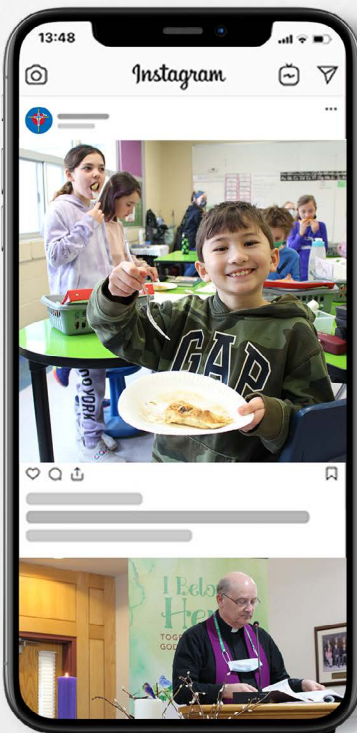


CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL
BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES



Purpose:

These guidelines are intended to help CDSBEO staff understand and navigate their professional boundaries and responsibilities in the appropriate use of electronic communication and social media. This document is based on the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)'s professional advisory: Maintaining Professionalism - Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media and we make use of the important insights highlighted in the advisory to assist our staff.

The CDSBEO Social Media Guidelines apply to all staff with the goal of guiding the use of digital tools in a safe, responsible manner while leveraging social media as a powerful communications tool that can support student achievement, education, school success, parent engagement and learning in our classrooms.

It is hoped that the articulation of these guidelines for staff will also support parents in their own social media practices.

Definition:

For the purpose of these guidelines, electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, messaging or video chat software, websites, apps, email, texting, and blogging. It also includes social media networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.

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Introduction:

Social media creates exciting educational and communication opportunities for educators and school Board staff; however, the scope of the technology also creates potential risks. It is our hope that these guidelines will assist our staff in understanding the distinction between the private and professional use of social media as an employee's off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant in maintaining public confidence.

Electronic communication and social media tools provide opportunities to learn, teach and communicate with students, parents/guardians and to engage with other educators and school communities both within our Board and beyond.

This technology serves a range of purposes from helping students and parents access assignments and resources to connecting with communities all over the world. CDSBEO staff also use the Internet and social networking sites as instructional tools, seeking resources to develop lesson plans and information to enhance their professional practice.

For the public, social media can be a window into our vibrant Catholic school communities and an opportunity for community members to understand and appreciate the innovative learning taking place every day in our classrooms.

These tools provide powerful new ways for employees to collaborate and dialogue with others, expand their professional network and continue their professional learning. Used thoughtfully and appropriately, these technologies offer opportunities to model digital citizenship for students and deliver the curriculum in innovative and engaging ways. However, some of the most popular social media platforms were not created specifically for educational purposes and their use can expose CDSBEO staff to risk when it comes to maintaining professionalism.

While employees should be cautious when communicating electronically and online, this does not mean it must be avoided altogether. Keep interactions professional, as you would in the classroom, and build a positive online presence. Know and respect proper professional boundaries with students, even when students initiate electronic interaction.

Professional vs Private Social Media Conduct:

All CDSBEO staff should treat professional social media space, whether it be electronic communication or social media platforms set up in a classroom, school or through the Board, like a classroom or professional workplace. **The standards we expect from our employees in their professional settings also apply to professional social media accounts.**

There is a distinction between the professional and private lives of our staff members; however, the nature of education means CDSBEO staff hold public positions and are important role models in the communities where they work.

That means off-duty conduct matters and sound judgment and due care must be exercised when posting, commenting or sharing social media content both privately and professionally.

Ontario teachers, for example, must “maintain a sense of professionalism at all times – in their personal and professional lives,” according to the Ontario College of Teachers.



How Social Media Platforms Use Your Data:

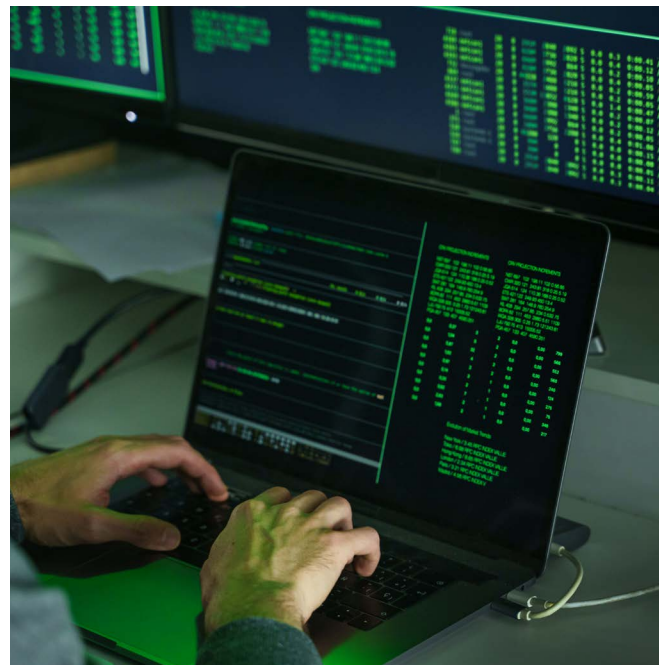
Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and others collect a significant amount of data from their users. This data includes personal information like your **name, age, gender, location, and contact information**, as well as your activity on the platform, such as the posts you like, the pages you follow, and the ads you click on.

This data is then used by social media platforms to serve **targeted advertising**. By analyzing your behavior on the platform, they can create a profile of your interests and preferences, which can be used to show you ads that are more relevant to you. For example, if you frequently search for fitness-related content on Instagram, you may start seeing ads for gym memberships, workout clothes, or protein shakes.

