

HWDSB Social Media Guidelines

Social Media Guidelines are intended to help all staff and those representing accounts affiliated with HWDSB use social media responsibly and successfully. If you have any questions, please contact the Communications and Community Engagement department at communications@hwdsb.on.ca.

General

HWDSB values social media as an effective tool to communicate, connect and engage with students, parents, staff and the community. Social media fosters engaging, two-way conversations that meet our communities where they are today. Also, individual social media accounts contribute to the collective narrative of HWDSB and tells its stories to the community.

Posts must be respectful and in accordance with principles of Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion. How a user conducts themselves online is a reflection of how we represent the values of the HWDSB.

The comments and posts expressed by followers on our social media pages do not necessarily reflect the opinions and/or position of the HWDSB or its employees. Individuals who do not follow the guidelines below will have their posts removed, and/or be blocked from the sites. Examples include:

- Obscene, racial 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.

Staff or representatives of HWDSB reserve the right to delete comments that:

- are spam or advertising
- advocate illegal activity
- promote particular services, products or political organizations
- infringe on copyrights or trademarks
- violate any HWDSB policies

Any violation of the following guidelines by staff or students may result in disciplinary action in accordance with HWDSB's [Code of Conduct Policy](#), applicable collective agreements, and provincial laws and regulations. HWDSB's Code of Conduct reinforces a positive school climate that promotes responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in the civic life (physical and digital) of the school community.

Social Media Users

A user of social media on behalf of a HWDSB should always consider themselves as an ambassador of the organization. The user should always take responsibility for their comments when there is a concern.

A personal account for staff or a user on behalf of an HWDSB social media account, whether the individual identifies their place of work or not, is considered public.

The use of social media is voluntary.

Staff must always consider their professional standards of practice. Board or school personnel may address an individual's choice of content that contradicts the Board's missions, vision and values. Everyone should refer to the Digital Citizenship below for online conduct and behaviour.

Resources:

- Professional Advisory (Ontario College of Teachers): [Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#)
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: [Practicing Caution: Guidelines for Electronic Communications](#)

Social Media Accounts

HWDSB's official accounts are Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. A social media account administered on behalf of HWDSB may be on a platform other than the school board's official accounts (Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, etc.).

Please note that as of March 10, 2023, TikTok is not an acceptable social media account to be used due to privacy concerns and has been blocked from all HWDSB devices.

Twitter: Twitter is a social media site, and its primary purpose is to connect people and allow people to share their thoughts with a big audience. Twitter launched in 2006 and is undoubtedly one of the most popular social media platforms available today, with 100 million daily active users and 500 million tweets sent daily. Twitter allows users to discover stories regarding today's biggest news and events, follow people or companies that post content they enjoy consuming or communicate with friends.

Facebook: Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person.

Instagram: Instagram is a social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from a smartphone. It is like a simplified version of Facebook, with an emphasis on mobile use and visual sharing. Similar to other social media platforms, a user can interact with other users by following them, being followed by them, commenting, liking, tagging, and private messaging.

Platform Guidelines/Standards

Social media platforms also have their own community guidelines/standards put in place. These rules and policies support user voice and aim to promote safe and accepting environments. Fellow users and the platforms themselves reserve the right to report/flag any post or comment that does not adhere to these guidelines/standards. Examples of unwanted content includes violence, harassment, hate speech, adult content, and more. Overstepping these boundaries may result in deleted content, disabled accounts, or other restrictions.

While many of these rules and policies are shared by HWDSB, it is important to understand the types of content that is prohibited by these platforms. Here is a list of community guidelines/standards for the social media platforms where HWDSB operates:

- [Facebook Community Standards](#)

- [The Twitter Rules](#)
- [Instagram Community Guidelines](#)

Social Media Start-Up

Before you choose a social media site, ask yourself a few questions:

- Who am I trying to reach?
- What social media tools do they prefer?
- Does this fit with my available time/expertise?

