



## **Social Media and Online Content: New Procedure**

**To:** Governance and Policy Committee

**Date:** 9 February, 2022

**Report No.:** 02-22-4259

### **Strategic Directions**

- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Social Media and Online Content Procedure, as presented in this report, be received for information.

### **Context**

TDSB employees have certain responsibilities related to appropriate social media use as outlined in TDSB policies and procedures, including the Employee Conflict of Interest Policy (P057), Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy (P088), and the Code of On-line Conduct (PR571).

Educators are also required to adhere to the Ontario College of Teachers' guidelines on the use of electronic communication and social media, which outlines professional boundaries, responsibilities and expectations associated with online and social media communication.

The Social Media and Online Content Procedure (the "Procedure") (see Appendix A) was developed to further support staff with the use of social media for student learning and professional development purposes and maintaining professionalism while using social media for personal uses.

The Procedure applies to TDSB employees who administer, contribute to, or access official TDSB social media accounts or channels. The Procedure also applies to TDSB employees' personal social media accounts and online content when information shared relates to the TDSB or may have an impact on the TDSB.

In developing the Procedure, staff reviewed other school board policies and procedures and incorporated content from the existing TDSB Social Media Guidelines and Ontario College of Teachers' Professional Advisory titled Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media. Union and federation partners were consulted on January 25, 2022 to inform development of the Procedure.

The Social Media and Online Content Procedure was approved by Executive Council on February 1, 2022 and is being presented to the Committee for information.

### **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

Subject to the Governance and Policy Committee's receipt, the Procedure will be provided to the Board of Trustees on March 9, 2022 for information.

### **Resource Implications**

No additional resources will be required for implementation of the Procedure at this time.

### **Communications Considerations**

The Social Media and Online Content Procedure will be posted on the Board's internal and external website and communicated through the System Leaders' Bulletin.

### **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

- Equity Policy (P037)
- Employee Conflict of Interest Policy (P057)
- Code of On-line Conduct (PR571)
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy (P088)
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy (P094)
- Workplace Harassment Prevention for Non-Human-Rights-Code Harassment Policy (P034)
- Human Rights Policy (P031)

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Social Media and Online Content Procedure

### **From**

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# Toronto District School Board

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Operational Procedure PR735

Title: **SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE CONTENT**

Adopted: February 1, 2022  
Effectuated: February 1, 2022  
Revised: N/A  
Reviewed: N/A  
Authorization: Executive Council

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## 1. RATIONALE

The Social Media and Online Content Procedure (the “Procedure”) was developed to support staff with the use of social media for student learning and professional development purposes and maintaining professionalism while using social media for personal uses.

This Procedure is aligned with and supports implementation of the TDSB’s Equity Policy (P037), Employee Conflict of Interest Policy (P057), the Code of On-line Conduct (PR571), the Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy (P088), Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy (P094), Workplace Harassment Prevention for Non-Human-Rights-Code Harassment Policy (P034), and the Human Rights Policy (P031). The Procedure also follows the spirit of the Ontario College of Teachers’ Professional Advisory titled Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

- To support staff with professional use of social media;
- To provide a safe, positive and respectful online learning and working environment through professional use of social media in a manner that is compliant with applicable law and related TDSB policies and procedures.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

*Board* is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “TDSB”.

*Digital Citizenship* refers to the relationship between an individual and their online presence whereby users recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of

living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and the responsibility to act and model in ways that are safe, legal and ethical.

*Discrimination* refers to any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which has a negative effect on an individual or group because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability/ level of ability or socio-economic status. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, services, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

*Harassment* refers to a form of discrimination that is often but not always, persistent, ongoing conduct or communication, in any form, of attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group which are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, inappropriate, intimidating or offensive. A single act or expression can constitute harassment, for example, if it is a serious violation or it is from a person in authority. Harassment may be either subtle or blunt.

*Hate* refers to expressions of bias, prejudice and bigotry that are carried out by individuals, groups, organizations and states, directed against stigmatized and marginalized persons and groups in communities, and intended to affirm and secure existing structures of domination and subordination. Hate activities and incidents represent some of the most destructive forms of human rights - based discrimination by promoting hatred against identifiable groups of people. Some hate incidents are also considered criminal offences committed against a person or property and motivated, in whole or in part, by bias or prejudice based on real or perceived race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability, level of ability or any other similar factor.