Social media platforms can also share your data with third-party companies, such as advertisers, data brokers, and researchers. These companies can use the data to create targeted advertising campaigns or to conduct market research. In some cases, the data can be used for more nefarious purposes, such as identity theft, fraud, or political manipulation.

Furthermore, social media platforms may also use your data to personalize your experience on the platform. For example, by analyzing your behavior, they can suggest new friends for you to connect with or recommend content that they think you will enjoy.

It is important to note that while social media platforms have taken steps to protect user data, there is still a risk that your information could be exposed. Therefore, it is essential to be cautious about the data you share online and to regularly review your privacy settings to ensure that you are comfortable with how your data is being used.



Guidelines for All CDSBEO Employees

Professional Use of Social Media:

- Exercise responsibility, caution, sound judgement and common sense when using professional social media accounts in the classroom, school or on behalf of the Board.
- Professional social media accounts should be used to enhance classroom learning, promote school initiatives and success and engage positively with parents/guardians and the broader community for which our schools serve. Posts should remain positive and make a link to student achievement and well-being as much as possible.
- Do not post comments or share material that would be inappropriate in the professional setting or would bring disrepute to colleagues, the school, the Board, Catholic education, or the broader education sector.
- When setting up professional social media sites, staff should responsibly consider the intended audience and the appropriate level of privacy.
- Accounts should include language and logos that clearly identify them as professional sites.
- Professional social media communications must comply with CDSBEO policies and applicable laws on the disclosure of confidential information, cyberbullying, student privacy, the use of threatening language and other Safe Schools concerns.
- Notify parents and your school administrator before using social networks for classroom activities.
- Principals must securely maintain the administrative logins for school social media accounts.
- Principals must be aware of and maintain a list of social media accounts connected to their schools.
- Media inquiries received on school accounts should be referred to the CDSBEO Communications Department.

Personal Use of Social Media:

- CDSBEO employees should exercise caution, common sense and professionalism when using personal social media accounts.
- Employees should consider that their personal social media conduct reflects on their professional reputation.
- Staff should never share information with students in any environment that they would not willingly and appropriately share in a school or school-related setting or in the community.

Interaction with Students on Virtual Platforms, Messaging, and Social Platforms

- Model the behaviour you expect to see from your students online.
- Teach students appropriate online behaviour and the proper use of comments and images.
- Maintain professional boundaries by communicating with students and others electronically at appropriate times of the day and through established education platforms and Board email.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses, videos or photos of a personal nature with students.
- Do not issue or accept “friend” or “follow” requests from students. Consider the privacy implications of accepting those requests from parents/guardians.

Understand Privacy Concerns

- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of student information and others in your school community.
- Ensure consent has been given before tweeting or posting any student work, digital pictures or other identifying information on social media or websites.
- Check frequently the privacy and security settings of photos and other content on social media accounts as they may change without your notice. Remember, your privacy on these digital platforms is never guaranteed.
- Use privacy settings for their intended audiences. Limitations to privacy settings exist; however, CDSBEO employees should be aware that social media sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions at any time.

Act Professionally

- Exercise responsibility, caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using social media sites.
- Seek the principal’s approval before creating social media accounts for classes and community groups.
- Cross-collaborate with CDSBEO social media accounts using relevant hashtags (see CDSBEO Brand Guidelines)
- Maintain a reasonable and positive alignment with the mission and strategic priorities of CDSBEO and content shared on social media.

- Maintain your professionalism by using a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with students and parents.
- Avoid online criticism about students, colleagues, your employer or others within the school community.
- Avoid impulsive, inappropriate or heated comments.
- Avoid comments or posts that are critical of government or elected officials.

Pause and ask yourself important questions...

1. When interacting with students, am I using electronic communication and social media to enhance their learning or for personal reasons?
2. What are my reasons for sharing this information with a student? Are they professional or are they personal?
3. Is this picture or comment something I would be comfortable with my students, their parents, my supervisor, my family or the media seeing?
4. Would my peers or supervisors consider what I have posted as reasonable and professional?
5. Would I write this/post this knowing it can never be truly erased and may remain in the public domain indefinitely?
6. Would I communicate this way in my community?
7. Am I keeping current in my awareness and knowledge of social media technology developments to protect myself from misuse?
8. How does my online presence – that which I control and that which is posted by others – reflect my professionalism? How does it reflect on my profession?



Verified Twitter Account Changes:

On April 20th, 2023, Twitter made significant changes to their verified accounts criteria. A verified account means that the user has a blue checkmark beside their name. Previously, accounts were provided the verification checkmark based on authenticity – an account had to be authentic with confirmed identity (ie; an official website), notable (represent a prominently recognized individual or brand), and active (with a record of adherence to Twitter rules).

With the recent changes, Twitter has removed all legacy verification and introduced a paid model whereby users may now obtain a blue verified checkmark through an active premium subscription to Twitter Blue at a cost of \$8/month or \$84/year.

You may notice that the CDSBEO Twitter account no longer has the blue verification checkmark, and we have opted not to subscribe to this service.

Similarly, the Board would not allow users who maintain a professional education account to expense the cost of this subscription.

Resources

[Ontario College of Teachers: Professional Advisory Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media, 2017](#)

[Catholic Curriculum Cooperative: The Ethical and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technology – A Guideline for all Stakeholders in Catholic Education](#)

[Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for World Communications Day, January 24, 2018](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

FOR EMPLOYEES

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