Before you create an account:

- Social media accounts operated by students do require consent from their teacher supervisor or school principal to set up a new account. Accounts operated on behalf of an HWDSB system program do require consultation with the superintendent responsible and in consultation with Communications and Community Engagement team
- Social media accounts operated by a School Council member do not require school consent; however, parent users should inform their principal when creating an account

Naming Conventions

Social media accounts should be linked to the generic school email account, with the school administrator or staff designate serving as the page administrator. All social media accounts should use the following naming conventions:

Account Type	Account Name	Account Branding
School	@schoolname_HWDSB	School logo, edited website banner
Classroom	@classname_schoolname @Room numbers at elementary @Subject area at secondary	Learning related & professional (classroom door, photo, etc.) Not school logo.
Program	Examples: @HWDSB_WeHelp or @HWDSBLearning	The HWDSB acronym should appear on the graphic icon. A line or special separation can divide the program name and the Board name
Sport, club or activity	@activity_schoolname	Design of sportsteam, club, or activity. Not school logo. Identify school name and HWDSB in the bio section
Professional	@yourname	Professional images of your choice Include HWDSB in your bio section
Personal	No mention of school, school activity, or work	No images related to school or work Personal accounts are subject to HWDSB's Code of Conduct.
School Council	@schoolnameCouncil (School name can be shortform for Twitter/Instagram, full name for Facebook)	Contact creative@hwdsb.on.ca to request school logo and School Council banner

Graphic Design Support

Initial graphic support will be provided to users of social media such as banners and logos. Only the HWDSB accounts can have the official HWDSB logo. Contact Communications & Community Engagement at communications@hwdsb.on.ca.

Sharing Suggestions

With your account set up, it's time to show your community what life is like in your school, classroom or profession. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Share a weekly heads-up about events
- Share your school calendar, promote events (before, live or after-the-fact)
- Link to positive stories
- Post photos of events
- Congratulate students and staff
- Promote public education and reflect well on the HWDSB community
- Communicate during emergency situations (Communications & Community Engagement can help)
- Plan tweets ahead of time, i.e., consider timely themes (holidays, exam time, registration)
- Repurpose content that is added to websites
- Promote meetings, decisions, actions and highlights
- Use social media as a tool for collaboration
- Solicit feedback on various topics
- Retweet/share information that promotes student, parent staff or community engagement

Reminders When Using Social Media

Considerations and best practices for students, School Council chairs and staff who administer social media accounts on behalf of a student group, a School Council, or an official school/board site are outlined below:

- Maintain a sense of professionalism and use good judgement at all times.
- Communicate with students and/or parents/guardians to inspire, educate, and engage.
- Never share information online that would not be appropriate to share in a classroom, meeting room or community setting. What is inappropriate for the classroom or office is also inappropriate on social media.
- Keep posts positive and do not engage in negative or critical conversations online.
- Retweets, Likes and Favourites are perceived as endorsements. These interactions should be done with care.
- Be transparent and authentic. Use your identity at all times.
- Always respect the privacy and confidentiality of student and staff information.
- Familiarize yourself with the privacy settings of each social media tool you are using.
- If posting the work of others, make sure to attribute the work, as per copyright legislation.

Privacy and Consent

Personal information includes more than somebody's name. It can be their image or a video of them, their work, something they created, or facts about them such as their grade, age or birthdate. Upholding each other's privacy rights means that we support adults and children to be in control of their own personal information.

One way we do this is through the Media Consent Agreement that gives parents/guardians the choice to permit schools to disclose student personal information beyond the school and board such as in classroom blogs, on social media and websites, in school newsletters or through classroom web apps. If parents/guardians have not provided consent on the Media Consent Agreement then schools cannot share student personal information in ways that make it publicly available or discoverable on the World Wide Web.

Because digital information, once it leaves the school or board, is out of the control of the individuals to whom it belongs, it is our duty as caretakers of student, staff and parent personal information to do what we can to reduce those disclosures. We can do this by finding creative ways to share achievements, events, and learning on social media that doesn't identify people. Asking students and adults if it is okay to post their information (e.g., a photo of them, a video, their work, some news about them) online is one way we can uphold their right to control their personal information.

HWDSB account users, including staff and personal accounts, should respect the privacy of individuals before posting their information (e.g., image, video, work, etc.) online.

- For individuals 18 years and older, please ask them if their information can be shared.
- For individuals 17 years and younger, school staff must ensure parents/guardians have provided media consent at the start of the school year and they should always ask the student, even if there is media consent, if they are okay with the disclosure.
- Student users should work with their teacher supervisor to determine if a peer has consent.
- School Council users should always seek verbal consent from a parent or guardian.

Avoid posting information about school field trips or off-site extra-curricular activities prior to the event as this can compromise student safety. Vague posts that do not include the time or exact location of the excursion are always safer, e.g. "Grade 10 Geography trip May 11"

HWDSB accounts assume consent has been obtained by the original user.

Staff in Communications and Community Engagement may share, repost or create an original post from your source material. When you post something online, we assume you've done everything you can to uphold individuals' right to privacy and control of their own personal information.