*Information Technology (IT) Resources* refers to computers, phones, tablets, cellular/mobile technology, computer applications, email, servers, networks, internet services, internet access including access to external websites, data and any other electronic or communication technology that exist today or may be developed in the future regardless of whether or not it may be used as a stand-alone device.

*Online Content* refers to a variety of online communities and includes but is not limited to: blogs, social networks, wikis, message boards, chatrooms, forums, electronic newsletters, and other sites and services that permit users to share information/content over the internet.

*Personal Information* refers to recorded information about an identifiable individual. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual,
- Information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved,
- Any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,
- The address or telephone number of the individual,
- Correspondence sent to an institution by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature, and replies to that correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence, and
- The individual's name if it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other personal information about the individual.

*Social Media* refers to a variety of online platforms/applications such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat and TikTok, etc., and other sites and services that permit users and organizations to share information/content over the internet and to interact with other users.

*Social Media Account* refers to an account hosted on a social media site or platform. A social media account can either be personal or corporate.

*TDSB* is the Toronto District School Board, also referred to as the "Board"

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY**

Associate Director, Business Operations and Service Excellence and Executive Officer, Government, Public and Community Relations.

#### **5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

This Procedure applies to TDSB employees who administer, contribute to, or access official TDSB social media accounts or channels.

The Procedure also applies to TDSB employees' personal social media accounts and online content when information shared relates to the TDSB or may have an impact on the TDSB.

#### **6. PROCEDURES**

##### **6.1. General Principles**

- 6.1.1. The Board recognizes the important role of social media and electronic communications. Social media tools provide an opportunity to communicate and share TDSB and other educational information across the internet. As students continue to spend an increasing amount of time

online, it is also an excellent opportunity to be a positive role model of digital citizenship.

- 6.1.2. Staff may use social media to complement their teaching and/or professional development. TDSB employees must maintain a sense of professionalism when using social media in both their personal and professional lives. Communication on social media can shape public opinion about oneself, profession, school, the TDSB or public education generally.
- 6.1.3. Use of social media presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. Staff should remember that social media communications are qualitatively different from other forms of communication in terms of their permanence and potential for broad circulation. Communication and undertakings with stakeholders should be guided with integrity, respect, care, professionalism and trust.
- 6.1.4. The requirement of staff to interact with other stakeholders in a manner which reflects integrity, respect, care, professionalism and trust extends beyond the working day, and more specifically, into the realm of social media. TDSB staff are expected to maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with all stakeholders to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained. Any and all social media use or online content must not include materials insulting, libelous, demeaning or offensive to the Board, students, staff or school communities, undermining the Board's reputation.
- 6.1.5. TDSB staff wishing to create/use official TDSB social media accounts as a method of communicating with the broader TDSB community for Board purposes must ensure that they have received permission from their school administrator or supervisor.
- 6.1.6. The use of social media must not have a negative impact on the productivity or efficiency of staff.
- 6.1.7. TDSB staff are prohibited from excess social media use during regular working hours for non-Board related purposes.
- 6.1.8. Sharing content on social media and other online platforms by staff during and outside of work hours that adversely affect the rights and privacy of Board staff, students or other school community members is prohibited.
- 6.1.9. TDSB staff are solely responsible for what they post online. Before creating and sharing content online, TDSB staff should consider the risks of using social media and carefully consider the impacts of any messaging on the different stakeholders who may see it while understanding that information may be circulated even if it is thought that the communications are private.
- 6.1.10. Any deliberate conduct that adversely affects an employee's ability to effectively perform their job or the performance of fellow staff, or conduct

which otherwise adversely affects students, parents, community members or other staff may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

