

APPROPRIATE USE OF ELECTRONIC SOCIAL MEDIA

Background

The District encourages responsible use of social media technologies and other forms of electronic communication to support learning, for school district business and communication purposes. However, social media usage must be undertaken in a manner that is respectful, privacy compliant, and consistent with the role of school district staff within the community.

This Administrative Procedure has been developed to provide employees and students with guidelines to understand the impact of social media and electronic communications and their appropriate uses in order to ensure professional communication standards, and to mitigate the school district's, employee's, and student's exposure to risk. An employee's online conduct is subject to the same standards that ordinarily apply to their on and off-duty conduct. District and School Code(s) of Conduct also apply.

Definitions

"Social media" refers to all forms of internet-based applications and technologies that allow end users to engage in conversations, provide input or opinions, create and share content, collaborate, share ideas, message other users, etc. Social media includes, but is not limited to: social networking, blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, instant messaging, texting and video streaming. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, Google+, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

"Electronic communication" 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.

Procedures

1. No Expectation of Privacy
 - 1.1 Employees should 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 be read, accessed, or published by third parties or transferred 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 anonymous, and must ensure it complies with applicable laws, this Administrative Procedure, and professional standards of conduct, including those of the Ministry of

Education, BCSTA, CUPE, USW and Teacher Regulation Branch. This expectation of conduct includes a responsibility to ensure that contributions to any site that is created by employees is monitored, administered, and moderated to ensure compliance with this procedure and any other applicable procedures.

- 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.

3. General Code of Conduct for Employees

- 3.1 Anything posted online by employees or communicated electronically to third parties may be perceived to be representative of the School District. Therefore, employees are expected to model an appropriate online presence and exercise good judgement to ensure that postings and communications do not reflect negatively on the employee's professional reputation or that of the School District.
- 3.2 Employees will take reasonable steps to monitor and exercise appropriate controls over their online presence, including by requesting that friends and third parties do 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 School District.
- 3.3 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 School District. Electronic communications and online posts involving or referring to work, students, co-workers, or parents should at all times be professional in nature.
- 3.4 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 or 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. For example, photos of co-workers, students, or workplace events should not be posted online without the consent of the affected individuals. Consent must be obtained before posting any person's image or information online.
- 3.5 Employees must 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 the content of the linked site is appropriate and adheres to School District policies.
- 3.6 When posting online content employees should not speak on behalf of the School District or use School District logos on private social media sites unless specifically authorized to do so by the Superintendent or designate.
- 3.7 Employees should pay particular attention to the privacy settings for their personal social media page(s). Some content that is appropriate for personal friends is not appropriate for circulation to work colleagues, parents, and students. However, employees should not look to the privacy settings on their personal social media page as creating anonymity or as a guarantee that postings will not be shared more broadly.

- 3.8 In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, district employees should not “friend” or “follow” students on their personal social media sites, especially if there is a teacher/student relationship, and should not request or accept any students as “friends” or “followers” on social media sites. Employees should also refrain from interacting with students on social media sites for purposes not related to the delivery of a student’s educational program.
 - 3.9 Employees should ask friends not to tag them in any photos or videos without their permission and remove anything that is not appropriate to the employee’s role in the School District, particularly for social media sites that do not have appropriate privacy settings.
 - 3.10 Confidential/sensitive information pertaining to the employee’s role in the School District or information involving the operation of the School District that is/was obtained through the course of employment shall not be disclosed on social media sites without permission.
4. Interactions Representing the District
 - 4.1 Unless given permission from a Principal or supervisor, a user is not authorized to use electronic social media sites to represent the School District, a school, program, or department. This decision will be made in consultation with the Superintendent or designate.
 - 4.2 In cases where a user has received permission to represent the School District, a school, program, or department, the user must identify themselves by name and as an employee of the District.
 - 4.2.1 The signature “Cowichan Valley School District” and/or the District logo should, where possible, appear in the banner for blogs, etc., or in the profile page for social media sites like Facebook.
 - 4.2.2 District logos will not be used without first obtaining permission from the Superintendent or designate.
 - 4.2.3 School logos will not be used without first obtaining permission from the Principal.
5. Use of Professional Social Media Sites
 - 5.1 The School 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 use for communicating with parents and students is consistent with appropriate professional boundaries and the policies and practices of the School District.
 - 5.2 Communications with students and parents through social media and other electronic communications must be formal, courteous, and respectful and relevant to school related matters. They should not involve or be linked to social media sites of a personal nature that may be maintained by the employee.
 - 5.3 Only School District authorized social media tools are to be used for online communication with students and parents.

- 5.4 Principal(s) must approve school-based social media groups, including class-specific groups that will be supervised and monitored by a teacher or other employee.
- 5.5 Employees are responsible for ensuring that any use of social media or other electronic communications with students complies with School District policies. 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/guardians in a signed School District media release form ([Form 151 – Student Information/Media Release](#)).
- 5.6 All professional social media sites are to be maintained by a school administrator/supervisor or a school/district employee delegated by the school administrator/supervisor. Responsibility is not to be delegated to a parent volunteer or student, as the established social media site will represent the School District.
- 5.7 The School District is not responsible for social media accounts established and maintained by school or district Parent Advisory Councils.
- 5.8 The School District reserves 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.
- 5.9 Employees are required to monitor contributions to any site they create, administer, or moderate for professional purposes. A moderation policy should be posted for participants to review **ie district FB moderation policy**. Posts that are not in keeping with the spirit of the page or moderation policy should be removed immediately.
- 5.10 All official school Facebook / Social Media pages should have a minimum of two school district employees with administrative access to the page (i.e. Principal and Head Secretary). The Superintendent or designate and District Principal of Instruction and Technology Services (or alternate) must also be given full administrative access to the page, in the event of emergencies or a breach of these procedures.
- 5.11 At the discretion of the school administrator/supervisor, other social media accounts used for professional purposes (i.e. class-specific pages) should be accessible by a second school employee for emergency purposes. This excludes user accounts that represent the professional identity of an employee (i.e. a Twitter account in the employee's name).

6. Privacy and Confidential Information

- 6.1 Users will not disclose confidential student information, images, or confidential school, department, or personnel records without obtaining appropriate written consent.
- 6.2 Users participating in social media activities will respect copyright laws, not only in relation to the content produced on the social media sites, but also in relation to the software that enables them to operate.

6.3 Users participating in social media or other electronic communication activities acknowledge that all information posted to sites may be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) or other privacy laws.

7. General Code of Conduct and Use of Social Media for Students

- 7.1 Online activities related to school are an extension of the classroom and subject to all school and district expectations. Student online behavior should reflect their school and/or the District's Code of Conduct.
- 7.2 Students should report any content or behavior through school-related social media that is not suitable for the school environment.
- 7.3 Students should consider the potential consequences of what they post online. Students should only post what they want friends, peers, teachers, or a future employer to see. Links to other websites should be appropriate for their school setting.
- 7.4 For students to be safe online; they are advised to never give out personal information, including last names, birthdates, phone numbers, addresses, and pictures. Students should not share their password with anyone except their parents/guardians.
- 7.5 Students must not intentionally misrepresent themselves or use someone else's identity.
- 7.6 Students are responsible for the work they create. They must not use intellectual property without permission. When paraphrasing another's idea(s), the sources must be cited. It is important to remember that pictures, videos and other digital content are protected under copyright and protection of privacy laws.

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

Adopted: August 19, 2019