SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

The goal of these guidelines is to provide, staff, administrators, students, parents and the school district community direction when using social media applications both inside and outside the classroom.

Edmonton Catholic School District (the “District”) realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning. To this aim, the District has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for staff, students and the school district community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not a staff member chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion, it is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that schools can discipline teachers if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. The District social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social activities. It is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by the District staff and students is a reflection on the entire District and is subject to the District's Responsible Use Policy. By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or District use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog wiki and/or podcast.
Online Publishing and Social Media

Personal Responsibility

- All online correspondence between staff and students must be related to coursework, or school sanctioned clubs or activities.
- District staff shall not accept or initiate electronic “friend” invitations from students unless it is directly related to school course work or sanctioned clubs or activities. (This would not include family/relatives of the employee.)
- District staff will not disclose any confidential student information, personal information or images without first obtaining written permission from the principal or supervisor. Posting student information of any kind should comply with FOIP regulations. No student last names, school names, addresses or phone numbers should appear on blogs or wikis.
- Be mindful of your role as an employee of Edmonton Catholic Schools and the fact that as long as you are an employee, your online postings are not only your personal “digital footprint” but they are also part of your footprint as a staff member of Edmonton Catholic Schools. District staff are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of being a District staff member online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work in the District.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face.
- When posting to your blog be sure you say that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the District. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent District's positions, strategies, opinions, or policies."
- Classroom blogs do not require a disclaimer, but teachers are encouraged to moderate content contributed by students.
- Remember that blogs, wikis and podcasts are an extension of your classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom, should be deemed inappropriate online.
- Follow the school’s code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else’s opinions; however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
Copyright

- Respect copyright and be sure not to plagiarize; give credit where it is due. Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. **It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts as your own.** When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.

Profiles and Identity

- Remember your association and responsibility with the District in online social environments. If you identify yourself as a District staff member, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues, parents, and students. How you represent yourself online should be comparable to how you represent yourself in person.
- Be cautious how you setup your profile, bio, avatar, etc.
- When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent yourself make sure you select a school appropriate image.

Personal Use of Social Media such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter

- District staff are personally responsible for all comments/information they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face, and be in accordance with the highest professional Standards.
- By posting your comments having online conversations etc. on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world, be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings what you ‘say’ online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a ‘private conversation’ may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.
- Comments related to the school should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even on the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.
- Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject where possible. This is especially the case where photographs of professional colleagues are concerned.
- Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect on your professionalism.
- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use may be deemed inappropriate. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality, and by that token an extension of your professional life and your classroom. If it
would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall - is it really correct to put it online?

- Microblogging (Twitter etc.) Comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings. Staff should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and again refrain from any comment that could be deemed unprofessional.

Social Bookmarking

- Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark.
- Be aware of words used to tag or describe the bookmark.
- Be aware of URL shortening services. Verify the landing site to which they point before submitting a link as a bookmark. It would be best to utilize the original URL if not constrained by the number of characters as in microblogs -- i.e. Twitter.
- Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as you do not control what appears on landing pages in the future.
Social Media Guidelines for Students

1. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues including wikis, blogs, photo and video sharing sites are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.

2. Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions; however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.

3. Be safe online. Use extreme caution when giving out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your teachers and parents.

4. Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate for a school setting.

5. Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts and pass them off as your own. When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.

6. Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image.

7. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.

8. Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.

9. If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your teacher right away.

10. Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in the project and/or access to future use of online tools.
**Parent Social Media Guidelines**

Classroom blogs and other social media are powerful tools that open up communication between students, parents, and teachers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a huge impact on learning. The District encourages parents to view and participate by adding comments to classroom projects when appropriate.

**Parents should adhere to the following guidelines:**

1. Parents should expect communication from teachers prior to their child’s involvement in projects using online social media applications, i.e., blogs, wikis, podcast, etc.
2. Parents will need to sign a release form for students when teachers set up social media activities for classroom use.
3. Parents will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws.
4. Parents are highly encouraged to read and/or participate in social media projects.
5. Parents should not publish or distribute any information that might be deemed personal about other students participating in the social media project. E.g. posting media of a school field trip or concert that include other students on personal Facebook pages or on YouTube.
6. Parents should not upload or include any information that does not also meet the **Social Media Guidelines for Students**. (see above)
7. Parents are reminded that the first point of contact regarding an area of classroom concern or classroom activity must be the classroom teacher.