



# PROCEDURE

IT-004

## USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

<b>Superintendent Responsible:</b> Superintendent of Education, Information Technology Services	<b>Initial Effective Date:</b> 2018/05/18
<b>Last Updated:</b> 2025/12/19	<b>Next Review Date:</b> 2029/12/19

### Purpose:

To outline parameters by which Grand Erie District School Board (Grand Erie) employee(s), students and community engage in electronic communications and use social media.

### Guiding Principles:

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, blogging and other tools and services that facilitate interactions over the internet. It also includes but is not limited to social media networking platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram, Threads, Bluesky, Reddit, LinkedIn and Snapchat.

The use of social media is voluntary. Individuals who create any accounts connected to Grand Erie; a school (e.g., a club, group, event or activity), students, School Council and/or employee(s) are required to inform their school Administrator(s). Accounts should connect to a Grand Erie email account (@granderie.ca). Any activity that relates to the operation of Grand Erie and/or the education of students is considered the business of Grand Erie. All employee(s), students and collaborative partners of Grand Erie, including but not limited to, School Councils, the Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, Indigenous Education Advisory Committee and Student Senate, will take this into consideration when using technology to communicate about the business of Grand Erie.

Individual educators can have social media accounts to share the good news and activities that are taking place inside classrooms. It is recommended for the account to be private and only allow the parents/caregivers of students in the classroom to follow. Before posting student photos, all media consent must be completed.

A personal account for employee(s), whether the individual identifies their place of work or not, or if not accessible by non-followers, is considered public. Employee(s) must always consider their professional standards of practice when engaging on social media. Grand Erie or school personnel may discuss or address an individual's choice of content when that content is inconsistent with this procedure.

Each time employee(s) communicate, they shape public opinion about themselves, their profession, their school, Grand Erie and public education. Statements such as, "Posts and comments are my own and do not reflect my employer's views" do not hold true. Reposts and likes of other accounts are perceived as endorsements. Employee(s) must use sound judgement and due care when using social media both on and off duty. The use of social media by students and employees must be done safely, responsibly, and professionally.

Authorized Grand Erie social media account holders reserve the right to refuse, block or remove any content in violation of policies and procedures, comments that are deemed to be discriminatory, hateful, abusive, harassing, defamatory, threatening or obscene content, or

advertisements, solicitations, and spam messages, or disclosure of personal or confidential information about Grand Erie, school(s), student(s) and employee(s).

Depending on the severity of the circumstance, Grand Erie reserves the right to block an account or, on a case-by-case basis, disallow comments on a post.

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

Employee(s), students, or School Council Chairs who administer social media accounts on behalf of a student group, a School Council, or an official school/Grand Erie group, club, event or activity should abide by the following:

1. Any use of the Grand Erie official logo on social media must follow the General Governance Policy and Visual Identity Procedure.
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. Social media may be used as a tool for collaboration and two-way communication.
8. Social media may be used to solicit input or feedback on various topics while ensuring privacy and respect for others.
9. Information that promotes student, parent(s)/caregiver(s), employee(s) or community engagement, including information you feel is relevant to these groups may be reposted/shared.

### **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 shared is public and users are responsible for what is posted, commented on and shared.
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 Grand Erie's mission/vision 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 Grand Erie's policy and expectation for professionalism.
15. Be mindful of all equity and inclusivity-related policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code when posting content.

### **All Users of Social Media and Electronic Communication**

When using social media, employee(s) 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 on personal accounts. When posting photos of students on a board-related account, employees must follow Media Consent Guidelines. 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 Grand Erie, classroom, department and professional accounts.
7. Do not use professional accounts to promote political parties, religion or politics.
8. Do not post or comment explicit, hateful, obscene and/or defamatory statements.
9. Refer students to the educational social media account if they become aware of an employee's personal social media account.
10. Review privacy settings to block student access to personal social media.

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

1. Administration of the Progressive Discipline Procedure (HR-119) process
2. Usage of Grand Erie's computer equipment and applications restricted or removed
3. Disciplinary action up to and including student expulsion
4. Disciplinary action up to and including employee(s) termination
5. Civil or criminal proceedings

**Reference(s):**

- Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy (IT-04)
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy (IT-01)
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Procedure (IT-001)
- Code of Conduct Policy (SO-12)
- Code of Conduct Procedure (SO-012)
- Ontario College of Teachers – Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media
- Progressive Discipline Procedure (HR-119)
- Website Requirements Procedure (SO-134)
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- Visual Identity Policy (SO-25)
- Visual Identity Procedure (SO-025)
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