- 6.1.11. Employee misconduct that involves the use of social media and the sharing of other online content can have an immediate, significant and ongoing impact on important Board interests. As a result, inappropriate use of social media and electronic communications is prohibited.
- 6.1.12. Inappropriate use of social media or electronic communications may also result in criminal charges or civil actions, where appropriate.
- 6.1.13. Inappropriate social media use and other online content includes, but is not limited to:
  - Making inappropriate online comments that are derogatory, slanderous, or defamatory in nature;
  - Disclosing personal or confidential information about the Board, school, students and colleagues;
  - Posting the work of others without proper attribution, in breach of copyright law;
  - Breaching a court-ordered publication ban;
  - Inciting hate against an identifiable group;
  - Contravening the Youth Criminal Justice Act by disclosing information about a minor; or
  - Using technology to criminally or otherwise harass or discriminate a student, colleague or any others, undermining Board's commitment to safe and positive learning and working environment, free of harassment and discrimination as outlined in the Equity Policy (P037), the Human Rights Policy (P031), and the Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034);
  - Using a computer to lure a child or a juvenile in violation of the Criminal Code;
  - Exchanging or forwarding compromising photos, videos, or audio recordings of students leading to charges of possession or distribution of child pornography; or
  - Using social media in violation of the TDSB policies, including the Equity Policy (P037), and corresponding procedures.
- 6.1.14. The Board supports online practices of its staff and students which protect all staff, students and community members from harm, breaches of confidentiality and harassment.
- 6.1.15. The TDSB values the importance of respectful conversations between the Board and members of the TDSB community, however when social media and/or online comments directed at the TDSB, school, staff member become disrespectful (including harassing, swearing, etc.), the TDSB reserves the right to discontinue engaging in that exchange or,

depending on seriousness of circumstances, block the account in question for a period of time or permanently.

## **6.2. Personal Social Media Accounts**

- 6.2.1. TDSB understands that some employees may participate in social networking platforms and/or maintain personal blogs or websites, contribute posts to personal blogs or personal websites or web pages of others.
- 6.2.2. Maintaining professional boundaries on social media is critical to sustaining public trust and ensuring relationships with students, staff and others remain professional.
- 6.2.3. TDSB staff will be personally responsible for the content they publish.
- 6.2.4. TDSB staff will adhere to the ethical and professional principles outlined in TDSB policies and procedures as well as professional designation ethical standards and/or code of conduct, such as the Ontario College of Teachers when writing and/or posting information online.
- 6.2.5. When using social media sites and posting online even with the strictest settings, TDSB staff should be aware that all information posted may become part of the public domain.
- 6.2.6. TDSB staff should ensure their profile including biography and related content is consistent with how they wish to present themselves to colleagues, parents/guardians, and students.
- 6.2.7. When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent themselves, staff should make sure to select a school-appropriate image and not use protected images such as copyrighted logos/images.
- 6.2.8. Links and posts that employees retweet, share, like or favourite online can be perceived as personal endorsements and should not be associated with the TDSB.
- 6.2.9. Whether or not staff explicitly identify themselves as TDSB employees online, they are connected to colleagues, students, parents and are often known to be members of the school community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their professional responsibilities under Board policies.
- 6.2.10. TDSB staff must not share information with the TDSB community and its stakeholders in circumstances when the information is not yet approved, or the staff member may not be authorized to share it in the public domain.
- 6.2.11. When posting information or contributing to social media, staff will ensure that information is accurate and factual.
- 6.2.12. When sharing opinions online, staff should be mindful of the potential impact those opinions may have on students, staff and the TDSB.



### 6.3. TDSB Corporate Social Media Accounts

- 6.3.1. TDSB social media accounts provide an opportunity to share information and other school news with students, parents and the broader school community.
- 6.3.2. The TDSB has established the following official social media accounts:
- Twitter: @TDSB
  - Facebook: toronto.dsb
  - Instagram: @TorontoDSB
- 6.3.3. Information published on a corporate social media account should be consistent with the Mission, Values and Goals Policy (P002) and TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
- 6.3.4. The Government, Public and Community Relations Department is responsible for managing the Board's official social media accounts, including:
- Planning, developing and engaging social media content across digital channels relevant to the TDSB community;
  - Monitoring digital channels and engaging with digital communities; and
  - Developing social media communication strategies to support system events and media relations.
- 6.3.5. TDSB reserves the right to remove a TDSB-controlled account deemed inappropriate, inactive, redundant or otherwise not required.

