

401.10AP – Social Media

Purpose

Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (“School District”) welcomes the responsible use of social media technologies and other forms of electronic communication to support learning and for school district business and communication purposes. However, social media usage must be undertaken in a manner that is respectful, privacy compliant and consistent with the role of school district staff within the community.

Procedure

This administrative procedure has been developed to provide employees and students an understanding of the impact of social media and electronic communications and their appropriate uses in order to ensure professional communication standards and to mitigate the school district’s, employee’s and student’s exposure to risk.

While social media, both personal and professional purposes, has many advantages, professionalism remains a priority. Employees have a duty of loyalty to their employer; therefore an employee’s online conduct is subject to the same standards of conduct that ordinarily apply to their on and off-duty conduct.

This procedure clarifies employee and student responsibilities when posting material online and exchanging electronic communications with students, parents and co-workers. It applies to social media use and other electronic communications by employees whether during the hours of work or at other times, on the district network or from outside the district network, and on district devices or personal devices. Employees and students should be aware that there is not an expectation of privacy in social media use and electronic communications.

1. Definitions

- 1.1. “social media” refers to all internet-based applications and technologies which 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 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 (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube, Google+ and Google Hangouts).

- 1.2. “electronic communications” refers to any written, audio, video, visual or digital communications occurring between employees or any one or more individuals through electronic means, including email, texting and other messaging services whether or not such communications are internet based.

2. No Expectation of Privacy

- 2.1. Employees should understand that there is no expectation of privacy in the use of social media or electronic communications, and that online and other electronically recorded communications may potentially be read, accessed or published by third parties or transferred to others without the knowledge or consent of the creator.

3. Responsibility of Employees

- 3.1. Employees are responsible for their electronic communications and for any content that they publish online, whether it is under the employee’s own name, an alias or is anonymous, and must ensure it complies with applicable laws, this Administrative Procedure, and professional standards of conduct, including those of the Ministry of Education, BCSTA, CUPE, and Teacher Regulation Branch. This expectation of conduct includes a responsibility to ensure that contributions to any site that is created by an employee are monitored, administered and moderated to ensure compliance with this Policy and Regulations.
- 3.2. Inappropriate communications through the use of social media or other electronic devices are subject to the same policies and principles as other forms of work-related misconduct.

4. General Standards of Conduct for Employees

- 4.1. Anything posted online by employees or communicated electronically to non-school district parties may be perceived to be an official representative of the School District. Therefore, employees are expected to model an appropriate online presence and to exercise good judgment to ensure that postings and communications do not reflect negatively on the employee’s professional reputation or that of the School District. This may require employees to take reasonable steps to monitor and exercise appropriate controls over their online presence, including by requesting that friends and third parties not post photos, videos or other online content depicting or pertaining to the employee that is not appropriate to the employee’s role in the School District.
- 4.2. What is inappropriate in the workplace is also inappropriate online, and when expressed in other electronic communications, including criticizing students, employees, parents or the School District. Electronic communications and online posts involving students, co-workers, or parents should at all times be professional in nature. Incidental personal use of district information technology, consistent with these guidelines, is permissible, provided it is not performed during work periods.

- 4.3. Employees must ensure that any information they post online or distribute through other electronic communications does not breach the privacy or confidentiality of another person. The use or disclosure of “personal information” of co-workers, students or parents in connection with social networking websites and services and through other electronic communications may be subject to the British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), and other privacy laws. (For example, photos of co-workers, students or workplace events should not be posted online without the consent of the affected individuals). Consent should ordinarily be sought before posting any person’s image or information online.
- 4.4. In their use of social media, employees must respect and model copyright and fair use guidelines. Employees must not plagiarize, and must properly acknowledge the authorship of materials posted by them. When using a hyperlink to attribute authorship, employees must be sure that the content of the linked site is appropriate and adheres to School District policies and/or administrative procedures.
- 4.5. When posting online content employees should not speak on behalf of the School District or use School District logos on private social media sites unless specifically authorized to do so.
- 4.6. Employees should pay particular attention to the privacy settings for their personal social media page. Some content that is appropriate for personal friends, is not appropriate for circulation to work colleagues, parents and students. However, employees should not look to the privacy settings on their personal social media page as creating anonymity or as a guarantee postings will not be shared more broadly.
- 4.7. In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, district employees should not ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ students on their personal social media sites, especially if there is a student/teacher relationship, and should not request or accept any students as ‘friends’ or ‘followers’ on social media sites. Employees should also refrain from interacting with students on social media sites for purposes not related to the delivery of the student’s educational program.
- 4.8. 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, particularly for social media sites that do not have appropriate privacy settings.
- 4.9. Confidential/sensitive information pertaining to the employee’s role in the School District or information involving the operation of NLPS that is/was obtained through the course of employment shall not be disclosed on social media sites without permission.
- 4.10. Administrative Procedure 401.13AP Appropriate Use of School District Information Technology provides standards associated and relevant to these guidelines.

5. Use of Professional Social Media Sites

- 5.1. The School District recognizes that there are potential benefits to the use of social media and other electronic communications as an educational tool. However, employees must at all times ensure that social media and electronic communications use for communicating with parents

and students is consistent with appropriate professional boundaries and the policies, procedures, and practices of the School District.

- 5.2. Communications with students and parents through social media and through other electronic communications must be formal, courteous and respectful and relevant to school related matters. They should not involve or be linked to social media sites of a personal nature that may be maintained by the employee.
- 5.3. Only School District authorized social media tools are to be used for online communication with students and parents. Should employees wish to create other sites and/or use other online forums for communicating with students or parents, they must obtain approval from their school Principal.
- 5.4. Employees are responsible for ensuring that any use of social media or other electronic communications with students complies with School District policies. Any personal student information that is posted to social media websites or circulated in other electronic communications while the student is under an employee's supervision must be compliant with the permission granted by the student's parents/guardians in a signed District Media Release form.
- 5.5. All professional social media sites are to be maintained by a school administrator/supervisor or a school/district employee delegated by the school administrator/supervisor. Responsibility is not to be delegated to a parent volunteer or student, as the established social media site will represent the School District. Official school district social media account login credentials must be shared with the school administrator.
- 5.6. The School District is not responsible for social media accounts established and maintained by school or district Parent Advisory Councils.
- 5.7. The School District reserves the right to remove, disable and provide feedback regarding professional social media sites that do not adhere to the law or do not reasonably align with these procedures.
- 5.8. Employees are required to monitor contributions to any site they create, administer or moderate for professional purposes. Posts that are not in keeping with the spirit of the page should be removed immediately.

6. General Standard of Conduct and Use of Social Media for Students

- 6.1. Online activities related to school are an extension of the classroom and subject to all school and district expectations. Student online behavior should reflect their school and/or School District's Code of Conduct.
- 6.2. Students should report any content or behavior through school-related social media that is not suitable for the school environment.

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- 6.3. Students should consider the potential consequences of what they post online. Students should only post what they want friends, peers, teachers, or a future employer to see. Links to other websites should be appropriate for their school setting.
- 6.4. Students should be safe online; they should never give out personal information, including last names, birthdates, phone numbers, addresses, and pictures. Students should not share their password with anyone except their parents/guardians.
- 6.5. Students must not intentionally misrepresent themselves or use someone else's identity.
- 6.6. Students are responsible for the work they create. They should not use intellectual property without permission. When paraphrasing another's idea(s), the sources must be cited.
- 6.7. Pictures are protected under copyright and protection of privacy laws.
- 6.8. Students must adhere to the School District's Digital Responsibility practices.

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