

MEME NO HARM

Started in late August, right after back to school, as a commentary on common student complaints, the @relatable_rc Instagram account quickly amassed a cult following among Rock Canyon's student body. The account then inspired a similar variety of meme accounts at other schools such as Rocky Heights middle school and Valor high school. by: Amanda Brauchler

WHO CAN RELATE?

Before the account was inundated with student-created meme submissions, the @relatable_rc page satirically poked fun at common school issues like juuling, parking, and generalizations about each grade. After accepting student memes, the account quickly became an outlet for student complaints about individual teachers.

"I feel that people were frustrated with what was happening, so they needed to vent somehow and hoped that others would relate," the account owner said. At the discretion of the account manager, tens of memes would be posted every day.

"The[re] were actually very many, some have gone over the line with some teachers," the manager said. "I mean just flat-out slandering the teachers for no reason."

Teachers commonly targeted on the account include David Sapienza, Derek DeNileon, and the school's principal, Andy Abner.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

After seeing the @relatable_rc page, a student at Rocky Heights middle school (RHMS) was inspired to create a similar account for RHMS.

The Instagram account, @rhmsrelatable started posting memes about the school, school issues, and the teachers. While the high school account has slowly become less harsh towards individual teachers, the middle school account continues to post content scrutinizing individuals. "[The intention]: just get back at the school and teachers for the things they've said and done to us," @rhmsrelatable said. "It's sad how much they abuse their seniority because they know they won't get any backlash."

BARKER UP THE WRONG TREE

One teacher individually scrutinized by a student-submitted meme is Engineering teacher, Kyler Barker. The meme directed at Barker suggested that he only gave students busy work instead of actually teaching. Unlike other teachers' memes on the platform, this was noticed by Barker and received a response.

"Tao, did you even pass that class?" Barker commented under Tao's comment on the post. "I consider if it's acutally relatable and if it's over the line," @relatable_rc said about his limits on posting. "Some staff like my account and some don't."

The theme with posting teacher-directed memes lasted just under a month before the account reverted back to more generalized commentary. The effect of those individual posts was not unnoticed by the staff, however.

"At first it was hurtful, to see that a student would go so far to post about it hurt my feelings," Barker said. "Students who don't actually know who I am, now those students' idea of who I am is tarnished."



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EDITORIAL

As an anonymous account, @relatable_rc needs to tread lightly before posting. Even with recent changes to the type of content that is posted, shifting from directive posts to more generalized topics, the account is still susceptible to punishment. I urge students and the account owner to familiarize themselves with their First Amendment rights, so they can continue to have an accepting platform that is not tarnishing and slandering the reputation of the school or the staff.

Due to the abrupt and harsh initial content that was posted, the school is still recovering from the irrefutable attack to staff morale so early in the school year. However, while still attacking the school, the account addresses the possible lack of communication or outlets for students to express their concerns.

"THIS IS RCHS FROM A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE. I THINK THE CONTENT REFLECTS THE SCHOOL'S PROBLEMS THAT NEED TO BE FIXED," @RELATABLE_RC SAID.

As an open platform that accepts student submitted content, it is clear the discrepancy between "safer" memes and those that were submitted by students, the memes with more individualized criticism.

"I'm not sure if [students] have an outlet for concerns, really," the account owner said. "I do believe [relatable_rc] creates an outlet." As a school, we should address the question at hand: Why do students feel like they do not have an outlet for their concerns? Even with resources like Text-a-Tip, students continue to feel like less action is being taken against prevalent issues at the school.

Some students need to see more change in the school or more student-involvement in those changes. A call for more transparency of action or even just the public "show" of more action against Juuls or other issues addressed on the meme page would reassure students.

Inherently, this problem does not point fingers or place blame on one group. It is clear that the students who post on the meme page are a fraction of the voices at the school, they are just the voices augmented by the social platform.