

Administrative Procedure 146 – Appendix B

Appendix B – SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR USING SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Background

Social media applications provide additional communication tools for the Division and its schools.

It is important to note that the school's website should always be the primary communication, with social media being used as a complementary tool.

Mentioning events, deadlines and school closures on social media is not a substitute for making them available on the school's website, newsletters or hotlines and sending direct communications when necessary.

Guidelines

For Getting Started

1. ATA members shall follow the rules and expectations outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and Teacher Leaders. Non-ATA members shall follow the rules and expectations outlined in BGSD's Administrative Procedures Manual. All staff shall adhere to the *BGSD Responsible Digital Citizenship through Admirable Use Agreement*.
2. Alberta courts have ruled that online posting that reflects negatively on one's employer can be grounds for discipline or termination. As such, staff should use sound judgement and due care when using social media while on and off duty.
3. There is no expectation that all schools have a social media account. These accounts are optional.
4. It is expected that those who use social media accounts will familiarize themselves with the Division's policy, administrative directives, brand standards, and accompanying documents.
5. Consider how the school's communication plans, goals and objectives will be met using a school social media account.
6. Consider implications, risks, and rewards in using social media in general, and become familiar with the social media tool that will be used before using it in an official capacity.
7. Consider a management plan for passwords, monitoring and posting. All social media account passwords should always be changed when someone working on the social channel leaves. Social Media Managers should use best practices regarding passwords.
8. Social Media Managers are to ensure that login credentials for all school-based social media accounts are shared with the Communications Department.
9. Social Media Managers shall stay current with each social media tool's privacy and safety settings. Settings can change without notice, often when platforms are updated, and need to be checked frequently.

For Setting Up a School-Based Account

1. Refer to “Staff Use, Account Administration and Monitoring” in Administrative Procedure 146 - Social Media.
2. All school Social Media Account Managers will be a part of BGSD’s Social Media Working Group. This group will have access to additional guidelines, tools and resources to help use social media tools effectively and follow BGSD policies.
3. The following Terms of Use will be posted on all school social media platforms:

Terms of Use Guidelines for Social Media

While [School Name] aims to engage in open conversation, we also ask that any concerns, ideas, or thoughts are expressed in a respectful, family-friendly manner and are consistent with Black Gold School Division’s **Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, Safe and Healthy Learning and Working Environments Policy 19**. Comments that do not follow the guidelines below will be removed and/or blocked from this page.

Obscene or disrespectful comments or posts will not be allowed. Comments that are abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone or any organization will not be permitted.

We reserve the right to delete any and all comments, especially comments that:

- Are abusive or personal attacks
- Are chain letters, spam or advertising
- Are clearly off-topic or disruptive
- Are unlawful, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, slanderous or embarrassing to any other entity
- Advocate illegal activity
- Promote particular services, products, or political organizations
- Infringe on copyright or trademarks
- Violate any Black Gold School Division policies or procedures

Individuals who do not follow these guidelines will have their posts removed and/or be blocked from this page. **We reserve the right to record evidence of cyberbullying and report it to law enforcement.**

You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username, and any information provided.

Finally, the comments and posts expressed by fans/followers on [School Name] account do not reflect the opinions and/or position of Black Gold School Division, Black Gold Schools or its staff. Therefore, we cannot be held responsible for the accuracy or reliability of information posted by external parties.

For more information about [School Name] and to contact us, please visit our website at [website].

Professional Hours: Official account monitored [insert hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.] If your inquiry falls outside of these hours, we will get back to you as soon as possible when office hours resume.

