



Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media Guidelines

Board Received: May 28, 2018 Review Date: June 2022

Policy Statement:

The Grand Erie District School Board recognizes that electronic communication and social media are an effective tool to connect and engage with a wide-range of audiences, including colleagues, students, parents, staff and the community.

The Board recognizes the changing nature of technology and continues to work to remain current while providing staff with increased opportunities for the use of new technologies and applications.

Accountability:

1. Frequency of Reports – As needed
2. Criteria for Success – Electronic Communication and Social Media accounts on behalf of the Board, a school, student and/or School Council follow these guidelines

Procedures:

Electronic communication includes social media and other messaging forms that allow users to interact, create, share and communicate information online. Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, messaging or video chat applications, websites, email, texting and blogging. It also includes social media networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snap Chat.

The use of social media is voluntary. Although accounts do not require Board or school approval, students, School Council representatives and staff are required to inform their school principal when creating an account connected to the school (e.g., a club, group, event or activity). Any activity that relates to the operation of the Board and/or the education of students is considered the business of the Board. All staff, students, trustees and stakeholders of the Board, including but not limited to, School Councils, the Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee (GEPIC), and the Student Senate, must take this into consideration when using technology to communicate about the business of the Board.

A personal account for staff, whether the individual identifies their place of work or not, is considered public. Staff must always consider their professional standards of practice when engaging on social media. Board or school personnel may discuss or address an individual's choice of content when that content is inconsistent with this policy and/or contradicts the Board's vision of Success for Every Student.

Each time staff communicate, they shape public opinion about themselves, their profession, their school, the Grand Erie District School Board and public education. Statements such as, "Tweets are my own and do not reflect my employer's views" do not hold true. Staff must use sound judgement and due care when using social media both on and off duty.

Use of Social Media to Support School Initiatives, Events and Activities

Staff, students, or School Council Chairs who administer social media accounts on behalf of a student group, a School Council, or an official school/board group, club, event or activity should abide by the following:

1. Any use of the Grand Erie official logo on social media must follow Bylaw 19 – Use of Board Logo and Grand Erie Name.
2. Social media can be used to promote events – before, during or after-the-fact.
3. Social media can promote public education and can positively impact Grand Erie's reputation.
4. Social media can be used to communicate day-to-day activities as well as emergency situations.
5. Content on a website can be repurposed through social media.
6. Social media can be used to promote meetings, decisions and actions or to highlight achievements or accomplishments.
7. Use social media as a tool for collaboration and two-way communication.
8. Use social media to solicit input or feedback on various topics while ensuring privacy and respect for others.
9. Retweet/share information that promotes student, parent, staff or community engagement, including information you feel is relevant to these groups.

Important considerations when using Social Media

1. Respect others.
2. Maintain confidentiality and privacy.
3. Be clear, factual and accurate. Correct mistakes.
4. Understand your personal responsibility with respect to the content created and/or shared. Ensure that you have permission to share the personal information of others.
5. Consistently monitor and stay current with social media trends and activity.
6. Build community. Try to be positive and add value to the conversation.
7. Understand that nothing is private. The comments and information you share is public and you are responsible for what you say.
8. Avoid political or commercial endorsements.
9. Be mindful when someone is expressing an opinion and when someone is being confrontational.
10. Remain calm when conflict occurs. Take time to respond thoughtfully.
11. Users that post social media content that contravenes the Board's values will be required to remove it.
12. Report inappropriate or unsafe behaviour.
13. All online dialogue and interactions with students must be for educational purposes only.
14. Social media interactions should be professional and reflect the board's character attributes.
15. Be mindful of all equity and inclusivity-related board policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code when posting content.
16. Retweets, likes and favourites are perceived as endorsements. These interactions should be limited and done with care.

Employee Use of Social Media and Electronic Communication

When using social media, employees are expected to:

1. Maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional social media use.
2. Maintain professionalism and good judgement at all times.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Do not follow students on their personal social media accounts.

5. Do not post pictures of students. Obtain permission from any adult whose photo, video footage and/or work is posted on social media, with the exception of photos taken at public events where there is no expectation of privacy.
6. Do not post images or content promoting alcohol, drug or tobacco use, or explicit content on Board, classroom, department and professional accounts.
7. Do not use professional accounts to promote political parties, religion or politics.
8. Refer students to the educational social media account if they become aware of an employee's personal social media account.
9. Review privacy settings to block student access to personal social media.

When the Board finds that a violation of this Policy has occurred, it may result in the imposition of one or more of the following:

1. Administration of the Progressive Discipline process found in Procedure HR119
2. Administration of Bylaw 28 – Trustee Code of Ethics
3. Usage of board computer equipment and applications restricted or removed
4. Disciplinary action up to and including student expulsion;
5. Disciplinary action up to and including employee termination;
6. Civil or criminal proceedings

References:

SO12 – Code of Conduct

Grand Erie's Code of Digital Citizenship

SO27 – Acceptable Use of Information Technology

Ontario College of Teachers – *Professional Advisory: Use of electronic communication and social media*

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario – *Electronic Communication and Social Media: Advice to Members*