

## SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

### Background

The Division recognizes that the use of electronic social media is a viable means to enhance learning. The Division supports the use of electronic social media to interact knowledgeably and responsibly for this stated purpose. This procedure applies to all Division students, staff, and School Council representatives.

This Administrative Procedure covers electronic media that may not be specifically referenced in that Procedure; however, it is to be read in concert with Administrative Procedure 144 – *Responsible Use of Technology* and Administrative Procedure 141 – *Portable Technology Security*.

### Definition

Social Media refers to all internet-based applications and technologies that provide for the creation, exchange, or sharing of information, opinions, commentary, personal messages, and other user-generated content, including but not limited to the use of websites, social networks, digital citizenship, digital footprint, social bookmarking blogging, tweeting, wikis, podcasts, video casts, video, audio, media, social bookmarking, postings through apps using mobile devices using iOS or Android operating systems (Including but not limited to: Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube, Google+, and Google Hangouts).

### Procedures

#### 1. Representing the Division

- 1.1 Unless given written permission from a principal or supervisor, a user is not authorized to use social media sites to represent a school, school council, department, or the Division.
- 1.2 In cases where a user has sought permission to represent a school, School Council, department, or the Division, the user must identify themselves by name and as an employee of the Division or School Council.
  - 1.2.1 The signature “Foothills School Division” and/or the Division logo needs to appear on the banner or profile page for social media.
  - 1.2.2 Access and permission to use the Division’s logo can be granted by emailing the Manager of Communications and Community Engagement.
  - 1.2.3 School logos will not be used without first obtaining written permission from the principal or supervisor.
    - 1.2.3.1 Logos must not be manipulated, altered, or replaced without first prior written permission by the Division.
- 1.3 Any use of media by a user must be consistent with the duty of loyalty each user owes to the Division and must not transgress any law or civil duty of care owed to the Division

or any other person. Breach of this requirement will be considered to be conduct that is subject to action by the Division and the Division will take such action as it considers is warranted.

- 1.4 Staff will only use mobile and smart devices during the course of the work day for instructional purposes or for school based communications, and not for accessing personal social media accounts.

## 2. Respect, Privacy, and Confidential Information

- 2.1 Users will not disclose confidential student information, images, or confidential school, department, or personnel records without first obtaining written consent from the Principal, supervisor, and guardian(s) for students under the age of eighteen (18) who are not independent students, as defined in the *Education Act*, or without first obtaining written consent from the Principal, supervisor, and from a student eighteen (18) years of age or older who is an independent student as defined in the *Education Act*.
- 2.2 Users will not use social media sites to be defamatory or harassing towards any person and will not espouse or support any position or opinion or statement that is contrary to Board policies and Division administrative procedures.
- 2.3 Employees may not use personal media recording devices including but not limited to cell phones, personal tablets, or computers beyond the scope of this procedure and are herein regarded as social media. For example, using a personal device for classroom management, discipline, or capturing media for personal use is not permitted.
- 2.4 Employees are responsible for their communications and for any content that they publish online, whether it is under the employee's personal account, an alias or is anonymous, and must ensure it complies with applicable laws, this Administrative Procedure, and professional standards of conduct for education professionals.
- 2.5 Anything posted online by employees or communicated electronically to non-school Division parties may be perceived to be an official representation of the school. Therefore, employees are expected to model an appropriate online presence and to exercise good judgement to ensure that postings and communications do not reflect negatively on the employee's professional reputation or that of the school Division.
- 2.6 Users may be disciplined if their social media comments and postings, whether personal or school(s) related, are not in compliance with the *Education Act*, *Human Rights Act*, this procedure, or any other policies or procedures of the Division.
- 2.7 Users participating in social media activities will respect copyright laws, not only in relation to the content produced on the social media sites, but also in relation to the software that enables them to operate.
- 2.8 Users participating in social media activities acknowledge that all information posted to sites is subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) if that information falls within the ambit of the information protected by and governed by FOIP.

## 3. Staff-Student Online Correspondence

- 3.1 Online correspondence between staff and students must be related to coursework, or school-sanctioned clubs/activities. Social media conversations between a staff member and a parent are subject to the provisions of this Administrative Procedure.

- 3.2 Principal(s) must approve school-based social media groups that will be supervised and monitored by a teacher from each participating school.
- 3.3 Principals will ensure that all school-sanctioned social media sites (including groups and pages) have at least two (2) administrators with administrative privileges.
- 3.4 Principals will inform staff members participating in school-created social media groups with students that the ethical standards for the teaching profession apply at all times, whether in a traditional school environment or an online environment.
- 3.5 Division staff 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 social media group.

#### 4. Social Media Accounts

- 4.1 Schools, school councils, departments, or individual staff wanting to create a social media account on behalf of the school/school council/fundraising arm of the school must request that a social media page be established under the Division’s corporate account.
- 4.2 All accounts can be set up through a formal written request by the sponsoring principal to the Corporate Secretary.
- 4.3 As a condition of such pages, the principal or vice-principal must be one (1) of the two (2) administrators of the account, who holds the responsibility to manage the page, including the review of posts and removing defamatory or inappropriate remarks.
  - 4.3.1 School Council accounts, pages, and groups must be administered by the council chair or vice-chair and one (1) member of the school administration.
  - 4.3.2 All posts pertaining to school activities, including but not limited to school council activities, fundraising, sport associations, and clubs, are subject to the review and approval by the principal or vice-principal.
- 4.4 Staff are encouraged to use the appropriate school social media accounts to celebrate and inform their community, rather than through their own individual accounts.

#### 5. Parent use of Social Media

- 5.1 It is recognized that Foothills School Division does not have any jurisdiction over parents’ personal use of social media. It should be communicated to our community, however, that defamatory statements regarding Foothills School Division staff members or students within the context of school-related events or instruction, will be defined as harassment. Sanctions may include those delineated in the Division Administrative Procedure 402 *Protection of Staff* and 403 *Harassment, Prevention, Reporting and Investigation*: a written warning, issue of trespassing notice, termination of volunteerism, and/or referral to appropriate authorities such as law enforcement.

Reference: Relevant Legislation and Regulations