

Social Media	
Adopted: April 1, 2019	Last Reviewed/Revised: February 3, 2025
Next Scheduled Review: 2027-2028	
Associated Policies & Procedures: I-43 Use of Technology and Digital Citizenship VI-62 Use of Technology and Digital Citizenship I-07 Protection of Privacy VI-81 Privacy Procedure I-36 Trustee Code of Conduct II-39 Progressive Discipline and Safety in Schools Code of Conduct VI-44 Progressive Discipline and Safety in Schools II-40 Bullying Prevention and Intervention III-14 Employee Code of Conduct V-18 Community Engagement and Public Consultation Policy VI-04 Complaints Resolution Process Workplace Discrimination Harassment Violence VI-102 Responding to Hate or Bias Motivated Incidents Involving or Impacting Students HCDSB Social Media Guidelines	

Purpose

To provide a framework that outlines the appropriate uses and acceptable practices for the use of social media in our Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) schools and workplaces as a communications vehicle to share pertinent information and engage stakeholders.

Application and Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and trustees who are interacting with students, parents/guardians, staff, trustees, and members of the broader community on social media channels and online platforms. It also applies to students who are managing an official HCDSB social media account.

References

[College of Early Childhood Educators - Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#)

[College of Early Childhood Educators – Using Social Media](#)

[Copyright Act](#)

[Government of Canada - Digital Citizenship Guide for Parents](#)

[Institute for Catholic Education – Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(MFIPPA\)](#)

[Ontario College of Teachers – Maintaining Professionalism - Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#)

[Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association \(OECTA\) – Appropriate and Professional Use of Electronic Communication, Social Media, and Online Educational Services](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

Definitions

Digital Citizenship: users recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal and ethical.

Social Media: refers to the use of web-based technologies (websites/blogs, platforms and/or applications) that enable users to communicate and share information online.

Social Media Channels: an application, platform or networking site that enables online interaction; e.g. Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Microsoft 365, etc.

User: for the purposes of this procedure, a user is any individual who communicates online through the use of web-based technologies (websites/blogs, platforms and/or applications).

Principles

- HCDSB is committed to preparing students for the workplace and for success in a world that continues to evolve through advances in technology. Fundamental to this commitment is helping students develop a positive digital footprint by teaching and modeling responsible digital citizenship that is in keeping with the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.
- HCDSB recognizes the benefits of using social media as an avenue to:
 - encourage conversations that build relationships and strengthen our community;
 - share pertinent information and engage stakeholders;
 - support instructional practice and develop professional learning networks; and
 - which supports and fosters diversity, equity and inclusion within the community, in accordance with Church teachings.
- HCDSB prioritizes communication that is clear, transparent and responsive and is committed to protecting the privacy of staff, students, and families, in accordance with our statutory duties and responsibilities under applicable legislation.

Requirements

A. Expected Standards of Behaviour for All Social Media Users

- All use of social media by students, staff, trustees, and HCDSB schools must comply with the applicable HCDSB policies and procedures.
- Social media accounts that represent a school, classroom, program, department, Catholic School Council, or school/system committee are viewed as extensions of HCDSB and must therefore reflect the Mission, Vision, and Values of HCDSB.
- All official HCDSB social media account administrators (see section C) must adhere to appropriate and professional boundaries and model responsible digital citizenship, while maintaining public trust in the community.

This includes:

- Maintaining a sense of professionalism in all online interactions.
- Exercising caution and good judgement when interacting with other social media users by sharing, reposting, liking, or commenting on a post.
- Keeping posts positive and not engaging in negative commentary.
- Upholding the Ontario Human Rights Code by ensuring that all online interactions are free of discrimination, harassment and violence.
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality.
- Ensuring permissions are in place before posting student images or sharing student work.
- Deleting any student photos uploaded to devices once they have been posted.
- Attributing credit when posting the work of others, as per the Copyright Act.
- Securing account credentials using your HCDSB email.

