

USE OF ELECTRONIC SOCIAL MEDIA

AG 34.2
2012 11 27

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board (the "Board") to support the safe, equitable, professional and responsible use of electronic social media via the Internet by Board employees and volunteers in a manner that is consistent with our Boards' Mission and Vision Statement, Catholic values, and Ministry guidelines, while recognizing the following:

1. The use of electronic social media is a valuable tool to collaborate with colleagues, parents, and students in order to further and promote educational excellence.
2. Our employees and volunteers serve as role models to our students. As such, this policy applies when individuals are on-duty and off-duty.
3. Parents entrust educators with the education of their children. As such, the use of electronic social media via the Internet has the potential to affect this trust.
4. In providing access to electronic social media outlets via the Board's network, the Board recognizes its limitations in fully controlling access to inappropriate information and interactions. The Board has taken reasonable precautions to restrict access to controversial materials.

The Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board has been utilizing electronic social media (i.e Twitter) to communicate with both Board staff and the general public.

All board employees and volunteers are required to familiarize themselves and adhere to the following procedures to ensure responsible use of electronic social media. Non-compliance with the NPSC Electronic Social Media Policy may result in a revocation of network usage privileges and/or disciplinary or other measures.

DEFINITIONS

Social Media:

For the purposes of this policy, electronic social media encompasses software, applications, RSS feeds (including those running on mobile devices), blogs, wikis, email and websites which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online. Examples include, but are not limited to: Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Blogger, Instant Messaging, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr and LinkedIn.

To Whom Does This Policy Apply

This policy shall apply to all employees and volunteers of the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board who have access to our Board's network.

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ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1. Representing the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

- 1.1. Board employees and volunteers shall require authorization through written permission from a principal or supervisor in order to use electronic social media to speak on behalf of the school, department, or Board as per AG 17.0, NPS-273-98.
- 1.2. Board employees and volunteers shall not make comments electronically using social media that would reflect negatively on the school, department or Board's reputation.
- 1.3. In any situation where the possibility of confusion might exist, Board employees and volunteers engaged in off-duty commentary using electronic social media will explicitly state that they are not representing the views of their school, department, or the Board.

2. Privacy Information Management and Respectful Communication

- 2.1. Board employees and volunteers shall not disclose confidential student, school, department or personnel records without first obtaining all required consents in writing.
- 2.2. Board employees and volunteers will ensure that any online comments respect Catholic values and adhere to the procedures as outlined in the Equity and Inclusive Schools policy. Commentary, content or images that are defamatory, harassing, pornographic, proprietary or that create a negative work environment may result in a revocation of network usage privileges and/or disciplinary or other measures.
- 2.3. Board employees and volunteers shall not use electronic social media to be defamatory towards students, colleagues, or Board programs, policies or procedures.
- 2.4. Board employees and volunteers shall not post material using electronic social media via the Internet that may violate the privacy rights of others, including photographs or videos taken at work or outside of the workplace.
- 2.5. For educational purposes only, Board employees will only use their own name when participating in an online social media group.
- 2.6. Board employees and volunteers may only use the Board network to access social media sites that are related to their duties. Board employees are not permitted to access personal social media sites during school/work hours.

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2.7. Board employees and volunteers shall respect all copyright laws when using electronic social media via the internet on the Board's network. All information posted to social media sites on the Board's network is subject to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

2.8. The Board reserves the right to monitor the use of electronic social media sites on its network by employees and volunteers.

3. Board Employee to Student/Parent/Colleague Online Communication Guidelines (see Appendix A)

3.1. When sending, publishing messages or creating information on the Internet, Board employees and volunteers will observe standards of respectful and professional behavior consistent with the Board's Mission and Vision Statement, its policies, guidelines and those of the school community.

3.2. Principals will inform all teaching staff participating in school or Board approved social media groups with students or colleagues that the ethical standards for the teaching profession apply at all times, including online and in traditional school environments.

3.3. Online communication between Principals, Vice-Principals, teachers and students must be related to promoting learning, course work or school-approved activities.

3.4. Principals may only approve school-based social media groups that include staff members.

3.5. All school-approved social media groups will be consistent with the school code of conduct.

3.6. Board employees and volunteers shall not initiate or accept "friend" invitations from students unless the networking is a part of an educational course or school activity and at least one other staff member has administrative access to the social media group. Exceptions may be approved in writing by the supervisor in exceptional cases.

4. Review of the Policy

4.1. The Board will review the policy with respect to the use of Electronic Social Media as often as is necessary, but at least annually.

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Cross References/Resources/Related Documents:

- Copyright
- Board/Staff Communication AS17 (NPS 273-98)
- Usage of the Board's Computer Network and Internet (AG 34.0 NPS 197)
- Integration of Computers (C-15.0 NPS 5-99)
- OCT Professional Standards
- OCT Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media (February 23, 2011)
- Labour and Employment Legal Alert, Borden Ladner Gervais, July 2011.

Other Board Policies Reviewed/Referenced:

- York Catholic District School Board: Employee Acceptable Use of Information Technology
- Ottawa Catholic District School Board: Electronic Social Media
- District School Board of Niagara: Electronic Social Media



Promoting Responsible Use of Electronic Social Media In Education Guidelines For Board Employees

- ✓ Always maintain your professionalism by communicating with students electronically at appropriate times of the day through established and approved education platforms (ie: LMS system, a collaboration site dedicated to a school project, blogs or wikis).
- ✓ Always maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with students, parents and colleagues to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained.
- ✓ Model the behavior you expect to see online from your students.
- ✓ Do not issue or accept “friend” requests to and from students.
- ✓ Always inform parents/guardians before using social networks for classroom learning activities.
- ✓ Always involve your principal, supervisor and another staff member when communicating with students and/or parents online.
- ✓ Always conduct yourself as a professional online, as you would in the community.
- ✓ Manage and maintain the privacy and security settings of your social media accounts. Check your settings frequently.
- ✓ When communicating on-line, avoid impulsive, inappropriate or heated comments.
- ✓ Always use your true professional identity at all times when communicating with staff, parents or colleagues.
- ✓ Consider whether any posting you create may reflect poorly on you, your school, the board or your profession.
- ✓ Respect the privacy and confidentiality of student information.
- ✓ Ensure you have reviewed the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board’s Electronic Social Media Policy.

(Reference: Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media, Ontario College of Teachers, February 2011).