

## **Appendix I – Social Media Guidelines for Staff**

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Medicine Hat Catholic Schools recognizes that employees may maintain personal blogs or websites, and/or contribute posts to personal blogs or personal websites or web pages of others, and/or participate in social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and TikTok. MHCBE encourages the use of social media. When used properly, it is an excellent tool for professional development and two-way communication.

Medicine Hat Catholic Schools recognizes that the use of social media is optional and that some staff members use social media to support their instructional practice and develop professional learning networks. These guidelines are intended to help staff use social media safely, responsibly and successfully.

Employees who participate in social media must abide at all times with all legal requirements, including compliance with all privacy and information laws. Employees must follow the following guidelines:

1. Board authorization is not required for staff to open a personal social media account. If you plan to use social media for instructional purposes (e.g. classroom Twitter account, Instagram account or blog), please inform your principal of your intended use.
2. Classroom social media accounts are seen as extensions of the school and must reflect the mission, vision and values of the Division. If a concern is raised about a classroom account, the principal will address any activity that may negatively impact the school, staff and students.
3. If you have a personal presence on social media, use the highest level of privacy tools available to control access to your personal activity. However, even with these privacy settings, recognize that these tools could be hacked, resulting in private posts being made public. In addition, social media sites can change their privacy policies and standards at any time, putting private posts in the public domain.
4. MHCBE strongly advises against the use of blended personal and professional social media accounts.
5. Do not disclose student record information on personal social media sites, including student work, photographs of students, or any other personally identifiable information about students.
6. Do not make or post disparaging, discriminatory, defamatory, confidential, threatening, libelous, obscene or slanderous comments about MHCBE, its employees, students, or school community members.
7. Do not post copyrighted information.
8. Do not use MHCBE or school logos or email addresses on personal social media sites.
9. Ensure that your profile and related content (even if it is of a personal and not an official nature) is consistent with how you wish to present yourself as a professional, appropriate with the public trust associated with your position. The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks.
  - 9.1 Do not use racial slurs, profanity, personal insults, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in your workplace.
  - 9.2 Do not post inappropriate photos or information of yourself online.

- 9.3 Do not choose an inappropriate avatar.
  - 9.4 Do not link to inappropriate content.
  - 9.5 Keep your posts positive and do not engage in negative or critical conversations online.  
There is no DELETE button. Do not react instantly to a negative comment. Always take the high road and re-direct to a personal telephone conversation.
  - 9.6 Retweets, likes and favorites are perceived as endorsements. These interactions should be done with care.
  - 9.7 Set your privacy settings so that you are notified if you are tagged or mentioned in photos or posts. Remove tags that may reflect negatively on you.
  - 9.8 MHCBE employees may choose to include disclaimers on their personal blogs that their views are their own and don't reflect the position of Medicine Hat Catholic Schools; however, such disclaimers do not remove or lessen the requirement of MHCBE employees to follow the guidelines included here in.
10. Communication with Students through Social Media
    - 10.1 MHCBE employees have the responsibility of maintaining an appropriate employee-student relationship at all times.
    - 10.2 MHCBE employees should not communicate privately with students via social media websites, or private email. Employees should not text message students without prior permission from their supervisor.
    - 10.3 If a student contacts an employee, the employee should not respond online. The employee could speak to the student the next school day and suggest other methods of communication.
    - 10.4 If a student continues to contact the employee, the employee must share the information with the school administrator or supervisor.
    - 10.5 Do not issue or accept student friend requests or follow individual students on social media. Staff should decline students' friend requests on social media.
    - 10.6 If you have a classroom account where you share important curricular information with students, students may follow your account. For the purposes of learning, you do not need to follow them back. Instead, you can encourage students to use tools, like hashtags, so that you can follow their online conversations. These can be linked to a specific area of study.
    - 10.7 There are concerns about personal duty of care in terms of monitoring social media when a student identifies that he or she is in crisis. All of the expectations and duties of educators apply with respect to conduct, responding to a child in need of protection or in crisis, as well as policies and procedures generally, and specifically regarding bullying, or activities that would be actionable through progressive discipline.