#### *Teacher and Classroom Accounts*

- 6.3.6. Teacher/classroom accounts provide an opportunity to share the day-to-day life and learning in classrooms. These accounts may be followed by parents, educators and community members.
- 6.3.7. The TDSB considers classroom social media accounts and sites as an extension of the classroom. What is inappropriate in the classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- 6.3.8. The following rules apply for teacher and classroom accounts:
- Elementary and secondary school educators should advise their Principal if they have a classroom and/or a professional teaching account on social media;
  - School Principal must be notified of teacher or classroom accounts;
  - Account should be setup using TDSB email address;
  - Biography should identify as a TDSB classroom;
  - Biography should also include a link to official TDSB school website;
  - To encourage parent engagement, educators are encouraged to inform parents of intended use and content of social media accounts, including for instructional purposes.

*School Accounts*

- 6.3.9. School accounts provide a window for parents and the community to see the life and learning that happens in your school each day. A school account is also helpful for communicating messages that relate to the entire school.
- 6.3.10. The following rules apply for school accounts:
- Account must be approved by the Principal and run by the Principal or assigned TDSB staff designate;
  - Account should be setup using TDSB email address;
  - Biography should identify as a TDSB school;
  - Biography should also include a link to official TDSB school website.

*Department Accounts*

- 6.3.11. Department accounts are created on behalf of a specific department within a school or the Board. Department accounts may be followed by students, parents, and others in the community.
- 6.3.12. The following rules apply for department accounts:
- Account must be approved by Principal/supervisor;
  - Account should be setup using TDSB email address;
  - Biography should identify as TDSB school and/or department it is representing.

**6.4. Protection of Personal and Confidential Information**

- 6.4.1. Staff are required to maintain the confidentiality of personal information and the protection of students and staff when using social media.
- 6.4.2. TDSB staff will not disclose any private, confidential or personal information online that is protected under applicable legislation, including but not limited to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), or for legal, security, commercial sensitivity, intellectual property, and/or other reasons determined by the Board.
- 6.4.3. TDSB staff will refrain from disclosing any confidential student information, personal information or images without confirmation or written permission from the parent(s)/guardian(s). A current student media release consent form, used only for the intended purpose, must be in place prior to taking and/or posting images of students on social media.
- 6.4.4. In an effort to protect privacy and prevent potential privacy breaches, information such as student work, photographs of students (including their faces) or any other personally identifiable information should only be shared when the appropriate TDSB media consent form has been signed by a parent or guardian.

- 6.4.5. Audio or video recording of class sessions as well as meetings of students, staff and school community members, are prohibited without consent of all participants and parents/guardians, as applicable.
- 6.4.6. All TDSB staff have a duty to make child welfare, protection, and safety a priority. The same expectations and duties of educators and staff with respect to child welfare and protection apply online, including social media. Any reporting or follow up should be made through normal reporting channels.

### **6.5. Social Media/Online Content Issues Management**

- 6.5.1. While social media presents a number of positive opportunities, there are times when social media issues can emerge both inside and outside of the classroom.
- 6.5.2. In the event of a social media issue or concern, TDSB employees may consider the following:
- Screenshot or capture the image of what is being posted online;
  - Report inappropriate/concerning online behaviour to the Principal/supervisor;
  - Report inappropriate online behaviour directly on the social media platform;
  - Should you require further assistance or have ongoing issues, administrators should contact their Superintendent and the Government, Public & Community Relations team to help further investigate the issue.

### **6.6. Non-Compliance**

- 6.6.1. Individuals who fail to comply with TDSB policies and this Procedure may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- 6.6.2. Inappropriate use of social media or online platforms may also result in criminal charges or civil actions, where appropriate. Inappropriate use of social media or online platforms may also result in criminal charges, a report of professional misconduct to a governing regulatory body (e.g., Ontario College of Teachers, Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, etc.) or civil actions, where appropriate.

## **7. EVALUATION**

This Procedure will be reviewed at a minimum, every four (4) years after the effective date.

## **8. APPENDICES**

- N/A

## 9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

### **Policies:**

- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources (P088)
- Employee Conflict of Interest (P057)
- Equity (P037)
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy (P094),
- Human Rights (P031)
- Workplace Harassment Prevention for Non-Human-Rights-Code Harassment Policy (P034)

### **Operational Procedures:**

- Code of Online Conduct (PR571)
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention (PR703)

### **Other Resources:**

- TDSB Educator Social Media Guidelines
- Ontario College of Teachers, Professional Advisory – Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media