

AP 120

Social Media - Operations

Background

The Abbotsford School District recognizes the importance of using social media at both the district and individual school levels to engage and communicate with students, parents, staff and the broader community. The district prioritizes the safety, security, and respect of stakeholder audiences above all else. The procedure has been developed to provide guidelines on how the district manages organizational social media accounts and responds to inappropriate interactions, trolling, or hate speech.

General Principles

- **Positive Communication:** All official district social media accounts should be used to promote positive communication, student learning, share achievements, and provide essential updates. These channels are used as an extension of the district's schools, hallways and classrooms.
- **Monitoring Rights:** The district (and by extension its schools) retain the right to monitor comments and interactions on organizational social media accounts. Users should have no expectation of privacy in comments left on these public platforms.
- **Individual Responsibility:** Any comments made on district social media accounts reflect the opinions of the individual commenter and not that of the district. This distinction is crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of the district.
- **No Tolerance for Inappropriate Behaviour:** Personal attacks, obscenities, discrimination, hate speech (comments that disparages a person, or a group, based on characteristic such as race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or religion), or any other inappropriate comments or actions will not be tolerated on district social media accounts. These behaviours can adversely affect learning environments and are in direct contradiction to district values.
- **Consultation with Communications Department:** Before any staff member bans/blocks a user from a district social media account, they must consult with their direct supervisor and the district's Communications Department. This ensures actions align with the district's administrative procedure and adhere to best practices.

Procedures

1. Turning Off/Limiting Comments

- 1.1. Comments on district social media accounts may be turned off/limited for posts that are purely informational (e.g., emergency protocols, closure notifications) or sensitive in nature (e.g., tragic events, legal matters).

- 1.2. This action is aimed to prevent any form of misinformation, harassment, trolling, or distraction from the main message of the post.
2. **Hiding/Deleting Comments**
 - 2.1. Comments left on district social media accounts containing hate speech, threats, misinformation, personal attacks against students or staff, or comments that violate the rights of others will be hidden or deleted.
 - 2.2. Repeated offenders or those who continuously post inappropriate content may have their comments removed on sight and pose the risk of being banned/blocked from engaging with the district's social media accounts.
3. **Banning/Blocking Users**
 - 3.1. Users who consistently engage in disruptive behaviour on district social media accounts may be muted as a first step in managing engagement. This means the district will not be notified of user comments.
 - 3.2. Users who post personal attacks, violent threats or hate speech will be permanently blocked/banned from district social media accounts and reported to the social media platform.
 - 3.3. Bans may be reconsidered based on future behaviour and/or individual requests.
4. **Transparency**
 - 4.1. Users subject to moderation actions (hiding/deleting comments or banning/blocking) on district social media accounts may receive a private message explaining the action taken and the specific reason, in accordance with the administrative procedure.
 - 4.2. All actions taken to hide/delete comments and/or to ban/block users will be documented internally. This documentation will include the date, the reason for the action, and the specific procedure violated.
5. **Reporting Bullying and Harassment**
 - 5.1. In instances where users violate the terms and conditions of social media platforms, the district will report these violations directly to the platform.
 - 5.2. The general public, including students, parents, and community members can report instances of bullying or harassment seen on district social media pages by emailing info@abbyschools.ca or by contacting the school or district office directly. All reports will be reviewed within a 72-hour period, and necessary actions will be taken to address the concern.
 - 5.3. Any direct threats, cyberbullying, or targeted harassment campaigns observed by or reported to the district or school will prompt a review. If found valid, they'll be addressed in accordance with the policy and could involve other disciplinary actions beyond social media.
6. **Direct Messaging Protocols**
 - 6.1. Direct messaging (DM) features on social media accounts should not be used for ongoing communication between staff, students, and parents.
 - 6.2. Any communication that requires more than a brief exchange between the district social media account administrator and students/parents/guardians should be redirected to approved district digital channels (i.e., MS Teams, district email).
 - 6.3. If a conversation via DM is initiated, employees should provide a standardized response directing the individual to the appropriate district digital channel for further correspondence.

Account Management and Security Protocols

1. Account Types

1. This social media policy applies to all digital channels that directly represent the district, including but not limited to:
 - i. Accounts that represent the Abbotsford School District (e.g., @abbotsfordsd);
 - ii. Accounts created for specific departments within the district (e.g., curriculum, human resources or career programs);
 - iii. Accounts that represent individual schools within the district; and
 - iv. Accounts set up for specific clubs, teams, or groups within individual schools.
2. Teachers have the autonomy to create and manage classroom social media accounts and are entrusted with the responsibility to use these platforms in a way that enhances the educational experience. Alongside this autonomy, teachers are strongly encouraged to:
 - i. Be aware of district policy and professional guidelines, ensuring actions align with district-wide expectations for conduct and content;
 - ii. Comply with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA), always maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of student information;
 - iii. Adhere to professional standards set by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), which outline ethical conduct, professional boundaries, and appropriate communication with students;
 - iv. Seek guidance from the Communications Department and utilize available resources, like those outlined above in this policy, to manage online interactions effectively and safely;
 - v. Inform your school Administration that you will be using a classroom social media account to share learning and student achievements; and
 - vi. Inform your immediate supervisor of any significant issues that arise on teacher classroom social media platforms, especially those that may impact student welfare or the reputation of the district.

2. Account Creation

- 2.1 Any creation of new social media accounts representing those outlined in *Account Types*
 - 1.A. must first receive approval from the Communications Department.
- 2.2 Staff members are requested to submit a proposal including the purpose, target audience, and content strategy of the proposed social media account for review to the district's Manager of Communications
- 2.3 All school social media accounts must be registered with and connected to an official district email address, not personal emails, to ensure continuity and official oversight.

3. Security and Access

- 3.1 For district social media accounts, a record of user login credentials (including any changes) must be maintained and shared with the Communications Department.
- 3.2 Login credentials for accounts set up for specific school clubs, teams, or groups only need to be shared with the school administration team.

- 3.3 A procedure for accessing district social media accounts in the event of an emergency or staff turnover will be established and managed by the Communications Department.
- 3.4 In the case of unauthorized access or security breaches, staff members are required to report the incident immediately to the Communications Department for prompt action and potential communication with affected parties.

4. **Annual Training**

- 4.1 All staff members with district social media management responsibilities are required to complete annual training provided by the Communications Department.
- 4.2 The training will cover current best practices for digital communication, district-specific procedures, and updates to community standards.
- 4.3 Failure to comply with annual training and the above noted procedures may result in revocation of district social media account privileges.