



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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### ACCEPTABLE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES SOCIAL MEDIA

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Description:

Many students want to take the technology they use in their daily lives and integrate it with how they learn. More and more, students indicate that they want, and need, their learning experiences in school to reflect this. As students learn to use social media, it is important to empower them to build strong online safety skills and to establish an appropriate and positive digital footprint. One of the best ways to do this is to model the responsible and professional use of social media.

For the purposes of these guidelines, social media refers to online technology tools that enable people and organizations to communicate and share information and resources over the Internet. Users provide information, but can also interact with each other using social media. Examples include, but are not limited to, blogs, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube. Using this definition, the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board environment can also be viewed as social media.

The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board recognizes that the use of social media is optional and that staff members may be using social media to support their instructional practice and develop professional learning networks (PLN).

Authorization:

Board authorization is not required for staff to open a personal social media account. Employees planning to use social media for instructional purposes (e.g., classroom Twitter account or blog), should inform their principal or supervisor of your intended use. Classroom social media accounts are seen as extensions of the school and must reflect the mission, vision and values of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board. If a concern is raised about a classroom account, the principal or supervisor will address any activity that may negatively impact the school, staff and students.

We reserve the right to delete comments that are considered:

- spam
- advertising or promotion of services, products or political organizations
- off-topic or disruptive
- advocating illegal activity
- infringement of copyrights or trademarks
- violation of any HSCDSB policies

- personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- private, personal information published without consent
- hyperlinks to material not related to the discussion

### Personal vs. Professional:

Every time people communicate, whether it's in person or on social media, public opinion is shaped about the individuals, their profession, their school, their board and public education. Statements like, "Tweets are my own and don't reflect my employer's views," don't hold true for educators.

Although staff lead private lives, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that teachers' off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant to their suitability to teach. As such, staff should use sound judgment and due care when using social media while on and off duty.

- Maintain a sense of professionalism at all times—in your personal and professional lives.
- The Board strongly advises against the use of a blended personal and professional account. Staff are encouraged to maintain a clear distinction between their personal and professional social media use, and should have two separate accounts for these purposes. When identifying yourself as an HSCDSB employee, be conscientious that any post made can be associated with your employer.
- If staff choose to have personal social media accounts, they should be separate from their professional accounts (i.e., classroom, department, school accounts).
- Social media users are accountable for their perceived endorsements (i.e., likes, tweets), comments and opinions. These interactions should be limited and done with care.
- Social media accounts for the purpose of voluntary, self-directed professional development are supported,
- Staff should communicate with students for educational purposes only and avoid or limit sharing personal information with students of the Huron Superior-Catholic District School Board.
- Texting students is inappropriate, whether for personal or educational purposes.
- Posting images or content related to alcohol and/or tobacco use cannot happen on classroom, department and professional accounts, and is discouraged on personal accounts.
- If you have a personal social media account that students become aware of, refer them back to the educational account for discussion rather than permitting personal or private messages.

### Professional Boundaries:

Maintaining professional boundaries on social media is critical to sustaining public trust and ensuring relationships with students remain professional. Remember that, on social media, the world is watching.

- All online dialogue and interactions with students should be for educational purposes only.
- Employees' social media interactions should be professional and reflect the board's mission and vision.

- Employees should be mindful of all equity and inclusivity-related board policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code when posting content.
- The tone of all communications should be formal and professional when communicating with students and others via social media.
- Private messages and/or texts to students should not be sent.
- Sharing information with students online that would not be appropriate to share in a classroom, or school/community setting. What is inappropriate in the classroom is also inappropriate on social media.
- Posts should be positive; engaging in negative or critical conversations online is to be avoided.
- Retweets, likes and favorites are perceived as endorsements. These interactions should be limited and done with care.

### Privacy and Confidentiality:

Safety is the overriding concern with regard to information posted online. The privacy and confidentiality of student information must be respected at all times. 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. Employees must:

- Always be mindful of the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), the [Youth Criminal Justice Act](#), and [Privacy and Management of Personal Information Procedure](#) when using social media. It is important to respect the privacy and confidentiality of students at all times.
- Familiarize themselves with the social media tool's privacy settings. Settings can change without notice and must be checked frequently. This often occurs when platforms are updated.
- Ensure privacy settings are appropriate and protect the privacy and confidentiality of students and their work.
- Never disclose confidential information about the school, students and colleagues. Particular care must be taken with students for whom the principal has identified custody/safety concerns.
- Not post personal information, including student names and locations etc., on social media without informed consent from students' parents/guardians. This includes, but is not limited to, blogs, student work, individual and group photographs, videos featuring the student or other identifying information.
- Ensure there is informed consent when placing personal student information online. Consent is provided via the "*Identification of Students for School Related Activities*" form that is sent home with all students at the start of the school year.
- Ensure that the "*Identification of Students for School Related Activities*" form includes a letter that provides specific information about how a student's image, name and work will be showcased on social media.
- Disclose which networks they will use and how they will be used to connect with students online for classroom purposes. If interactions will take place on social media after school hours, for educational purposes only, this should be included in the letter.
- Ensure that events such as school excursions (where students are leaving school or board premises on a school-sponsored activity) are not be posted prior to the event. However,

vague posts that do not include the time and location of the excursion are permitted (e.g., Grade 9 Science Trip on April 7).

