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WCDSB Social Media Guidelines

These guidelines help staff use or manage WCDSB social media accounts safely and responsibly to support student achievement, celebration, parent engagement, and Deep Learning in our classrooms. These guidelines can also support their discussions when communicating with parents/guardians.

Advisories within this document are based on the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)'s professional advisory: Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media as well as Board policies.

Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, messaging or video chat software, websites, apps, email, texting, and blogging. It also includes endorsed social media networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

PROFESSIONAL VS PRIVATE SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT

In accordance with the Ontario College of Teachers, Ontario teachers must “maintain a sense of professionalism at all times – in their personal and professional lives.”

The distinction between private and professional use of social media is important for maintaining public confidence; employees' off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students and families, reflects on the Board. WCDSB staff use the Internet and social networking sites as instructional tools to find development resources, lesson plans, and information to enhance their professional practice. Social media connects Catholic school communities with a greater understanding and appreciation for the learning taking place in classrooms.

Most popular social media platforms were not created specifically for educational purposes and may pose risks to the professionalism of WCDSB staff. Being cautious does not mean avoiding electronic and online communication entirely; rather, it means being mindful of what is posted and the message it conveys. New technologies offer opportunities to expand professional networks and continue professional learning through collaboration and dialogue. Using innovative technologies with digital citizenship in mind provides opportunities to deliver the curriculum thoughtfully and appropriately through engaging methods. Establishing and maintaining professional interactions and boundaries with students, families, and communities can help build a positive online presence.

Inappropriate social media use can reflect negatively on WCDSB and affect public confidence in the Board. Even when employees are acting in a personal capacity, it can affect public perception. Social media offers many resources and can help enrich staff, but not all content is acceptable or appropriate for use in the workplace.



PROFESSIONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Exercise responsibility, caution, and sound judgement when using professional social media accounts in the classroom, school, or on behalf of the Board.
- Professional social media accounts should be used to enhance classroom learning, promote school initiatives and success, and engage positively with parents/guardians and the broader community which our schools serve. Posts should remain positive and make a link to student achievement and well-being as much as possible.
- Do not post comments, share, amplify, or engage with material that would be inappropriate in the professional setting or would bring disrepute to you, students, colleagues, the school, the Board, Catholic Education, or the broader education sector.
- When setting up professional social media sites, staff should responsibly consider the intended audience and the appropriate level of privacy for the audience, communications, and account settings.
- Accounts should include language and logos that clearly identify them as professional sites. Clearly distinguish between professional accounts conducting board business and personal accounts that may have a loose association with the board. Professional accounts should use board logos and language. Personal accounts should include disclaimers that make it clear that this is not a professional account of the board. Reference Style Guide and Operating Procedures here.
- Professional social media communications must comply with WCDSB policies and applicable laws on the use and disclosure of confidential information, cyberbullying, student privacy, the use of threatening language and other Safe Schools concerns.
- Before creating a social media account, staff must have it centrally vetted and approved by the Board's Communications department. Accounts for temporary events (e.g., prom) are not permitted.
- Administration of account and login credentials must be properly managed according to board operating procedures and must be coordinated with Communications Services.
- Principals must be aware of and maintain a list of social media accounts connected to their schools.
- Media inquiries received on school accounts should be referred to the Senior Manager of Communications.
- Cross-collaborate with WCDSB social media accounts using relevant hashtags and mentions.
- Maintain a reasonable and positive alignment with the mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities of WCDSB and content shared on social media.
- Maintain your professionalism by using a formal, courteous, and professional tone in all communications with students and parents.
- Avoid online criticism about identifiable students, student groups, colleagues, your employer, or others within the school community. Avoid impulsive, inappropriate, or heated comments. Avoid comments or posts that are critical of government or elected officials. Professional accounts affiliated with the board are not an appropriate venue to air personal grievances.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Personal accounts are created and managed by individuals and are distinguished from board professional accounts. Personal accounts can be associated or affiliated with board profiles or activities, or kept entirely separate, or in some cases set to private. Use privacy settings to manage your feed and intended audiences.



- Employees should consider that their personal social media conduct reflects on their professional reputation and WCDSB.
- WCDSB employees should exercise caution, sound judgement, and professionalism when using personal social media accounts.
- Interact with students appropriately. Model the behaviour you expect to see from your students online.
- Maintain professional boundaries by communicating with students and others electronically at appropriate times of the day and through established education platforms, such as, Board email or the Learning Management System.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses, videos, or photos of a personal nature with students.
- Do not issue or accept “friend” or “follow” requests from students. Consider the privacy implications of accepting those requests from parents/guardians.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of student information and others in your school community.
- Ensure consent has been given before posting or disclosing any student work, digital pictures, or other identifying information on social media or websites.
- Limitations to privacy settings exist. It is the responsibility of the account holder to be aware of changes to the configuration of privacy settings that could affect unintended disclosures.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND RETENTION

The Board is subject to MFIPPA, which governs collection, use, access, disclosure, and retention of information. We are required to manage records inside our Board, as well as through third parties such as social media tools.

Each social media account holder should download an archive of their posts and account history. This can be saved locally on a Board-managed device until follow-up instruction is issued. Archiving posts and account history from accounts are typically found in Settings and Privacy areas of social media accounts.

References:

- [IV-002-Treatment-of-the-Public.pdf \(wcdsb.ca\)](#)
- [IV-003-Treatment-of-Students.pdf \(wcdsb.ca\)](#)
- [IV-004-Treatment-of-Staff.pdf \(wcdsb.ca\)](#)
- [APC034 Bullying Prevention and Intervention](#)
- [APC018 Code Conduct](#)
- [APC016 Records Information Management](#)
- [APS017 Responsible Use of Technology-Staff](#)
- [APC023 Student Personal Information Collection Use Disclosure](#)
- [APC036 Freedom Of Information and Protection Of Privacy](#)
- [ACP040 Privacy Breach Protocol](#)

See also:

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)'s professional advisory: Maintaining Professionalism - Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media



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- [Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media - Updated - Professional Advisory | Ontario College of Teachers \(oct.ca\)](#)

Speech and Language Pathologists CASLPO

- [PA EN Using E-Mail Communications With Patients.pdf \(caslpo.com\)](#)

Social Workers OCSWSSW

- [PN-Communication_Technology_Practices_Policies_for_Digital_World.pdf \(ocswssw.org\)](#)

Psychology Associates

- [https://cpo.on.ca/members/professional-practice/standards-of-professional-conduct/](#)