



Arthur Phillip High School

Social Media Policy

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Preamble

“Today’s social media tools are incredibly powerful communication vehicles that allow organizations to connect and engage with many different audiences. With more than seven million users, Twitter is growing at an annual rate of 1,382 percent, Facebook boasts over 250 million active members, and aspiring writers have started more than 133 million blogs.

“While the wild popularity of these apps has opened up a world of opportunity for developing brands and building communities, the social and extremely public nature of these services also brings potential hazards. That’s why organizations are developing policies on the use of social media for staff and users alike.” (School Library Journal: <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6699104.html>)

Social Media Definitions

Social Media is a group of online applications that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content.

Conversations in social media are a dialogue, an opportunity to listen, share, collaborate and respond to our communities. Social Media includes websites that incorporate one or more of the following:

- **Blogs:** Web logs or journals where authors and users can post textual, audio, or video content, and where some permit others to post comments on their blogs. Some websites enable individuals to create free standing blogs, other special interest websites use blog tools and message forums to engage users.
- **Microblogs:** Websites and spaces that allow users to post short blog entries. Twitter is an example, as well as other sites that invite users to post short status and location updates such as Facebook and Foursquare.
- **Social networks:** Websites where users can create customised profiles and form connections with other users based on shared characteristics and interests. Websites such as Facebook and MySpace tend to foster personal social contact among “friends”, while websites such as LinkedIn are oriented toward professional networking.
- **Media sharing:** Websites where users post and share videos, audio files and/or photos as well as tag them to enable searchability. Examples include YouTube, Flickr, Picasa, and Google Video.
- **Wikis:** Resources or documents edited collaboratively by a community of users with varying levels of editorial control by the website publisher. Wikipedia is an example.
- **Virtual worlds:** Web or software-based platforms that allow users to create avatars or representations of themselves, and through these avatars to meet, socialize and transact with other users. Second Life and other virtual worlds are used for social purposes and e-commerce, non-profit fundraising, and videoconferencing.
- **Podcasts:** Audio or video that can be broadcast to a device; any software and hardware application onto which you can download audio files will work just as well. Podcasting is similar to a radio broadcast but the files are available for downloading from a website.
- **Skype:** A voice-over-Internet Protocol (VOIP) service and has been owned by Microsoft since 2011. The service allows users to communicate with peers by voice, video, and instant messaging over the Internet.

Why Have a Social Media Policy?

The benefits of social media for the personal use of members of our school community outside the classroom are clearly evident. Even though the negative impacts receive a lot of attention and cause significant anguish for many students and creates a significant extra workload on teachers and administrators attempting to come to grips with this technology.

The benefits of establishing a social media presence for effective education and communication purposes, both inside and outside school, are becoming increasingly apparent but are still somewhat confronting for educators coping with the negative impacts on a daily basis.

This policy aims to establish clear guidelines for all groups within our school community.

The Student

Student responsibilities:

- **Privacy:** Students should not post personally identifiable information about themselves or other student. Use your first name only. Don't use photographs of yourself or others. If you want, use an image of something that represents you instead. Limiting access to close friends may seem safe but you cannot be certain that one of them won't share your information or posts.
- **Security:** You are responsible for anything posted in your name. Keep passwords and IDs secure.
- **Cyberbullying:** Do not engage in cyberbullying and report it if you are a victim of cyberbullying. Don't pick fights online and do not engage in them. If an online discussion makes you feel uncomfortable, leave the discussion. STOP responding to users that make you uncomfortable, fearful, angry or upset. BLOCK them if it continues. TELL someone. Don't be afraid to apologise online if you have done something wrong.
- **Take Care in What You Say:** Use appropriate language. Remember that how you say something is as important as what you say. Avoid exaggeration, provocation and sarcasm. The written word can come across badly compared to the spoken word.
- **Be Respectful to Others:** Be fair and accurate in what you post. Be informative, thoughtful and interesting. Do not say anything online that you would not say in person. Do not make defamatory remarks online, make racial slurs or use inappropriate language.
- **Tolerance:** Be as tolerant of others' opinions as you expect them to be of your opinions. It is OK to disagree in a discussion but it is possible to do so respectfully.
- **Appropriateness:** Contribute to social media sites as if your grandparents were watching you. Would they be proud of what you were posting or would they be shocked?

The Teacher

Teacher responsibilities:

- **Separate Professional and Personal Social Media Accounts:** Staff who decide (with approval) to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate personal and professional accounts and should only use their DEC email address with that professional social media account. Teachers should use the privacy settings of their

own social media sites to limit access by students and should not interact with students on their own sites. Nor should they accept their students as “friends”.

