

# AP 401

## Social Media - Employees

### Background

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This procedure has been developed to ensure that the use of social media and digital tools by employees aligns with the values, goals, and policies of the school district. Further, this policy is in place to mitigate employees' exposure to risk while protecting the reputation of the school district, its employees, and students.

### Procedures

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#### 1. Definition of Social Media

- 1.1. Social media encompasses a wide range of online platforms and technologies that facilitate creating, sharing, and exchanging information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. This includes:
- i. Social networks (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube)
  - ii. Digital citizenship platforms and tools
  - iii. Blogs and microblogs (e.g., Blogger, WordPress, Twitter)
  - iv. Wikis (e.g., Wikipedia, Wikispaces)
  - v. Podcasts and videocasts
  - vi. Video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo)
  - vii. Social bookmarking services
  - viii. Email and instant messaging
  - ix. Texting and messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram)
  - x. Internet forums and discussion boards
  - xi. Online gaming platforms (e.g., Xbox Live, PlayStation, Minecraft)
  - xii. Cloud-based collaboration (e.g., Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive)
  - xiii. Virtual meeting technologies (e.g., Skype, Google Hangouts, Facetime)

#### 2. General Guidelines

- 2.1. As employees of the district, a public sector entity, there is an inherent level of public visibility and recognition that comes with the position. Staff members are viewed as representatives of the district and, by extension, the broader public education system.
- 2.2. Employees must align their social media use with the district's values and expectations, maintaining community confidence and a discrimination-free environment.
- 2.3. Any use of social media related to work or school that involves students and/or employees must be of a professional nature and adhere to professional codes of conduct.

2.4. Online activities must not interfere with the performance of an employee's duties.

### **3. Social Media Account Usage**

- 3.1. Any use of social media that involves students must be focused on teaching and learning and not be linked to personal sites.
- 3.2. Approval for creating school-based or club-related social media accounts must be obtained through the appropriate supervisory channels, as outlined in AP 120: Social Media – Operations.
- 3.3. Communications involving students, parents, or district partners should occur through district-approved social media accounts.

### **4. Employee Conduct**

- 4.1. Employees are responsible for their conduct on social media and what they publish online, exercising good judgement and upholding professional standards.
- 4.2. Employee behaviour on social media should reflect the district's values of respect, trust, integrity, communication, and teamwork, as these tools are an extension of the workplace. What is inappropriate in the workplace is also inappropriate online, including criticizing students, employees or the district.
- 4.3. Employees are responsible for monitoring contributions to any site they create, administer or moderate.
- 4.4. Employees must not 'friend' students to their personal social media accounts.
- 4.5. Employees must not initiate or accept electronic 'friend' invitations from students unless the networking is part of an existing school course/club social media platform and at least one (1) other staff member has administrative access to the district-approved account.
- 4.6. Employees may not post or transmit personal information related to staff or students using personal social media accounts.
- 4.7. Employees must respect and model copyright and fair use guidelines. A hyperlink citation to outside sources is required.
- 4.8. Employees must not plagiarize and must also give credit where it is due. When using a hyperlink, employees must be sure that the content of the linked site is appropriate and adheres to district and provincial standards.

### **5. Online Communication**

- 5.1. All online correspondence with approved district digital channels should be conducted in a professional manner.
- 5.2. 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. school district email, written correspondence, MS teams, video, or audio calls).
- 5.3. 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, district email).

- 5.4. Online correspondence between employees and parents/guardians are to be conducted only via approved district digital channels (i.e., MS Teams, district email).
- 5.5. Any communication through social media accounts that requires more than a brief exchange should be redirected to approved district digital channels, as per AP 120: Social Media – Operations.

## **6. Privacy and Consent**

- 6.1. Use of social media must adhere to the British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and guidelines from the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB), particularly where issues related to personal information are concerned.
  - i. Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system. Educators have an understanding of the education system in BC and the law as it related to their duties.*
- 6.2. Employees are responsible for ensuring that any use of social media with students complies with the social media platform's terms of service agreement.
- 6.3. Before posting pictures, images, recordings or other personal information on social media, employees must first ensure that they have written consent (i.e., AP 324: Student Photograph Video and Media Consent + Form) and verbal consent from affected individuals.
- 6.4. 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. Considerations for Personal Social Media Use**

- 7.1. Abbotsford School District employees are individuals with private lives; however, off-duty conduct matters and sound judgment and due care must be exercised.
- 7.2. Employees should ensure their personal social media usage does not negatively impact community confidence in the district. Personal postings should respect privacy settings, avoid identification of students, and not disclose confidential information.
- 7.3. Employees should ask friends not to tag them in any photos or videos without their permission and remove anything that is not appropriate to the employee's role in the school district. Videos or pictures of workplace events should not be posted without permission.
- 7.4. Employees must differentiate personal opinions from district views unless authorized to speak on the district's behalf.
- 7.5. Employees are encouraged to consider setting their personal social media accounts to private to maintain a balance between professional and personal spaces.

**8. Responsibilities**

- 8.1. School Administration/Managers will review this policy with staff on an annual basis to remind employees of their responsibilities under this administrative procedure.
- 8.2. Employees who do not follow the terms and conditions outlined may face disciplinary action.

**References**

[AP 417 - Information and Communication Services](#)

[AP 120 - Social Media Policy - Operations](#)