



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

## S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

March 31, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians:

**RE: Parent Use of Social Media**

This is a joint letter from our District Parent Advisory Council, the Cranbrook and Fernie Teacher's Association, Southeast Kootenay Principals and Vice Principals Association and School District Superintendent and Board of Education regarding our concerns related to some use of social media directed at school personnel.

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) continues to play a larger role in our society and we are continually being challenged to help our children use social media in a safe and respectful way.

Over the last number of years, we have had to deal with escalating problems between students based on inappropriate or disrespectful content on social media. Therefore, teaching students how to use social media properly has become an increasing focus in our schools.

We have also become aware of social media, on occasion, being used by some parents and community members in a way that is viewed as inappropriate towards our schools and/or school personnel. As social media expert, Jesse Miller states: "Parents upload content on a daily basis to social media websites thinking that information is shared solely with friends and family unaware of the numerous avenues personal information travels once on the Internet."

While we understand that sometimes a parent may be unhappy with a situation that developed in school, voicing those concerns on social media and/or the subsequent conversation has sometimes resulted in statements that have been taken as threatening or bullying. Concerns are usually best dealt with through the proper channels either with your child's teacher, school principal or School District Office with a view to solving the problem.

We also believe that when this type of conversation happens on social media, we are sending mixed-messages to our children. Therefore, we would encourage any users of social media to consider the following:

1. Our children need to learn to stand up for themselves as they mature and gain skills, and they need to know they can rely on their parents to support them, but any lessons in assertiveness needs to be paired with lessons on respectful interpersonal problem solving.
2. People who role-model inappropriate ways of dealing with conflict affect their children's ability to develop effective methods of conflict resolution in their own lives.
3. Parental anger at a teacher, principal, or school, when expressed in front of a child, can ruin the child's confidence in their primary educational relationships. This can lead them to disengage from or even to become hostile toward school and the people who wish to help them to succeed.

Our School District's Policy 3.7 (Code of Conduct) Guiding Principles states:

*"...that all students and staff have a right to learn and work in a safe, respectful and productive Environment and.....that all communication needs to be based on courtesy and mutual respect".*

We, the undersigned, would again encourage and advise anyone who has a concern with a person, an event or an incident in any of our schools to first have a conversation with the person and, if you are still not satisfied, contact the school principal and/or the office of the Superintendent. We will do our utmost to work with you to reach a resolution to your concern.

Sincerely,

Lynn Hauptman  
Superintendent of Schools

Kate Noakes  
Co-Chair, CFTA

Scott Holt  
President, Southeast Kootenay Principals'  
And Vice Principals' Association

Frank Lento  
Chairperson of the Board of Education

Shelley Balfour  
Co-Chair, CFTA

Debbie Therrien  
DPAC Chair