacher publishes a student's work, a disclaimer should be provided indicating the terms of redistribution or reuse.
4. Schools must provide contact information and other general information about the school on the school website, including the school's name, phone number, fax number, grade levels, and address, the principal's name, and the e-mail addresses of the school administrative team.
5. Graphics used on school websites must be appropriate to the school and should be of a size that will download quickly into a web browser.
6. Schools must keep information presented on their school's web page current, accurate, and grammatically correct.

7. The principal or designee must approve all revisions and additions to the school website.
8. Failure to comply with these guidelines or the standards of this policy, as determined by the superintendent or designee, may result in the removal of a school's web page from the Internet.

Legal References: U.S. Const. Amend. I; Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12131 *et seq.*, 28 C.F.R. pt. 35; Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 705(20), 794, 34 C.F.R. pt. 104; 17 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*; G.S. 115C-325(e) (applicable to career status teachers), -325.4 (applicable to non-career status teachers); 168A-7

Other Resources: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1, Level AA, available at <https://perma.cc/UB8A-GG2F>

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