What happens when someone shares an image without consent? The individual has the right to ask for that content to be removed. This could be considered a breach and staff should involve the Privacy Office.

The Privacy Office is always here to help with any questions or situations you wish to discuss.
privacy@hwdsb.on.ca

Conflict Resolution

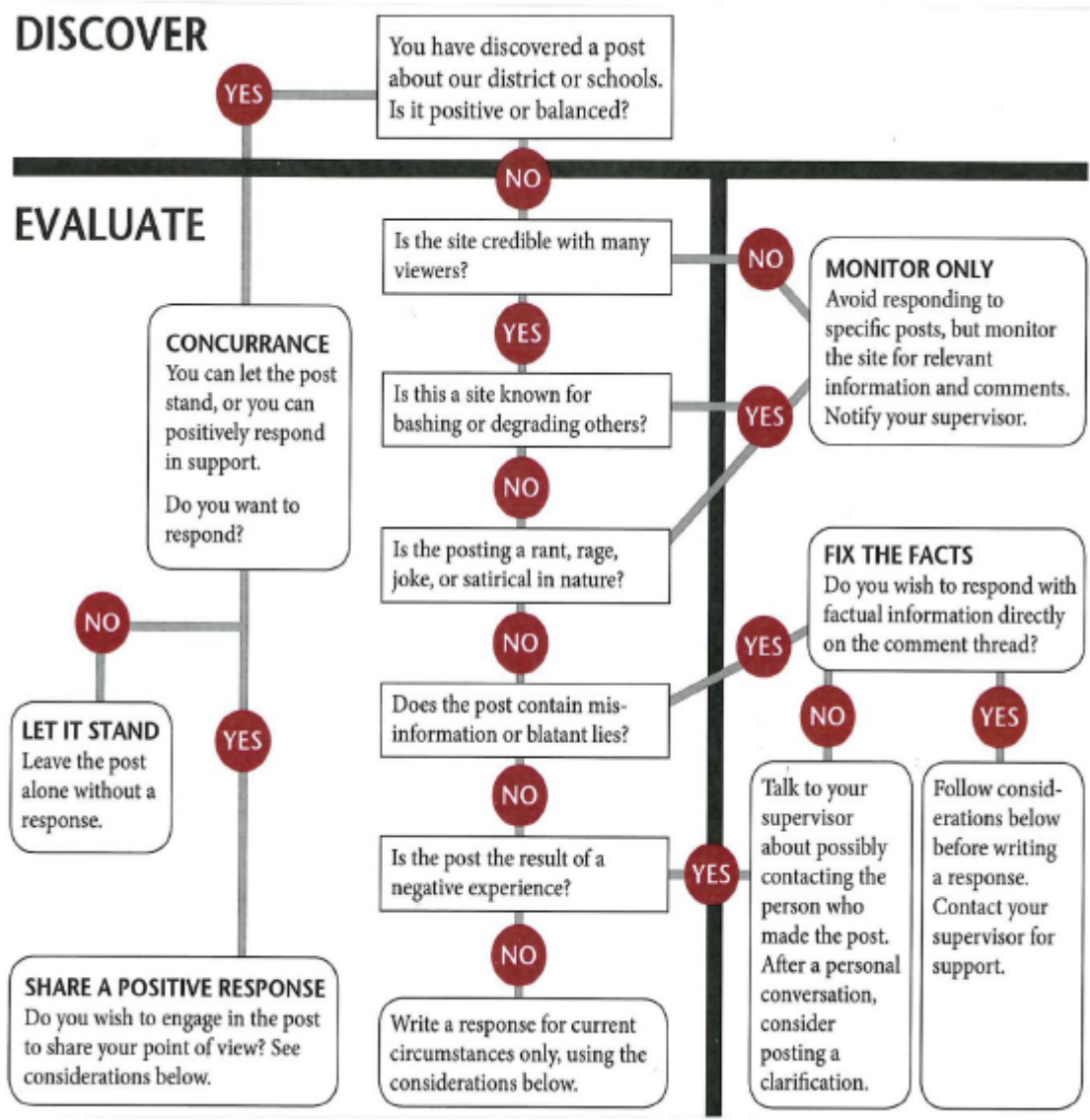
Social media is a platform that curates opinions and perspectives. Users of social media may find themselves in a situation where conflict arises. The goal on social media is to be responsive.

Seeing negative or false comments about our schools can be frustrating, but responding with another comment is not always the answer. Follow this guide to decide what to do next to best represent our schools and board.

