

# **Policy for Inappropriate Comments on Social Network/Media Sites Regarding Edgerton Christian Academy (ECA)**

**This policy applies to students, staff members, families, volunteers of ECA and every person who has contact with the school in an employment, voluntary, or familial capacity.**

Social Networking and digital communication are a fact of 21<sup>st</sup> Century life. They can serve as an effective communication tool when postings are made with sound judgment and discretion. The determination of what constitutes sound judgment and discretion is relative to the various value and belief systems embraced by each individual. Due to the variance in moral and ethical parameters relative to each person's sense of "right and wrong" or "appropriate and inappropriate" the posting of information on social media sites spans wide ranges. Postings include innocuous announcements to lengthy blogging episodes that exhibit emotions embedded in distorted facts validated by outlandish opinions.

Such postings may include highly personal information demonstrating a disregard for the privacy of oneself and of others. These postings can contain inaccurate statements that may or may not be purposefully stated regardless of their veracity which can include implied or plainly stated threatening statements, untruths, bullying and harassing statements, and/or volatile statements made with the intention of inciting others to react negatively, thus "growing" the thread of additional statements containing prevarications, inaccuracies, and the expression of opinions that are not based upon facts or truths. This discourse can serve to ignite reactions, which inappropriately perpetuate and magnify the issues. When the worldwide web is used as a forum for such emotive and unbridled expressions it becomes problematic for the person or the organization of focus due to the vast audiences that view, comment upon, and subsequently share the posted inaccuracies. While freedom of speech is a constitutional right, exercising prudent judgment coupled with a sense of responsibility regarding the posting and dissemination of emotive, inaccurate, biased, and private information is a Christian responsibility and is directly aligned with the Mission, Vision, and Beliefs of Edgerton Christian Academy.

In accordance with our Mission and Beliefs, Edgerton Christian Academy promotes Christian behavior, which is behavior that imitates the example that is set forth by Christ in the Bible. These examples have been adopted as ECA's value system reflected in the Mission and Belief Statements for the School. Since the decision to enroll in Edgerton is a personal choice, the family's enrollment of a child(ren) implies acceptance of the Mission and Beliefs of the school. Moreover, there is a reciprocally implied expectation on the part of the school that our Mission and Beliefs will be reflected in the families' and students' actions and behaviors and in all aspects regarding school functions, communications, and dispositions, whether practical, verbal, or virtual.

In order to mitigate the circumstance of widely spread inaccuracies or reactions that can be offensive and/or damaging to the school, families, students, or to the staff and in order to protect the rights and privacy of the aforementioned entities, this policy provides responses and/or sanctions ranging from cautionary to punitive in response to such defamatory social media actions. This policy will be applied universally and without discrimination. Also while it is acknowledged that such commentaries can/may be authored by another person under the name of the owner of/subscriber to the social media site, email, text or other media account, the responsibility for the commentary will be placed upon the person whose name is associated with the account/origins.

When it is determined by the principal that a violation of this policy has been committed, the violation will be referred to the Ethics Committee. This committee is composed of 3 members of the Board of Trustees, the Principal or designee, and others as assigned by the Board of Trustees or as required by the nature of the issue. The Ethics Committee will review the principal's findings and make a determination for further action. The Ethics Committee makes all decisions for actions regarding the violation(s) and all decisions are final.

### **Violations can include but not be limited to:**

- Violations of privacy with regards to publishing or posting of personal information, conversations, pictures, or opinions obtained by or expressed by school personnel, students or parents on any social media sites or other sites where this information may be viewed by the public or privately posted to a limited audience involving a staff member or a student without explicit permission of the staff member, student or any other person(s) associated with ECA is not permitted.
- Social media texting, or website postings that are critical, negative, defamatory or not in keeping with the Mission or Beliefs of ECA and/or that name ECA staff, families or students in a like nature; these postings can include words, pictures, videos, or any other method of communication be it verbal or visual.
- Any other type of communication that the administration deems critical, negative, defamatory or a violation of privacy to the school and/or its staff, students and/or its families.

### **Procedures for Resolution Determination:**

- The violation is reported to the Principal and to the Ethics Committee.
- The Principal reviews and investigates the information and forwards the information/findings to the Board of Trustees.
  - The Principal may be required to notify the local police.
  - The Principal notifies the person(s) responsible for the communication that the school is aware of the communication and that the Principal is required to bring the matter to the attention of the Ethics Committee because it is a violation of our policy for ECA family members to engage in such activities.
  - The Ethics Committee convenes to discuss the issue, review the information/findings, and then determine a course of action. The Committee's determined course of action is based upon the nature, scope, and impact of the errant communication and the number of previously occurring infractions by this person(s).
  - At the discretion of the Ethics Committee, the violator may be permitted to address the Committee.
  - The Ethics Committee's decision is final.

### **Possible Consequences or Actions for Infractions:**

The following explanation of "Actions" may not be inclusive. "Actions" may need to be varied to meet the indications of the violations. The Principal and the Ethics Committee reserve the right to adjust the "Actions" based upon the circumstances in the event it is deemed by either or both entities that additional or alternative "Actions" need to be taken.

- **Level 1 Action** --- A conversation explaining that this type of communication is not permitted which shall include an explanation of the possible repercussions should the incident be repeated will be conducted with the person(s) violating this policy. This conversation will be memorialized in a written report available to the Committee and to the violator and kept on file at the school.
- **Level 2 Action** – The person(s) will be notified in conversation and/or in writing that one or more of the following actions will be taken:
  - Legal action could be taken if warranted.
  - The student/family could be asked to leave the school.
  - The staff member could be released from employment