

# USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

## Background

The procedures have been updated to align with the Ministry of Education Order #14/2024, which establishes provincial standards for using social media in educational settings. The Division recognizes the importance of maintaining clear and professional boundaries in the use of social media. As such, social media platforms are strictly prohibited from being used to engage directly with PRSD students. The use of social media is reserved exclusively for the Superintendent, school administrators, or their designated delegates and is intended solely for the purposes of community communication and engagement.

Research has increasingly highlighted the potential downsides of social media in school environments, including distractions from learning, increased anxiety, and exposure to inappropriate content. These findings reinforce the Division's commitment to ensuring that social media is used responsibly and only for purposes that benefit the broader school community. By restricting social media use to official channels, we aim to protect students while fostering a focused and secure learning environment.

## Definition

*Social media* refers to user communities or sites where users interact with each other, post messages and pictures, and otherwise communicate with groups of people.

## Procedures

### 1. Social Media During School Hours

- 1.1 Social media sites will be blocked on all PRSD networks from Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM.
- 1.2 Exceptions can be made for specific staff computers requiring social media access for community communication and engagement. Such exceptions can be requested through the Technology Services helpdesk and will require approval from the Director of Technology Services.
- 1.3 If a site is misclassified as blocked or not blocked, please submit a request to the Technology Services helpdesk for review.
- 1.4 If a student or staff member has a personal device with a data plan or access to a non-PRSD Internet service, they can bypass PRSD Internet filters to access social media during the school day. Any use of social media on a personal device by unauthorized individuals during the school day in any school setting will be treated as a breach of this administrative procedure.

## 2. Staff-Student Online Interactions

2.1 There is to be no correspondence between staff and students on social media platforms.

2.2 Division staff shall not initiate or accept “friend,” “follow,” or similar student invitations.

## 3. Interactions Representing the Division

3.1 Unless the Superintendent or delegate approves, a user is not authorized to use social media sites to represent a school, School Council executive, department, or Division.

3.2 In cases where a user has sought permission to represent a school, School Council, department, or Division, the user must identify themselves by name and as an employee of the Division or School Council executive.

3.2.1 The signature “Peace River School Division” and/or the Division logo needs to appear in the banner for blogs, etc., or in the profile page for social media sites like Twitter.

3.2.2 Access and permission to use the Division’s logo can be granted by emailing the Division Communications Coordinator.

3.2.3 School logos will only be used by first obtaining written permission from the principal or supervisor.

3.3 Any use of media by a user must be consistent with the duty of loyalty each user owes to the Division and must not transgress any law or civil duty of care owed to the Division or any other person. Breach of this requirement will be considered to be conduct that is subject to action by the Division and the Division will take such action as it considers is warranted.

## 4. Respect, Privacy, and Confidential Information

4.1 Users will not disclose confidential student information, images, or confidential school, department, or personnel records.

4.2 Users will not use social media sites to be defamatory or harassing towards any person and will not espouse or support any position, opinion, or statement that is contrary to Board policies and Division administrative procedures.

4.3 Users will not engage in behavior or comments that would reflect negatively on a school or the Division’s reputation or the reputation of any person employed with or holding elected office with the Division.

4.4 Users may be disciplined if their social media comments and postings, whether personal or school/Division related, are not in compliance with this procedure or any other policies or procedures of the Division.

4.5 Users participating in social media activities will respect copyright laws, not only in relation to the content produced on the social media sites, but also in relation to the software that enables them to operate.

- 4.6 Users participating in social media activities acknowledge that all information posted to sites is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) if that information falls within the ambit of the information protected by and governed by FOIP.

## 5. Social Media Accounts

- 5.1 Schools, School Councils, departments, or individual staff wanting to create a social media account on behalf of the school/School Council/fundraising arm of the School Council must request that a social media page be established under the Division's corporate account.
- 5.2 All accounts can be set up through a formal written request to the Superintendent or delegate.
- 5.3 As a condition of such pages, the Principal or Assistant Principal must be one (1) of the two (2) administrators of the account who holds the responsibility to manage the page, including removing defamatory or inappropriate remarks.

Adopted/Revised: JUN 2016/NOV 2019/AUG 2024

Reference: Section 31, 33, 52, 53, 68, 196, 204, 222, 205 Education Act  
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
Personal Information Protection Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Canadian Criminal Code  
Copyright Act  
ATA Code of Professional Conduct  
Teaching Profession Act