- Understand that everything posted can be altered and shared, even if an account is anonymous. Comments expressed privately between social media users can be shared in a more public domain, even with privacy settings set to high.

### Photos and Student Work:

The “Identification of Students for School Related Activities” form that goes home with students at the start of the school year covers social media. Elementary students who return signed forms can have their names, images and student works posted on social media. Secondary students who do not return a signed form can also have their names, images and student works posted on social media.

Employees must ensure that:

- Online tagging photos and videos featuring students should not be posted on social media without the informed consent of a parent/guardian. Photos and posts are tagged with care; this is especially true of photos posted of others.
- Student work is not posted on social media without the informed consent from students’ parents/guardians.
- Students/parents/guardians are informed of the intention to post images, videos, and/or student work online. The consent form must include exactly what will be posted (e.g., student’s first and last names, grade, activity).
- Group photos (e.g., a sports team or musical group) are used with the informed consent from everyone in the photograph.
- As a courtesy, verbal consent is obtained from any adult (e.g., teacher, parent, volunteer, other board staff member) whose photo, video footage and/or work is posted on social media. Exceptions include images of administrators and trustees that are taken during the course of their employment or photos taken at public events where there is no expectation of privacy. Consent is not required for photos and videos that are taken at public meetings and/or events.
- Students for whom consent is not provided are excluded and/or have their faces blurred.

### Who to “Friend” and “Follow”:

Staff should not have online interactions with students on social media outside of forums/platforms dedicated to educational use. This is consistent with the advice provided in the Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory: [Maintaining Professionalism - Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#).

Employees should:

- Not issue or accept student friend requests or follow individual students on social media.

### Professional Hours:

Social media operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This doesn't mean you have to. Monitoring and replying at any time of the day or night sets up an expectation that you will always do so. Employees are encouraged to:

- Establish “professional office hours” and share them with students and parents so that they know if and when responses to questions will be posted on social media.
- Link to a social media disclaimer to inform the public of the general monitoring of the account. Office hours should be available on professional social media accounts, (e.g., on your Twitter biography), and be strictly adhered to. **See sample** social media disclaimer at the end of this document.
- Keep student safety and supervision a top priority. Staff can post to social media during the instructional day, only if it is for educational purposes and if student safety can be maintained.

### Maintenance and Monitoring Responsibilities:

At the discretion of administration and management, school social media accounts may be run by one or more school staff members. Communication sent out via social media accounts should have a consistent voice and be positive in tone. It is important that staff who create their own personal, professional, classroom and/or school social media accounts monitor these accounts with some regularity, at a frequency determined by them. This means that individual staff members are responsible for the accounts they maintain. Just like school websites, some accounts may be more extensive and more frequently updated than others based on school priorities. Best practice, however, would be that an official school account be updated regularly. If possible, even five minutes a day spent on an account ensures it is considered active and effective. Many social media experts believe that logging into accounts once a day, if even for five minutes, is advisable. In this way, you can respond to questions and remove posts that are inappropriate and contrary to the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board's Mission Statement. Employees are reminded that:

- Posts and comments of an inappropriate nature or that contain personal or irrelevant information should be removed/deleted promptly, if permitted by the tool.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to report a post or comment to an administrator for investigation. Please use professional judgment in this regard. If a behavior would be reported at school, it should be reported similarly if it occurs online.
- Privacy settings should be set so that employers are notified if tagged or mentioned in photos or posts. Remove tags that may reflect negatively.
- Social media notifications should be forwarded to an email account to monitor what is being said without logging into social media accounts.
- School administrators should have access to all school social media account. Board email account should be used to register accounts.

### Duty of Care:

- There are concerns about personal duty of care in terms of monitoring social media when a student identifies that he or she is in crisis. All of the expectations and duties of educators apply with respect to conduct, responding to a child in need of protection or in crisis,

specifically regarding bullying, or activities that would be actionable through progressive discipline.

- While staff and administrators are vigilant with respect to students in crisis, it is important for the safety of students and legal liability that employees clearly state the supports that should and should not be expected through social media. There is no expectation that a school, classroom, department or personal social media account is monitored 24/7. It is important that this information is communicated to potential users. School accounts must have a social media disclaimer—a paragraph or two that defines when the account is monitored and what to do if help is needed. See “[Sample Social Media Disclaimer](#)” at the end of this document.

#### Staff Supervision:

- Of course, staff can post to social media during the instructional day. Generally, this activity would focus on communicating classroom work, and building positive relationships with school audiences. Alternately, staff may post non-school-related content to their personal accounts on their own time. At all times, however, student safety must be maintained. We recognize that some staff members may choose to post outside of the regular school day.

#### **Sample SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLAIMER**

The [@HSCDSB Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts are administered by staff at the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board. We do not monitor this account 24/7.

We update and monitor this account intermittently throughout the school day--from 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. At times, the accounts may be used before and after these times to communicate about urgent issues or respond to inquiries from members of the public.

While we aim to engage in open conversation, we also ask that posts are respectful of our board community and are consistent with our Mission Statement. Individuals who do not follow the [social media guidelines](#) will have their posts removed, and/or be blocked from the sites.

We welcome your comments and questions on social media, but before you do so, please ensure you do not include personal information or photos of others without their consent.

For official correspondence, please contact [communications@hscdsb.on.ca](mailto:communications@hscdsb.on.ca) or call 705-945-5666.