

SOCIAL MEDIA

Background

The Division believes that the use of social media by staff is a communication tool to engage employees, parents/guardians and students to enhance student learning. The Division is committed to supporting the use of social media to interact responsibly for instructional and professional development purposes. All division employees are committed to the use of the internet and social media to positively engage and communicate with stakeholders.

“Alberta courts have ruled that online posting that reflects negatively on one’s employer can be grounds for discipline or termination. Moreover, online communication can be seductive and can elicit personal information from [all staff] teachers that may fall outside an appropriate teacher-student or teacher-teacher relationship. Making critical comments about colleagues can give rise to charges of unprofessional conduct, and posting pictures of students or coworkers can constitute a violation of privacy laws. Also, teachers should be careful in posting pictures of themselves; pictures can be manipulated by others and then posted elsewhere, and provocative images can bring about employment difficulties.” (Reference ATA 2017).

Definitions

Social Media - includes, but is not limited to the following:

- electronic blogs;
- personal websites; and
- postings on wikis and other sites where content is user-generated (ie. Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram, SnapChat, Tik Tok and other video, picture or information-sharing sites on the Internet).

Stakeholders – includes:

- Employees
- Agents of the Board (e.g. Coaches)
- School Council members

Procedures

1. Interactions Representing the Division

- 1.1 *Stakeholders* are authorized to use electronic *Social Media* sites to represent a school or the division (including departments, sports teams, etc.) only with written permission as provided on “*Social Media Account Request*” form (138-1).

2. Principals and supervisors will review the following with all *Stakeholders* on an annual basis:

- 2.1 Administrative Procedure - Social Media (AP 138);
- 2.2 Administrative Procedure - Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools (AP 135); and
- 2.3 “Social Media Guidelines for Schools/Departments” (Appendix 138).

3. Respect, Privacy and Confidential Information

- 3.1 *Stakeholders* must maintain confidentiality of student information, images or school, department or personal records at all times. *Stakeholders* participating in *Social Media* activities acknowledge that all information posted to sites is subject to provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* and the *Technology (Internet/Network) Acceptable Use (AP 140)* requirements of the Division and on file at each school.
- 3.2 All *Social Media* postings by *Stakeholders* are to contribute to a positive, supportive and professional learning environment within the Division.
- 3.3 *Stakeholders* who utilize *Social Media* as a tool are to access only in order to build and enhance the reputation of the Division.
- 3.4 *Stakeholders* will be held accountable should their *Social Media* comments and postings, whether personal or school/division related, result in a potential negative impact on the Division.
- 3.5 Division and school logos will only be used after obtaining permission from the Superintendent of Schools or designate.
- 3.6 *Stakeholders* participating in *Social Media* 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.

4. Online Correspondence Between Employees and Students

- 4.1 All online communication between employees and students must be related to course work or school sanctioned clubs/activities. Division email and/or Google Classroom should be the primary communication method.
- 4.2 The Division will only approve school-based *Social Media* groups that will be supervised and monitored by at least one employee on a regular basis and that have at least two employees with administrative privileges.
- 4.3 Division employees must be aware that the Division applies guidelines/ethical standards developed for the teaching profession to all staff groups, at all times, whether in a traditional school environment or an online environment.
- 4.4 Division employees shall not initiate or accept electronic “friend” or “follow” invites from students under any circumstances, including instant (text) messaging on personal devices for classroom or sports/extra-curricular related activities.
- 4.5 Division employees can communicate with students regarding school-related information such as sporting events, rehearsal times, homework, etc. using vetted Applications that do not identify personal information such as phone numbers.

Reference: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)

Related APs: Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools (AP 135)
Technology (Internet/Network) Acceptable Use (AP 140)

Appendix: Social Media Guidelines for Schools/Departments (Appendix 138)

Forms: Social Media Account Request (138-1)
Technology (Network/Internet) Acceptable Use Agreement - Network Users (140-3)