

Topic:	Social Media and Electronic Communications for Staff
Effective:	September 2000
Cross-References:	Ontario College of Teachers Social Media Advisory Ontario College of Teachers Standards of Practice HDSB - Code of Ethics Policy and Administrative Procedure; Acceptable Use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT)
Review/Revision Date:	September 2017
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education (Information Services); Executive Officer of Human Resources; Superintendent of Education (Communications)

INTENDED PURPOSE:

For the purposes of this procedure, *social media and electronic communication* refers to online technology tools that enable people and organizations to communicate and share information and resources over the Internet (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, email, texting, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, etc).

The Halton District School Board recognizes staff have personal social media accounts and may also be responsible for board social media accounts. The Board also recognizes that the use of social media is optional and that staff members are using social media to support their instructional practice, develop professional learning networks (PLN) and enhance administrative capabilities. **The Board expects personal and professional use of social media will not be blended.**

This procedure focuses on professional social media accounts. It is intended to provide direction and guidance as to the appropriate use of social media in alignment with Halton District School Board policies and procedures related to the use of technology.

The Ontario College of Teachers Act confers heightened responsibilities to Teachers. Members (of the Ontario College of Teachers) should maintain a sense of professionalism at all times – in their personal and professional lives.

PROCEDURES:**1. Authorization**

- Although permission is not required for staff to open a professional social media account, those staff creating the account are responsible for its use. It is recommended the employee let their supervisor know a social media account has been created. Example: classroom, student accounts created under the direction of the teacher, school clubs, etc.
- School or department based accounts require the approval of the Principal or Manager and in those cases the Principal or Manager is responsible for its use. Example: School Twitter feed

2. Personal vs. professional

- Every time staff communicate, they shape public opinion about themselves, their profession, their school, the Halton District School Board and public education. Statements like, "Tweets are my own and don't reflect my employer's views", don't hold true. Staff should use sound judgment and due care when using social media while on and off duty.

Best Practices:

- Maintain a sense of professionalism at all times.
- Maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional social media use.
- Do not follow students on their personal social media accounts
- Do not post images or content promoting alcohol, drug or tobacco use, or explicit content on board, classroom, department and professional accounts.
- Do not use professional accounts to promote political parties, religion or policies.
- If you have a personal social media account that students become aware of, refer them back to the educational account.
- Review privacy settings to block student access to personal social media

3. Professional boundaries with students

Maintaining professional boundaries on social media is critical to sustaining public trust and ensuring relationships with students remain professional. When using your social media account the world is watching.

- All online dialogue and interactions, messages and texts must be for educational or professional purposes only.
- Only the person or department/school that is responsible for responding on behalf of the Board should do so.
- Be mindful of all equity and inclusivity-related board policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code when posting content.
- What is inappropriate in the classroom, school, office or community setting is also inappropriate on social media.
- “Retweeting,” “Liking,” “Pinning,” etc. may be perceived as endorsements. These interactions should be limited and done with care and with authentic learning purposes.
- If you have a classroom account where you share important curricular information with students, students may *follow* your account. For the purposes of learning, you do not need to *follow* them back. Instead, you can encourage students to use tools, like hashtags, so that you can follow their online conversations. These can be linked to a specific area of study.
- Text messaging with individual students using personal cell phones is discouraged. In some instances, where this must occur, group messaging is preferable and must be for educational purposes only.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

Safety is the overriding concern with regard to information posted online. Always respect the privacy and confidentiality of student and staff information. Breaches of privacy and confidentiality can occur with respect to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and board policies and procedures.

- Verbal consent should be obtained from any adult (teacher, parent, volunteer, other board staff member) whose photo, video footage and/or work is posted on social media. Exceptions include images of principals, vice-principals and trustees that are taken during the course of their employment. Exceptions also include photos taken at public events where there is no expectation of privacy.
- Consent is not required for photos and videos that are taken of staff at public meetings and/or events (sports, concerts). Students for whom consent is not provided must be excluded and/or have their faces blurred.

- Employees setting up Social Media sites must ensure the protection of privacy of students and staff, and that the ownership of intellectual property is maintained.
- Ensure privacy settings are appropriate and protect the privacy and confidentiality of students and staff.
- Staff must never disclose personal or business confidential information about the board, school, students and colleagues. Particular care must be taken with students for whom the principal has identified legal/safety concerns.
- Informed consent is necessary when placing personal information online. The “*statement of personal information practices*” provides notification.
- Personal information, includes student names, location, student work, individual and group photographs, videos featuring the student or other identifying information.

5. Additional resources

- **HDSB Social Media Site** - The HDSB Social Media site provides advice and information to assist staff using Social Media. Social Media account users must review and understand terms and conditions of service for social media applications in accordance with HDSB policy (see additional resources) and professional standards
- Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario – *Electronic Communication and Social Media: Advice to Members*
- HDSB – *Acceptable Use Procedures for Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*
- HDSB – *Privacy and Information Management Policy*
- HDSB - *Privacy and Information Management FAQs*
- HDSB – *Privacy Breach Protocol*
- HDSB – *Authorization for Promotional Use of Student Photos/Work/Activities Form*
- Ontario College of Teachers – *Professional Advisory: Use of electronic communication and social media*
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation of Ontario – *Using Social Media Safely.*