For Posting

1. ATA members shall follow the rules and expectations outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and Teacher Leaders. Non-ATA members shall follow the rules and expectations outlined in BGSD's Administrative Procedures Manual. All staff shall adhere to the *BGSD Responsible Digital Citizenship through Admirable Use Agreement*.
2. Alberta courts have ruled that online posting that reflects negatively on one's employer can be grounds for discipline or termination. As such, staff should use sound judgement and due care when using social media while on and off duty.
3. Each school account should have a determined content strategy.
4. Determine who will be empowered to respond directly to other users. If you are part of a team, determine protocol for who responds and when.
5. It is recognized as best practice for BGSD and its schools that have social media accounts to post to its social media platforms on a regular basis. However, it is important that posts be substantive and meaningful for their intended audience.
6. On applicable social media applications, settings must allow only social media managers and pre-designated contributors to post content, recognizing that some platforms audience members are still able to contribute via comments, likes, shares, replies, etc.
7. If you choose to use a social media application that does not allow commenting to be turned off, be prepared to accept and respond to comments, both positive and negative.
8. When in doubt, ask. If you are uncertain about how to respond to a comment, what information should or should not be shared, what type of tone or language to use, or even the best way to use a particular social media tool, ask for help from a supervisor or colleague. Please contact the Communications Department if you need assistance in formulating a response.
9. Social Media Managers have a responsibility to report and seek assistance from the Principal if they see something of concern, such as aggressive or hateful comments, bullying or an individual at risk. The school, with guidance from Division Office, is responsible for implementing response and prevention strategies, and if necessary, involving law enforcement.
10. All posts should have an authentic, honest and transparent voice.
11. All posts should be respectful. Social Media Managers should not engage in arguments or post inflammatory comments or statements in response to any negative or derogatory comments about the Division, all Black Gold Schools, its staff or services.
12. Social media should never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues should be dealt with face-to-face or by phone.
13. If Social Media Managers unintentionally post something online that is incorrect, correct it visibly and publicly as soon as possible.
14. Social Media Managers should use social media to drive people back to the school's website: it is the one place where the school can control everything.
15. All posts and content should adhere to Administrative Procedure 153 - Advertising and Distribution of Materials.

- 15.1 The advertising of products or services by a commercial business, organization, or agency is permitted at the discretion of the Principal, if it contributes to the social or educational benefit of students or their families.

16. Recommended content:

- 16.1 Announcements such as inclement weather days, late buses, etc.
- 16.2 Messages already posted to websites, newsletters, etc.
- 16.3 Awards and achievements
- 16.4 Non-identifiable student work; or identifiable student work for which appropriate permissions have been obtained as per provincial legislation and BGSD policy
- 16.5 Notification and reminders of upcoming public events
- 16.6 Promote school goals
- 16.7 Fun facts, tips and how-tos related to school and education
- 16.8 Questions, polls, fill in the blank
- 16.9 Answer questions or clarify misconceptions

17. Content not recommended:

- 17.1 Student record information, or content that would identify students (student work, photographs, etc.) for which appropriate permissions have not been obtained
- 17.2 Disparaging, discriminatory, defamatory, confidential, threatening, libelous, obscene or slanderous comments
- 17.3 Copyrighted information

18. When using Twitter, use a hashtag search engine or a Twitter search to find hashtags related to the topic users wish to Tweet about.

Monitoring and Tools

- 1. Assign at least one Social Media Manager who can regularly monitor postings and update content.
- 2. Social Media Managers must monitor accounts regularly to ensure no inappropriate comments have been posted and to ensure timely response to questions and emerging issues.
- 3. Social Media Managers have a responsibility to report and seek assistance from the Principal if they see something of concern, such as aggressive or hateful comments, bullying or an individual at risk.
- 4. Social Media Managers should report to the Principal immediately if the social media account has been hacked or accessed by someone without permission.

Additional Affiliated Accounts

1. Additional accounts such as department, classroom or instructional accounts are extensions of the school. Staff are not authorized to use or establish these accounts without documented permission of their Principal.
2. Refer to Appendix C - Guidelines for Principals regarding the use or establishment of these accounts.

Reference: Administrative Procedure 153 - Advertising and Distribution of Materials
Aspen View Public School Division Social Media Guidelines for Staff
BGSD Responsible Digital Citizenship Through Admirable Use Agreement
Brock University Social Media Guidelines
Edmonton Catholic Schools Social Media Guidelines for Schools
EIPS Social Media Guidelines
University of Alberta Social Media Guidelines
University of Lethbridge Social Media Guidelines
Wild Rose School Division Social Media Guidelines