



Policy: Employee Social Media Policy

Policy Number: GL

Policy Type: Personnel

Background:

Digital communication and social media create new opportunities for extending and enhancing education. Social media can support instructional practice, and assist in developing professional learning networks. Hanover School Division supports the use of social media to interact knowledgeably and responsibly for these stated purposes, with the expectation that employees will maintain professional boundaries at all times.

The Employee Social Media Policy governs the publication of, and commentary on social media by employees of Hanover School Division (“HSD”). This policy and the requisite procedures, provide guidance and direction for the appropriate use of social media - in alignment with HSD policies. The terms as defined, seek to ensure appropriate use and to mitigate exposure to risk, for employees and the Division. HSD employees are free to publish or comment on social media in accordance with this policy.

Definitions

- a) **Social Media** refers to a diverse set of online tools that enable people and organizations to communicate/share information and resources, over the Internet and wireless networks (e.g. instant messaging, mobile apps, software applications, online communities, and websites). Social media also refers to freely accessible online tools used to produce, post and interact using text, images, video and audio to communicate, share, collaborate, or network.
- b) **Professional-Use** refers to an employee’s use of social media to advance a program or function of the Hanover School Division as part of an employee’s job responsibilities or to engage in professional development specific to their function as an employee.
- c) **Personal-Use** refers to an employee’s use of social media for purposes unrelated to their employment. A user must not identify their relationship with Hanover School Division in any area of their Personal Use account, including but not limited to their personal profile or messages that imply employment or connection with HSD.
- d) **Blended Account** refers to one account that combines Personal-Use and Professional Use media. Any Blended Account that refers to Hanover School Division in any way or form, will be considered and treated as a Professional-Use account.

Policy

Any use of social media related to work or school that involves students and/or Hanover School Division employees is deemed professional-use, and therefore professional codes of conduct including all pertinent HSD policies and procedures must be followed. Use of social media for professional purposes is an extension of the workplace.

Hanover School Division takes no position on employees’ decision to participate in the use of social media for personal use, on personal time. Although this policy does not govern such personal use, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that teachers’ off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant to their suitability to teach. Statements like “*Tweets are my own and don’t reflect my employer’s views*” don’t hold true for educators. As such, employees should use sound judgment and due care when using social media while on and off-duty.

- 1) Employees are encouraged to maintain a clear distinction between their professional and personal social media use, and therefore should create separate accounts for these purposes. Maintaining professional boundaries on social media is critical to sustaining public trust and ensuring relationships with students remain professional. Although not prohibited, HSD advises against the use of a blended social media account (combination of personal life and function of work).
- 2) Employees are permitted to create social media accounts for classrooms, departments, and events without obtaining prior permission. HSD retains the right to restrict, limit, or prohibit such accounts. School and/or employee contact information should be used during account setup.
- 3) Employees are not authorized to create social media accounts that serve as “official” accounts of a school or the Division, unless approved by either the Principal, Superintendent, or designate.
- 4) Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the Division or post comments as a representative of the Division, except as authorized by the Superintendent. HSD or School logos are not to be used on social media accounts unless appropriate permission has been granted.
- 5) Be mindful of all equity and inclusivity-related board policies when posting content, including the Manitoba Human Rights Code.
- 6) Do not disclose information that is protected by privacy laws, confidential, or proprietary to the Division, its students, or employees. Follow all copyright laws and fair use guidelines for electronic content.
- 7) Maintain professionalism at all times. Model an appropriate online presence and exercise good judgment to ensure that postings do not reflect negatively on your professional reputation or that of the school division.
- 8) Do not use obscene, profane or vulgar language or engage in communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libelous, or defamatory.
- 9) Do not post images or content promoting alcohol, drug or tobacco use, or explicit content.
- 10) On professional use or blended accounts, do not promote personal beliefs, religion, or political parties. Be aware that re-tweeting, liking, or pinning, may be perceived as endorsements.
- 11) In all instances and without exception, social media interactions with students should reflect an educational purpose. Never share information with students online that would not be appropriate to share in a classroom, or school/community setting.
- 12) Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses (non-HSD), or photos of a personal nature with students.
- 13) Parent/Guardian consent is required to include student names, photos, videos, or their works on social media. If consent has not been provided, those students must be fully excluded. Verification of parental permission must be obtained through PowerSchool records on file. When publishing, only the first names of students may be used.
- 14) Employee consent is required from an employee prior to posting their identifiable images on social media. Consent is not required for images that are taken of employees at public events (i.e. sporting events, meetings, concerts), where there is no expectation of privacy.

- 15) Employees are solely responsible to manage their professional-use accounts, which includes user access, publishing rights, and content management. Employees are held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, information that violates the privacy rights, or other rights, of a third party.
- 16) Publishing on social media is a public record. Employees should have no expectation of privacy in any circumstances.
- 17) HSD may view and monitor an employee’s public social media presence at any time without consent or previous approval. If found in a policy violation, employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause.
- 18) HSD assumes no liability for any direct or indirect damages arising from employees’ use of social media. The Division is not responsible for the accuracy of information found on the Internet and only facilitates access and dissemination of information through its systems.

For specific Guidelines and application of this policy, refer to Hanover School Division’s Administrative Procedure P - GE - 111.

Use of Social Media procedure.

Date Policy Created	June 8, 2018
Date of last Review:	June 30, 2022
Reference(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Educational Administration Act (C.C.S.M.C. E10) Part V:28 (3) ● Public Schools Act ● The Defamation Act (RSM 1987, c D20) ● The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (SM 1997, c.50) ● The Manitoba Human Rights Code (SM 1987-88, c.45) ● The Privacy Act (RSM 1987, c. P130) ● The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act (SM 2016, c.17) ● School Administration Handbook Procedure P-GLA Use of Social Media
Related Forms:	