Sometimes no response is an effective response. Know who the person is who is sharing concern or conflict. Social media inquiries from individuals rather than anonymous accounts should be prioritized in terms of a response.

Here are some conflict resolution strategies to consider:

1. **Respond:** Build trust. Even if the person engaging cannot be satisfied show care, attentiveness, and kindness. See chart to support response.
2. **Get off the Public Newsfeed:** Ask the social media user to direct message (DM) you to get the conversation away from public viewing. If the inquiry can not be managed in this space, move to the next strategy.
3. **Get offline:** If DM does not work, offer them to send you an email or direct them to [Addressing Concerns at HWDSB](#).
4. **Have a conversation:** Conflict is best resolved with parties closest to the source. Direct contact with the individuals to mediate the conflict is preferred. Users can always contact an Administrator for support.
5. **Issues management:** Contact Communications and Community Engagement at communications@hwdsb.on.ca for support when conflict turns into an issues response.



Leadership and Social Media

Social media is one strategy to build and maintain goodwill, promote events, recruit and recognize others, and gather feedback on key issues. Social media also provides a glimpse into the HWDSB culture and showcases achievement and learning for the community. Engaging students and families, and developing thoughtful, responsible, and digital citizens. Here are some connections to leadership on social media:

- Model and lead by example
- Create a culture of recognition
- Be inclusive
- Empower others to be positive
- Communicate effectively
- Show honesty and integrity
- Remember that people matter most

Social Activism

HWDSB believes in raising the voices of those who experience social injustice as well as those who advocate for change locally and globally. Staff are encouraged to communicate activism in a professional and positive manner. Students representing school groups, councils, activities or clubs can participate in peaceful discourse online with the supervision of the teacher in charge of that program. School Council users can seek guidance from the school principal, contact the co-chairs of the Parent Involvement Committee or reach out to their local trustee on advice related to an issue.

Wellness and Social Media

Social media should be a positive experience. At times, however, the content consumed (such as current events or distressing news) can impact one's wellness depending on the content that a user monitors. Set boundaries and use do not disturb settings on your accounts. Ensure that someone has access to your password in the event of an emergency.

- Foster positive relationships online
- Support and encourage others for the purpose of motivation
- Take conversations offline and in private to avoid public conflict

Disclaimers

A disclaimer can promote wellness on social media, especially for accounts representing a group, activity, club or school. This can be posted on the school or board website linked to the social media account. The following points may be considered:

- Statement or purpose for social media account (i.e. two-way communication, value ideas and opinions)
- Reinforce principles of equity and inclusion
- Acknowledge the account is not monitored 24/7
- Encourage support (i.e. If you are a student in crisis, please call 911, HWDSB Helps or visit www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- Contact information for the user

We Help Online

When a user is online, we may see people post information that makes us worry that they are struggling with their mental health. If someone posts something online that makes you worried that they may be unsafe or in need of support, contact someone who can get immediate help. Signs can look like:

- Saying goodbye to everyone, saying they are feeling hopeless, depressed.
- Posting quotes or pictures which reflect feelings that they are not hopeful about life.
- Pictures of self-injury or self-harm, medication, or objects which could be used to harm self or others, including knives or guns.
- Posting comments or threats about wanting to cause harm to people or places.
- Contact a school administrator to access social work supports.

Learn more: www.hwdsb.on.ca/wehelp

Digital Citizenship

Online spaces provide people with positive opportunities to assume new roles, obtain needed support, learn new skills, and collaborate with others. At the same time, opportunities to participate in harmful or counterproductive ways abound online, such as through hate speech, grieving, trolling, cyberbullying, and other forms of misconduct that can harm both individuals and whole communities.

We are committed to preparing our students for success through the development of 21st century competencies. We believe all students and staff should have equitable access to learning opportunities and environments that are engaging, authentic, relevant, and connected to local and global issues. We support this learning through the ethical, competent, and responsible use of digital tools, applications and platforms.

We ask all our students and staff to be respectful when connected. THINK FIRST

Identity...

- I keep my passwords complex, private and secure
- I don't share personal information about myself or others
- I represent myself positively online because it lasts forever

Purpose...

- I use digital tools to learn and show my learning
- I don't use my device as a distraction from learning
- I follow teacher instructions and advocate for my learning needs

Respect...

- I ask permission and give credit when using others' work
- I ask permission before taking photos/videos of others
- I communicate with respect and empathy and stand up to cyberbullying

Organization...

- I have a charged device when I need it
- I keep the case/cover on when not in use
- I treat my device with respect

Learn more: [Digital Citizenship at HWDSB](#)

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