B. Staff and Trustees on Social Media – Personal and Professional Accounts

- Professional accounts must always reflect the Mission, Vision, and Values of HCDSB and adhere to the requirements in this procedure.
- Social media accounts that blend personal and professional content are not permitted because of the elevated liability, privacy and security risks. Staff and Trustees must maintain a clear distinction between their personal and professional social media use.
- Staff are encouraged to refer to professional regulatory bodies (e.g. the Ontario College of Teachers) for further guidance related to social media.
- As representatives of HCDSB, staff and Trustees interacting on their personal social media accounts should use their discretion when sharing content, and at all times maintain a level of professionalism outside the school or workplace setting.
- Staff and Trustees must not post any images of students on personal social media accounts.

- Staff and Trustees must not follow student social media accounts from either their personal or professional accounts, with the exception of student-run HCDSB official accounts (e.g., Student Trustee accounts, Student Senate accounts, student council/school club accounts, etc.).
- Private messages (Direct Messages/DMs) that are of a personal nature (i.e. not related to school, classroom, school board matters, etc.) between staff or Trustees and students are not permitted.

C. Official HCDSB Social Media Accounts

Official HCDSB social media accounts include school-affiliated accounts, Board-affiliated accounts, and Trustee social media accounts.

- i. School-Affiliated Social Media Accounts
 - HCDSB School Accounts
 - School Principal/Vice Principal/School Staff Accounts
 - Classroom Accounts
 - Program/Department/Division Accounts
 - Catholic School Council Accounts
 - Student Council/Club Accounts
- ii. Board-Affiliated Social Media Accounts
 - HCDSB Account (i.e. official corporate account)
 - Board Staff Accounts
 - HCDSB Department/Program Accounts (e.g. Human Rights & Equity, STEAM, etc.)
 - HCDSB Committee Accounts (e.g. CPIC, SEAC, etc.)
 - HCDSB Student Trustee Accounts
 - HCDSB Student Senate Accounts
- iii. Trustee Social Media Accounts
 - Chair of the Board Accounts
 - Trustee Accounts

Authorization to Open an Official HCDSB Social Media Account

- Individuals interested in creating or assuming a school-affiliated social media account must complete the [HCDSB Social Media Authorization Form](#). School accounts and School Principal accounts will be approved by Strategic Communications. All other school-affiliated social media accounts must be approved by the School Principal.
- Individuals interested in creating or assuming an HCDSB-affiliated social media account must receive approval by Strategic Communications and complete the [HCDSB Social Media](#)

[Authorization Form.](#)

D. Privacy & Confidentiality

- Safety and protection of privacy are overriding concerns with regard to information posted and shared online. All users shall adhere to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*, and all other applicable legislation.
- Users are not permitted to share personal information related to students, parents/guardians, staff, trustees, etc.
- Posting of student images and/or student work is permitted on **official HCDSB social media accounts only**.
- Before posting student images and/or student work on social media, staff must confirm that there is written consent from the parent/guardian, through the *Family Information Consent Form*. Permission must be granted for the current school calendar year. Students who do not have parental consent on file must be excluded from photos and/or video footage appearing on school and/or HCDSB social media channels.
- It is common practice to capture photos and video footage of adults over the age of 18 (staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and trustees) during public meetings, and public events in the community. Verbal consent should be obtained from any adult whose photo, video, and/or work is posted on social media.

E. Copyright, Visual Identity and Intellectual Property

- All visual representations of the HCDSB, including but not limited to the official logo and branding of the HCDSB or any of its schools, will be in congruence with and in support of the Mission, Vision and Values of HCDSB.
- HCDSB has exclusive rights to all intellectual property created for HCDSB, and reserves the right to monitor, limit, or restrict its use by any parties whether internal or external to HCDSB.
- Consultation with the Strategic Communications department is required before branding a social media account with a logo, school crest, emblem, tagline, or name that implies affiliation with a school and/or the HCDSB.
- Attribute credit when posting the work of others, as per the *Copyright Act*.

