

### SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

#### **Background**

The Vancouver School District recognizes that social media is a valuable communication tool. It allows staff to promote school and District events and activities within the community. It is an important method of distributing and sharing information about and with our community partners, and its use helps to prepare students for an environment in which social media is increasingly prevalent.

When using social media all staff have a responsibility to protect the privacy of students, and to maintain professional boundaries, and model respectful conduct in communications with students, families, and the community.

This Administrative Procedure sets out the social media guidelines that are consistent with the District's mission, values and expectations and its legal obligations under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

#### **Definitions**

##### **Community Partners**

parent advisory councils, student councils, District student council, and other educational organizations affiliated with the District.

##### **Confidential Information**

information about the District that is not generally known, used or available to the public.

##### **Employee**

includes anyone employed by the District.

##### **Parents/Guardians**

means the parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the District.

##### **Personal Information**

means information about an identifiable individual that is collected, used, disclosed, received or recorded in connection with the programs activities or operations of the District, and includes a person's name, contact information (excluding business contact information), grade, age, school, photograph or other information.

##### **Personal Social Media Account**

refers to a social media site or user account established by an Employee for their own personal use.

##### **Purposes**

means the purposes described in section 1 of this procedure.

## **Social Media**

refers to any online platform or technology that provides for the creation, exchange and sharing of information, opinions, commentary, personal messages and other user generated content, including but not limited to social networks, blogs, instant messages, podcasts, video casts (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter, TikTok, Reddit and postings on video or picture-sharing sites and elsewhere).

## **School-District Social Media Account**

a Social Media Account approved by the District under this Procedure for the purposes of creating, exchanging or sharing information about the programs or activities or operations of the District, or any school, program or class of students within the District.

## **Student**

refers to an individual who is actively enrolled in the District.

## **Procedures**

This Procedure sets out the expected separation for the use of personal and school district social media accounts and the standards of conduct for employees in their use of social media.

- 1.0 The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that social media usage by employees is consistent with the following expectations:
  - 1.1 maintaining community confidence in the District and its employees;
  - 1.2 the provision of a safe, healthy and discrimination-free working and learning environments for students and employees;
  - 1.3 ensuring compliance with District policies and administrative procedures, including in relation to standards of professional conduct and professional boundaries; and,
  - 1.4 ensuring the District's compliance with privacy and other applicable laws.
- 2.0 This Procedure does not apply to employees in their personal use of social media.
  - 2.1 unless that usage undermines the Purposes outlined in section 1.0.
  - 2.2 unless that usage has negative consequences for District students, employees, parents/guardians or an employee's employment.
  - 2.3 unless that usage contravenes the Professional Standards for BC Educators.
- 3.0 Social Media Account Usage
  - 3.1 All communications using social media between employees and students, parents/guardians or District partners or the broader District community should take place using school and/or District social media accounts.

- 3.2 Employees may create school-based social media account(s) by obtaining approval from their principal or direct management supervisor. The principal or supervisor will notify the District communications department of any approved social media accounts.
- 3.3 Social media accounts created for/by school clubs and/or extra-curricular activities are the responsibility of the sponsor teacher. This includes account creation, access, and content.
- 3.4 Communications and content on school/District social media accounts must comply with this Procedure and will be subject to monitoring by the District. The District reserves the right to remove any postings, or content of any other nature, from such approved social media platforms that they consider to be inappropriate or in violation of this procedure.
- 3.5 Despite section 3.1, employees may use their personal social media accounts to follow, re-share, “like” or comment on posts on school/District social media accounts or those of its community partners but must maintain their fiduciary responsibility to the employer.

#### 4.0 Employee Responsibility

- 4.1 Employees are responsible for the content and information they post on social media, whether it is posted under the Employee’s own name, an alias or anonymously.
- 4.2 Employees are expected to exercise good judgement in their use of social media.
- 4.3 Online communications are subject to the same standards of conduct as other work-related communications. Employees are expected to maintain appropriate, professional and respectful practices in their communications through social media, including by maintaining professional boundaries in communications with students, employees and parents/guardians.
- 4.4 Employees may not post or transmit personal information related to staff or students using personal social media accounts.

