

## **USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **Background**

Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including preparing District students to succeed in their educational and career endeavors.

The District is committed to ensuring that all students and staff, who utilize social media technology for professional purposes, do so in a safe and responsible manner. The District strives to create professional social media environments that mirror the supportive environments of our schools.

These procedures provide direction regarding recommended practices for professional social media communication between District employees, as well as social media communication between District employees and District students.

In recognition of the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era, the lines between professional and personal endeavors are sometimes blurred, these procedures also address caveats for use of personal social media by staff.

These procedures do not address student-to-student communication via social media. Each Principal will provide instructions that are specific to student use of technology and social media.

These procedures apply to all District employees at all locations.

### **Definition**

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat.

- Professional social media is a work-related social media activity that is either support services based, or school based (e.g., a District principal establishing a Facebook page for his/her school or a District teacher establishing a blog for his/her class).

Personal social media use is a non-work-related social media activity (e.g., a District employee establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for his/her own personal use).

## Procedures

### 1. Professional Social Media Use

#### 1.1. Maintenance of Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts

- 1.1.1. District employees who decide to engage in professional social media activities must maintain separate professional (District email) and personal email addresses. As such, District employees must not use their personal email address for professional social media activities. The professional social media presence will utilize a District email address and must be completely separate from any personal social media presence maintained by the District employee.

#### 1.2. Communication with District Students

District employees who work with students and communicate with students through professional social media sites will follow these procedures:

- 1.2.1. Professional social media sites that are school-based will be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational or extra-curricular program matters;
  - 1.2.1.1. On school-based professional social media sites that involve District students, District employees will use the sites for professional purposes only.
- 1.2.2. Professional social media sites that are non-school based will have a reasonable relationship to the mission and function of the District organization creating the site;
- 1.2.3. Disclaimer statement such as “these views are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer / school district” do not free employees from the responsibility of remaining professional on and off duty.
- 1.2.4. District employees will inform their supervisor before setting up a professional social media presence and acknowledge they have read and understood Administrative Procedure 146 – Use of Social Media;
- 1.2.5. Professional District social media sites are to include language identifying the sites as professional social media District sites. For example, the professional sites can identify the District school, department or particular grade that is utilizing the site and be linked to the school website.

#### 1.3. Guidance Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

- 1.3.1. District employees will treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in District professional settings are expected on professional social media sites
- 1.3.2. District employees will exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using professional social media sites;
- 1.3.3. District employees will use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites to ensure that professional social media communications only reach the employees’ intended audience. However, District employees are to be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy

settings and other functions. Employees are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilized prior to utilizing the site;

- 1.3.4. Professional social media communication must be in compliance with existing District administrative procedures, Board policies and applicable laws, including, but not limited to, prohibitions on the disclosure of confidential information and prohibitions on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language;
- 1.3.5. No personally identifiable student information may be posted by District employees on professional social media sites, including student photographs, without the consent of the students' parents.

#### 1.4. Monitoring of Professional Social Media Sites

- 1.4.1. Employees using professional social media have no expectation of privacy with regard to their use of such media;
- 1.4.2. District administrators reserve the right to remove, disable, and provide feedback regarding professional social media sites that do not adhere to the law or do not reasonably align with these procedures;
- 1.4.3. To assist in monitoring, as a recommended practice to the extent possible, the default setting for comments on professional social media sites is to be turned off or moderated regularly. If the default setting for comments is turned on, the comments on the site must be monitored on a daily basis by the user;
- 1.4.4. When establishing professional social media sites, staff will consider the intended audience for the site and consider the level of privacy assigned to the site, specifically, whether the site is to be a private network (for example, it is limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school) or a public network (for example, anyone within the school or a larger group within the District community can participate). It is a recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network; and
- 1.4.5. District administrators will maintain documentation of all reported non-compliant communications as well as any violations that are otherwise brought to the supervisor's attention.

#### 1.5. Media Inquiries

- 1.5.1. Any media inquiries received via professional social media sites are to be referred to the Manager of Communications.

### 2. Personal Social Media Use

#### 2.1. Communication with District Students

- 2.1.1. In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, District employees are not to communicate with students who are currently enrolled in District schools on personal social media sites.

#### 2.2. Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

Employees are to exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

- 2.2.1. As a recommended practice, employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees have a personal responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilized;
- 2.2.2. District employees will not “tag” photos of other employees without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged;
- 2.2.3. Personal social media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption at school and/or the workplace, and can be in violation of the Administrative Procedure 140 – Acceptable Use of Technology;
- 2.2.4. The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites is prohibited.

### 3. Applicability of Board Policies, District administrative procedures and Other Laws

- 3.1. These procedures provide direction intended to supplement, not supersede, existing Board policies and District procedures. Users of professional social media sites are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, provincial and local legislation.
- 3.2. These procedures are not designed to serve as a code of conduct for social media use. However, all existing Board policies and District procedures, and legislation that cover employee conduct may be applicable in the social media environment.

### 4. Additional Inquiries

- 4.1. This document is meant to provide general guidance and not cover every potential social media situation. Should any questions arise, please contact the Director of Information Technology or the Manager of Communications. As these procedures address rapidly changing technology, the District will regularly revisit these procedures and will update them as needed.

Reference: Sections 8, 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act  
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
School Regulation 265/89  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Canadian Criminal Code  
Copyright Act

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