F. Monitoring

- Strategic Communications does not directly monitor personal student and staff social media accounts as part of its duties.
- Strategic Communications does monitor official HCDSB accounts, as well as mentions of HCDSB and any of its schools, programs and departments and will respond to questions and concerns raised through social media.

- All student-run school-affiliated accounts must be overseen by the School Principal and/or a designated staff member.
- Official Catholic School Council social media accounts must be overseen by the School Principal.
- The Principal and/or Superintendent and/or the Strategic Communications department reserves the right to address any activity that may negatively impact the school, HCDSB, or the students, staff and school community.
- HCDSB reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without notice, staff, trustee and student activities while using HCDSB technology, including social media content, for the purposes of investigation of inappropriate online interactions, legal matters, or other issues.
- There are concerns about personal duty of care in terms of monitoring social media when a student identifies that they are in crisis.
 - All of the expectations and duties of educators apply with respect to conduct, responding to a student in need of protection or in crisis, as well as policies and procedures generally, and specifically regarding bullying, or activities that would be actionable through progressive discipline.
 - While we know staff and administrators are always vigilant with respect to students in crisis, it is important for the safety of students and legal liability that we clearly state the supports that should and should not be expected through social media.
 - There is no expectation that a school, classroom, department or professional social media account is monitored 24/7. It is important that this be communicated to potential users.
 - School accounts must have a social media disclaimer in the description of the account profile (or an automatic reply through direct messages, if available) that defines when the account is monitored.

G. Incidents and Concerns

Concerns may be raised about social media activity involving a student, staff member, trustee, or member of an HCDSB/school committee.

- Incidents or concerns related to online interactions between HCDSB students will be addressed by the School Administration, in accordance with the HCDSB policy and procedure on Progressive Discipline and Safety in Schools and other applicable policies/procedures.
- Concerns related to online interactions by staff will be referred to Human Resource Services for further review and/or investigation under the applicable policy.
- HCDSB trustees are governed by the Trustee Code of Conduct, and any concerns related to online interactions involving trustees will be addressed through *Policy I-36 Trustee Code of Conduct*.

- Any concerns raised around online interactions pertaining to HCDSB/school committee members will be addressed through the appropriate Committee Code of Conduct.

H. Roles and Responsibilities

All Users are responsible for:

- ensuring any use of social media is in compliance with privacy legislation and conducted in accordance with requirements set out in this procedure and other relevant HCDSB policies and procedures;
- modelling responsible digital citizenship;
- seeking approval to create or assume an HCDSB school, class, program, or department account, by completing the [HCDSB Social Media Authorization Form](#);
- regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted to ensure it meets the requirements of this procedure;
- managing security and passwords, including handovers to relevant staff, as required;
- reporting any incidents or concerns, in accordance with section G in this procedure.

School Principals are responsible for:

- ensuring staff review *Procedure VI-63 Social Media*;
- establishing and monitoring responsible digital citizenship through the school's Code of Conduct;
- modelling responsible digital citizenship for staff and students;
- ensuring individuals interested in creating or assuming a school-affiliated social media account have completed the [HCDSB Social Media Authorization Form](#);
- addressing any concerns related to school-affiliated social media accounts and contacting their Family of Schools Superintendent, Human Resources, and Strategic Communications for support, as required.

Strategic Communications staff are responsible for:

- ensuring individuals interested in creating or assuming an HCDSB-affiliated social media account have completed the [HCDSB Social Media Authorization Form](#);
- facilitating the handover process for HCDSB school social media accounts, as required;

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- providing social media training, guidance and support to official HCDSB social media account administrators;
- addressing any concerns related to HCDSB official social media accounts, and redirecting concerns through the appropriate avenue, as per section G;
- ensuring the Family of Schools Superintendent and/or the Director of Education are kept apprised of incidents and ongoing concerns as required.

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Administrative Council

AUTHORIZED BY: _____
Director of Education and Secretary of the Board