

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Background

The District welcomes the responsible use of social media technologies and other forms of electronic communication to support learning and for District business and communication purposes. This Administrative Procedure has been developed to provide all employees with guidelines to understand the impact of social media and electronic communication and their appropriate uses in order to ensure professional communication standards and to mitigate the District's employees' exposure to risk.

The District recognizes the open nature of social media which is often used for both personal and professional purposes. However, professionalism remains of utmost importance. It may not always be clear when one is speaking on behalf of the District, sharing facts, or sharing personal/professional opinions. It is important to remember that we are subject to the same laws, policies, and expectations when interacting online as we would in-person.

This Administrative Procedure is designed to clarify all employees' responsibilities when posting material online and exchanging electronic communications with students, parents and co-workers. This Administrative Procedure applies to social media use and other electronic communications by all employees whether during the workday or at other times, on the District network or from outside the District network and on District devices or personal devices. All employees are to be aware that there is not an expectation of privacy in social media use and electronic communications. Social media and electronic communications are subject to review by the District as reasonably required, including to investigate complaints of inappropriate use. Breach of this Administrative Procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Definitions

Electronic communications refers to any written, audio, video, visual or digital communications occurring between employees or any one or more individuals through electronic means, including email, texting and other messaging services whether or not such communications are internet based.

Social media refers to all internet-based applications and technologies which provide for the creation, exchange or sharing of information, opinions, commentary, personal messages and other user generated content, including but not limited to the use of social networks, digital citizenship, digital footprint, blogging, tweeting, wikis, podcasts, video casts, video, audio, media, social bookmarking, postings through apps and including, but not limited to current top examples: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube, Google+ and Google Hangout.

Procedures

1. No Expectation of Privacy

- 1.1. Employees are to understand that there is no expectation of privacy in the use of social media or electronic communications, and that online and other electronically recorded communications may potentially be read or accessed by third parties or transferred to others without the knowledge or consent of the creator.

2. Responsibility of Employees

- 2.1. Employees are responsible for their electronic communications and for any content that they publish online, whether it is under the employee's own name, an alias or is anonymous, and must ensure it complies with the applicable laws, Board policies and District administrative procedures and professional standards of conduct, including those of the [Ministry of Education, Teacher Regulation Branch](#). This expectation of conduct includes a responsibility to ensure that contributions to any site that is created by an employee are monitored, administered and moderated to ensure compliance with this Administrative Procedure.
- 2.2. Inappropriate communications through the use of social media or other electronic devices are subject to the same policies and principles as other forms of work-related misconduct. Employees have a responsibility to make appropriate reports to the District about breaches of this Administrative Procedure, or the misuse of these technologies, including whether such communications negatively impact students, the workplace or the reputation of the District.

3. General Code of Conduct

- 3.1. Anything posted online by employees or communicated electronically to third parties may be perceived to be representative of the District. Therefore, employees are expected to model an appropriate online presence and to exercise good judgment to ensure that postings and communications do not reflect negatively on the employee's professional reputation or that of the District. It is expected that employees take reasonable steps to monitor and exercise appropriate controls over their online presence, including by requesting that friends and third parties not post photos, videos or other online content depicting or pertaining to the employee that is not appropriate to the employee's role in the District.
- 3.2. Social media is an extension of the workplace. What is inappropriate in the workplace is also inappropriate online and when expressed in other electronic communications, including criticizing students, employees, parents or the District. Electronic communications and online posts involving students, co-workers, or parents are to at all times be professional in nature. Electronic communications and online activities must not interfere with the performance of an employee's employment responsibilities.
- 3.3. Employees must ensure that any information they post online or distribute through other electronic communications does not breach the privacy or confidentiality of another person. The use of disclosure of "personal information" of co-workers, students or parents in connection with social networking websites and services and through other electronic communications may be subject to the British Columbia [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FIPPA), and other privacy laws. It may also be subject to other legal obligations of confidentiality.

- 3.4. Employees must in their use of social media respect and model copyright and fair use guidelines. Employees must not plagiarize and must properly acknowledge the authorship of materials posted by them. When using a hyperlink to attribute authorship, employees must be sure that the content of the linked site is appropriate and adheres to Board policies and District administrative procedures.
 - 3.5. When posting online content, employees are not to speak on behalf of the District or use District logos on private social media sites unless specifically authorized to do so.
 - 3.6. Employees are to pay particular attention to the privacy settings for their personal social media page. Some content that is appropriate for personal friends is not appropriate for circulation to work colleagues, parents and students. However, employees are not to look to the privacy settings on their personal social media page as creating anonymity or as a guarantee postings will not be shared more broadly.
4. Communication with Students and Parents
- 4.1. The District recognizes that there are potential benefits to the use of social media and other electronic communications as an educational tool. However, employees must at all times ensure that social media and electronic communications used for communication with parents and students are consistent with appropriate professional boundaries and the practices of the District.
 - 4.2. Communications with students and parents through social media and through other electronic communications must be formal, courteous and respectful and relevant to school matters. They are not to involve or be linked to social media sites of a personal nature that may be maintained by the employee. For example, employees are not to invite, or accept invitations from students to participate as “friends” on a personal Facebook page.
 - 4.3. Only District authorized social media tools are to be used for online communication with students and parents. When employees wish to create other sites and/or use other online forums for communicating with students or parents, they must obtain approval from their Principal who will obtain District authorization.
 - 4.4. Employees are responsible for ensuring that any use of social media or other electronic communications with students complies with Administrative Procedure 140 - Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Technology Services. Any personal student information that is posted to social media websites or circulated in other electronic communications while the student is under an employee’s supervision must be compliant with the permission granted by the student’s parents in a signed District Media Release form ([Form 146-1](#)).

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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