Medicine Hat Public School Division
601-1st Avenue SW, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 4Y7 | Phone 403.528.6700 | Fax 403.529.5339 | www.mhpsd.ca

MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATES AS MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION,
AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "MHPSD" AND/OR "DIVISION"

SECTION 500 – Personnel and Employee Relations

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES: SCHOOLS

PROCEDURE CODE:	*530 AP 005*
Policy Reference: 530 – Communications and Technology	

STAKEHOLDERS

1. Internal
   The internal stakeholders for Medicine Hat Public School Divisions' (MHPSD) social media guidelines are the school's social media coordinators (consisting of at least one School administrator), school administration, the Division's communication coordinator, senior administration and the Board of Trustees.
2. External
   External stakeholders include school communities (students and parents/guardians) and the community at large.

OVERVIEW

This document provides the guidelines for social media use for MHPSD schools.

Definition

Social Media refers to a group of Internet-based applications that promote communication among participants. Social media includes blogs, wikis, and other interactive sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

PURPOSE

The Division recognizes the use of social media as a viable medium to engage staff, students, parents/guardians and volunteers for educational purposes. The Division acknowledges the freedom of opinion, discussion and sharing of information that supports interaction that reflect the mission and vision. The Division supports staff and volunteer use of social media to interact in a knowledgeable, respectful, professional, and responsible manner. Approved social media platforms for school use are Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Users will not disclose confidential or personal information as defined by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act without first obtaining consent from the parent/guardian, or the students that are age 18 or over. Consent must be provided in order to post full names, addresses, pictures, videos, and audio recordings that allow the identification of individuals. This includes, but is not limited to blogs, student work, individual and group photographs, videos featuring the student or other identifying information.
    - **Staff:** It is expected that all staff support and promote communications initiatives between schools, home and the community. This includes the use of pictures and names listed on MHPSD websites, social media and in other direct and indirect communications. Any staff member that does not want their picture or name shared publicly is asked to speak with their administrator to withdraw consent.
    - **Volunteers/guests:** There will be instances where photos and videos are taken in classrooms or at non-public MHPSD functions where volunteers or guests are present. Individuals that take photos/videos are required to obtain verbal consent from the volunteer/guest before posting publicly.
    - **Public events:** Schools are permitted to take photos and videos at events where members of the public are invited. Schools are required to inform visitors and guests that photos and videos will be taken at the event and that any individual who does not wish to have their picture posted publicly needs to speak with administration.
2. A work-related email address will be used to create Twitter and Instagram accounts. Facebook requires that a personal user profile/email address is connected to a business page. It is not mandatory for a staff member to use their own personal profile on Facebook, it will be at their discretion.
3. Any social media site/account created and maintained by a school is owned by the Division and managed by school designates. Division resources will not be used to create and maintain social media accounts.
4. The Division and schools will have a minimum of two designates responsible for content management of each social media account. Accounts will be monitored to ensure materials posted are aligned with Division policies/procedures and are updated regularly.
5. Social media designates at each school must be aware of the staff, students and parents/guardians who have not given media consent and cannot be identified on school media channels.
6. Staff and volunteers using social media will comply with copyright laws.
7. A consistent approach to the visual content and messaging is important for an effective online presence. All posts will use “We” rather than “I”. Individuals will use a unified voice and not sign their name to a post.

8. Teacher/staff accounts are permitted when:
   8.1. Account includes the school name in the handle, user or profile name, are private and parental permission is obtained. Images can be shared with approved members (parents/guardians and students from the class, administrators and MHPSD admin).
   8.2. Account is public, and content displayed (since the account was created) is school related. A public teacher account will include the name of the school in the handle, user or profile name.
9. Teacher/staff accounts are not permitted when:
   9.1. Posts on the social media platform are both school related and personal.

PROCEDURES

1. Social media accounts are to be updated regularly to share relevant, credible and timely information.
2. Recommended updates for social media include, but are not limited to: calendar of events for the Division and/or school (i.e. first day of classes, professional development days, school breaks); school activities (i.e. theatre performances, sporting events, academic fairs, school council meetings); items of educational or social interest; links to positive news stories; and good news or celebrations related to schools, students, staff or the Division.
3. It is recommended that comments are reviewed daily within office hours.
4. All posts to social media should accompany quality images or video. Blurry, pixelated, water marked or copyrighted images are not permitted.
5. Details including the time and locations for school excursions are not to be communicated prior to the event for the safety of students.
6. All social posts that include photos, are subject to applicable provincial legislation at all times. No personal information, including student names, location, etc. should be posted on social media without informed consent from students' parents/guardians or from the student if age 18 or over. This includes, but is not limited to blogs, student work, individual and group photographs, videos featuring the student or other identifying information.
7. Confidential information will not be posted; including anything related to legal matters, subjects deemed controversial, Division policy/procedures, contractual matters, details related to emergency or crisis situations.
8. Whenever possible, it is recommended to use accepted linking practices that update social media sites when updating sections of the school websites.
9. The school's Facebook account will include the following disclaimers on its page for purposes of transparency and accountability to stakeholders:
   9.1. Obscene, racial or disrespectful comments, posts and visuals will not be allowed.
   9.2. Comments that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or any organization will not be permitted.

9.3. Message the account privately regarding personnel issues rather than utilizing social media.

9.4. Each school reserves the right to delete comments that are:

- spam
- advertising
- off-topic or disruptive
- advocate illegal activity
- promote particular services, products, or political organizations
- violate Board policies and/or administrative procedures
- any comments and posts that do not reflect the opinions and/or position of the Board.

10. Staff members that are responsible for the administration of social media accounts, on behalf of the school, will endeavour to respond to public requests for information in a timely manner. Staff are encouraged to establish "professional office hours" and share them with students and parents/guardians. Staff are encouraged to use the automated response tool for direct messages to assist in communicating response times.
11. Following hour zero protocol, the information officer will provide the direction and messaging for all external communications in an emergency. Social media will be monitored for questions that may be posed from concerned citizens. While school representatives may be asked to monitor social media, only the information officer or delegate will post responses to online comments in an efficient and effective manner.
12. A post or discussion may be removed at the discretion of MHPSD administration with an acknowledgment noted of why the retraction was necessary. If possible, an individual response is preferred.
13. Schools will provide the login information and passwords for Instagram and Twitter, along with the designated staff member(s) associated with all social media pages and sites to the Division's communications coordinator. The communications coordinator will be added as an administrator on the school Facebook page and provided with the highest level of access.
14. All accounts will be used in a responsible, ethical and legal manner, appropriate to an educational setting and follow the policies and admin procedures set by the Board.
15. Grievances are not to be published to social media.

REFERENCES

Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Approved: December 4, 2017
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