



Durham Catholic District School Board

“The Board”

Policy

Title: Social Media	Policy #: PO441
Policy Area: Operations	
Source: Superintendent	
Date Approved: May 12, 2014; November 11, 2013 (Interim)	
Dates of Amendment:	

1.0 Introduction

The Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) believes that open, respectful, two-way communication builds relationships, enhances student success, well-being and achievement, and fosters a sense of belonging to a community among stakeholders. This communication should be consistent with Gospel values.

The Board also recognizes the importance of engaging in dialogue using a variety of communication tools, and that many students, families, staff and other stakeholders participate in social media for accessing and sharing information.

To ensure a positive online environment for social media participants, the Board has established a Social Media Policy which is applicable to all students, staff, parents/guardians and others who choose to comment on or about Board or school initiatives on DCDSB or individual social media sites.

2.0 Definitions

Content – a written, visual or auditory message that is posted to provide meaning for a public audience and to address accessibility.

Harassment – words, conduct or action that is repeatedly directed at an individual that serves no legitimate purpose, and which annoys, alarms, or causes that individual emotional distress.

Social Media – refers to any online environment in which the general public can post content and follow or comment on content posted by others including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, Blogs, online video or photo sharing sites (YouTube or other).

2.0 **Definitions** (Cont'd)

Social Media Administrator – an individual who has been trusted with monitoring, contributing to, filtering, measuring and otherwise guiding the social media presence of a Board-related or school-related group. This role may be assigned to a Supervisory Officer, Manager, Principal, Vice-Principal or person designated to carry out this function.

Social Networking – the act of participating in social media either by posting comments or photos or observing those of others.

Social Media Profile – information that is used to describe an individual or group in a social media account and should include as space permits, its formal name (i.e., St. Luke Catholic School, Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School), official address and link to website.

3.0 **Purpose**

The purpose of the Durham Catholic District School Board's social media policy is to ensure that:

1. information that is posted to Board social media sites and online communities contributes to student achievement, safety and well-being;
2. students, staff and Board or school sanctioned committee members recognize that when posting to school or Board social media sites, they are observed as ambassadors of their schools, the Board and the global Catholic community;
3. when communicating with other members of school communities or professional networks, students and staff recognize that social networking misconduct (such as harassment) may result in similar actions or consequences that are outlined in the Ontario Schools Code of Conduct.

4.0 **Application/Scope**

This policy ensures that social media activity among staff or students is used to build positive relationships and community engagement, and that the expectations for communicating with peers or with the Board and/or affiliates on social media sites are similar to the expectations identified in the Durham Catholic District School Board's Code of Conduct.

5.0 **Requirements**

- The Board, affiliated schools and committees (i.e., DCPIC, SEAC, Anniversary Committees, etc.) have established positive online social networking communities. Users are encouraged to join a conversation, share, or check in to see what is happening across the Board and in school communities through Board and/or individual school social media pages.
- All users shall adhere to the principle of confidentiality.

5.0 **Requirements** (Cont'd)

- Board-affiliated social media forums are available for everyone to respectfully discuss topics related to education and/or DCDSB school communities, and to share or celebrate positive news stories. These are also places where the Board and its schools will share news, upcoming events and other information about Board-wide or individual school initiatives.
- When posting on or referencing DCDSB, individual schools, students, staff or affiliates, it is important to ensure a respectful community. While DCDSB and school social media sites are monitored by designated individuals, participants who observe inappropriate social networking behaviour related to the Board, schools, staff or students must contact the school Principal or Supervisor to report inappropriate use.
- School principals may establish school social media accounts to engage with their school communities. A minimum of one social media administrator must be assigned to oversee the content being shared and monitored. A secondary or back-up administrator is recommended.
- Prior to setting up a social media account, the school Principal or group leader must inform the Communications Officer of the profile name and the administrator(s) who are responsible for posting content and monitoring dialogues associated with the sites.
- Board-affiliated group representatives other than individual schools who wish to establish social media presence must request written permission from the school Principal or Supervisory Officer prior to setting up their accounts. The Communications Officer must be informed of the decision to set up a social media account.
- Board employees and affiliates who choose to engage in social media must ensure that appropriate social boundaries are maintained.
- Schools should refrain from accessing personal social media accounts during instructional periods.

The Board will not tolerate:

- Profane, racist, homophobic, sexist or disrespectful comments on DCDSB or affiliated social media sites;
- Comments or images that are slanderous, disrespectful, abusive, hateful or intended to deface or hurt anyone or any organization;
- Comments or images that violate the privacy of DCDSB students, families, staff members or affiliates;
- Content that breaches the confidentiality of DCDSB business information;
- Unsolicited promotion of products or services;
- Content that infringes on intellectual property or publication rights;
- Personally identifiable information such as one's location and/or any identification numbers.
- The sharing of personal content on DCDSB accounts.

5.0 **Requirements** (Cont'd)

Participants post and share content on DCDSB's social media sites at their own disclosure, taking personal responsibility for their comments and posts, images, photos, usernames and any information that can be viewed by the public or by personal contacts.

Consequences for Administrators or Individuals

Social networking actions that do not comply with the Standards of Behaviour or Ontario Schools Code of Conduct are subject to be treated with the same consequences. In addition, the Durham Catholic District School Board reserves the right to:

- Remove unsolicited promotion of products or services;
- Remove posts that are considered spam or advertising;
- Remove posts that are off-topic, inappropriate or disruptive;
- Remove posts that advocate illegal activity;
- Remove posts that promote particular services, products or political organizations;
- Remove posts believed to infringe on copyrights or trademarks;
- Remove posts that violate any DCDSB policies;
- Reprint or quote any post along with the name or username of the individual who posted;
- Ban future posts from users who violate DCDSB's social media policy;
- Implement consequences of behaviour outlined in the Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy, including (but not limited to) detention, suspension or expulsion;
- Modify the social media policy at any time.

Breach of policies and administrative procedures by staff may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

6.0 **Sources**

- Ontario Schools Code of Conduct
- Standards of Behaviour
- Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media
- Ontario College of Teachers Act
- Education Act

7.0 **Related Administrative Procedure**

- Social Media Administration, Monitoring and Reporting (AP441-1)