#### 5.0 Online Correspondence

- 5.1 Employees should communicate with students and parents/guardians about a student’s individual progress or activities at school using direct, confidential, and secure two-way methods of communication (e.g. VSB email, written correspondence, MS teams, video, or audio calls).

- 5.2 Online correspondence between employees and students should be limited to communications concerning course work or school sanctioned clubs/activities and use only approved District digital channels (i.e., MS Teams, VSB-email).
- 5.3 Online correspondence between employees and parents/guardians are to be conducted via only approved District digital channels (i.e., Teams, VSB-email).
- 5.4 Employees shall not initiate or accept electronic “friend” invitations from students unless the networking is part of an existing school course or school club structure and at least one (1) other staff member has administrative access to the approved social media group account.

## 6.0 Privacy and Consent

The School District and its employees are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which applies to all collection, use and disclosure of Personal Information by the School District and its employees, including when such personal information is posted to or transmitted using social media. The employer (i.e., managers, supervisors, principals/vice-principals) are responsible for ensuring that employees are familiar with their obligations under this legislation so that their social media usage complies with it.

- 6.1 Before posting pictures, images, recordings or other personal information on social media, employees must first ensure that they obtain written consent (i.e., media consent form on file at the school) from affected individuals.
- 6.2 Schools are expected to maintain written consents on file from students or (for students under the age of 13) their parents/guardians for the use, publication, and dissemination of their information, including through social media. The provision of such consents is optional and may be withdrawn by students (or, if applicable, their parents/guardians). Employees must ensure that such a consent has been obtained before posting any personal Information (including images and photographs) of students and/or employees on social media.
- 6.3 Employees may not publish sensitive Student Personal Information to social media, even with consent. Sensitive personal information includes any information that the disclosure of which may expose students to embarrassment, safety risks or other harms (e.g. information about a student’s mental health or medical information, special needs, home contact information or discipline or conduct history).

## 7.0 Considerations for Personal Social Media Use

Any communications or content posted online by Employees may be perceived by the community or the public to be representative of the District or may reflect on the employee as a representative of the District and impact their ability to perform their duties. Employees should carefully consider the implications of their social media usage, even when using social media for personal purposes.

7.1 Employees are encouraged to act consistently with the following guidelines in their personal social media usage:

- 7.1.1 model an appropriate online presence to ensure that online postings and communications do not undermine the community's confidence in this District;
- 7.1.2 become familiar with and (where available) apply privacy settings in their personal social media usage to protect private communications or sensitive subject materials or images;
- 7.1.3 not bully, harass, intimidate, defame or discriminate against students, parents/guardians or co-workers or other members of the District community;
- 7.1.4 avoid posting any content or material that directly or indirectly identifies students except with consent and as permitted by this Procedure;
- 7.1.5 not use social media to disclose confidential information of the school or the District or its employees;
- 7.1.6 be accurate when publishing information about the District on social media, and promptly correct mistakes that are identified;
- 7.1.7 use school/District social media accounts for school district related purposes, and they should confine personal social media usage to their personal social media accounts;
- 7.1.8 when an employee posts about their work at the District, they should;  
be transparent with other users by identifying the employee's relationship to the School District;
- 7.1.9 unless authorized to speak on behalf of the District, employees should clearly state that opinions and comments that they post about District programs, activities or operations are their personal views and that they are not speaking on behalf of the School District (e.g. "these are my personal views, and do not represent the views of the Vancouver School District");
- 7.1.10 seek guidance from their principal or supervisor if they are unclear about the appropriateness of their social media usage;
- 7.1.11 ensure that the materials they post online, in a professional capacity, complies with copyright laws and fair use guidelines, including by attributing work to its creator and refraining from plagiarizing content.

8.0 School principals and managers/supervisors will review this procedure with their staff on an annual basis.

Reference: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Professional Standards for BC Educators

Effective: May 11, 2022