- **Approval:** Any educational use of social media utilised by a teacher should occur with the knowledge and approval of their supervising staff member. Professional social media sites should indicate the school and faculty/year group/class utilising the site. The site/s will be monitored by supervisors who have the right to remove or edit any material that does not meet the rules outlined in this policy.
- **Communication with Parents:** Parents, many of whom are not comfortable with social media, should be informed about the educational applications of social media that we utilise in our practice.
- **Communication with Students:** With email, staff and students interact educationally only via their DoE / APHS email accounts. Any social media interaction should also be only within the realms of a professional social media account and not personal accounts.
- **DoE Code of Conduct:** Staff responsibilities while online are the same as their in-person responsibilities. The same standards expected in a school are expected in educational social media sites.
- **Privacy:** The privacy settings on educational social media sites should limit access to the intended audience and teachers should understand the rules of the social media site being used. Staff should ensure that no personally identifiable student information is posted on an educational social media site without parental permission.
- **Be Yourself:** Be up front about your professional role.
- **Respect Copyright:** Understanding copyright and fair use laws with regard to republishing protected content and referencing sources is your responsibility.
- **Provide Value:** Think about what you have to offer via social media, whether it's thoughtful and relevant blog posts, news tweets, or homework help, and focus on providing that consistently.
- **Online Etiquette:** Given the instances of inappropriate social media use by students, we as educators need to consistently and continually train students in appropriate etiquette whilst online and maintain high expectations of online contributions by all concerned.
- **Use Good Judgment:** Think about the type of image that you want to convey on behalf of the school and DEC when you're posting to social networks and social media sites. Remember that what you post will be viewed and archived permanently online once you hit the “publish” button.

The Parent

While no one knows what effect increased social networking has on kids' development, it's clear that young people do need some guidance around use. So how can you help your kids make good decisions as they navigate their virtual lives?

Parents are urged to encourage your children to:

- Understand what information should stay private. Tell your kids why it's important to keep some things to themselves. Information like their school, address, phone number, family information and even their suburb is private and should stay that way.
- Be safe and use common sense. An 'online friend' that you don't know in real life is a STRANGER. They should regularly change their passwords and make them hard for anyone to guess. They should never share their passwords (except with you).

- Avoid bullying and harassment. They may become either targets or perpetrators of cyberbullying (or both). Misuse of the internet and associated technology (bullying/harassing someone) is a crime. Don't break the law and risk getting a criminal record. If your child is being bullied or harassed online by fellow pupils, talk to the school.
- Think before they post. Remind them that everything can be seen by a vast, invisible audience. Once they put something on their pages, it's out of their control and can be taken out of context and used to hurt them or someone else. Tell them that online stuff can last forever and that once they post it, they can't take it back. If they wouldn't put something on the wall at school or if they would not want their grandparent to see it, they shouldn't post it online.
- Create safe screen names. Encourage your kids to think about the impression that screen names can make. A good screen name won't reveal much about how old they are, where they live, or their gender. For privacy purposes, your kids' screen names should not be the same as their email addresses.
- Set their privacy settings. Privacy settings aren't foolproof, but they're important. Take the time to learn how privacy settings work on your kids' favourite sites, and teach your kids how to control their privacy.
- Understand that online politeness counts. You teach your kids to be polite offline; talk to them about being courteous online as well. If your children wouldn't say something to someone's face, they shouldn't post it.
- Maintain a balance in their lives. Watch the clock. Social network sites can be very time consuming. Hours and hours can go by, which can be detrimental to completing homework, socialising in the real world, keeping fit or getting enough sleep.
- Communicate with you if they feel threatened by someone or uncomfortable because of something online. Encourage them to STOP (responding to the other person), BLOCK (the other person from sending them more) and TELL (you). Make sure that your children feel comfortable coming to you with concerns and questions and don't over react if things go wrong.

Parents can assist their children with social media by:

- Going online themselves. If you don't have one already, get an account for yourself. See what kids can and can't do.
- Talking to your children about the nature of their digital world. Remind them that anyone can see what's on their pages (even if they think no one will). Potential employers often surf social networking sites. Ask your teens to think about who might see their pages and how they might interpret the posts or photos.
- Setting some rules for what is and isn't appropriate for your kids to communicate, play and post online. Posts with photos or comments about youthful misbehaviour could come back to haunt them.
- Keeping the computer in an area where it can be monitored, like the family room, kitchen or living room, not in your child's bedroom. Your child will be using computers and the technology for the rest of their lives. You are in the ideal position of being able to get them off to a safe and positive start.