



Thames Valley District School Board - Social Media Guidelines

Introduction

Thames Valley District School Board affiliated social media sites are an online extension of the Thames Valley brand, reputation and community. In addition to the [TVDSB Code of Conduct](#), these Social Media Guidelines have been designed to provide directions for use alternative communication vehicle and an informative online community for students, parents/guardians, staff and media. Social media channels are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, SnapChat, TikTok).

Thames Valley District School Board employs a variety of strategies for communicating with key stakeholders. With its growth in popularity, social media has become an effective tool for delivering news, events and education-related content.

Educators using social media are bound by statutory and regulatory frameworks, including the *Education Act: Statutes and Regulations*, the *Ontario College of Teachers Act: Statutes and Regulations* and the *Teaching Professions Act* (Section 18).

Use of social media by Thames Valley staff as a tool to support education or as a method of communicating with students, parents/guardians or colleagues should be guided by the standards of professional conduct outlined by the Education Act, collective agreements and the Ontario College of Teachers.

See: [Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#)

In addition, the use of social media will be guided by the ethical and professional principles outlined in Thames Valley policies and procedures:

- [Information Technology Policy](#)
- [Information Technology Appropriate Usage Procedure](#)
- [Equity and Inclusive Education Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Management of Personal Information Procedure](#)
- Thames Valley District School Board Social Media Guidelines

1.0 TVDSB Social Media Terms of Use

1.1 Thames Valley does not allow obscene, explicit or racial comments/posts, nor do we allow comments that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or any organization.



Thames Valley's social media accounts are not for personal use. Comments involving personal issues with the Board, a school or staff member will be removed.

1.2 We reserve the right to delete comments that are considered:

- spam
- advertising or promotion of services, products or political organizations
- off-topic or disruptive
- advocating illegal activity
- infringement of copyrights or trademarks
- violation of any TVDSB policies
- personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- private, personal information published without consent
- hyperlinks to material not related to the discussion

1.3 Participants use social media at their own risk, taking personal responsibility for all comments, usernames and information provided.

1.4 Postings/comments by individuals on Thames Valley social media sites do not reflect the opinions and views of Thames Valley or its employees.

1.5 If you have concerns regarding content or behaviour on a Thames Valley social media site, please contact the Thames Valley Communications Department at communications@tvdsb.ca.

2.0 Creating a Social Media Account/Page/Group

2.1 Our employees are not required to obtain authorization to create a personal social media account, page or group. However, it is highly recommended that staff have a discussion with their principal or supervisor surrounding the purpose for using social media. Educators planning on using social media to augment classroom learning and/or promote professional practice should be familiar with this Guideline. It is strongly recommended that staff do not identify themselves as Thames Valley employees in a personal social media account. Content posted on personal social media sites are a reflection on the Board and may impact the Board's brand and reputation. Please refer to [Code of Conduct/Off-duty Code of Conduct](#) for expectations related to behaviour for TVDSB employees.

2.2 Social media accounts associated with TVDSB are those belonging to a Thames Valley school, program, department, team or club and may be branded as such (i.e. @TVDSBcares, @ChippewaTVDSB, @TVDSBengage). All other Thames Valley social media associations/accounts may be discussed with the Communications Department (i.e. @johndoeTVDSB).

2.3 When creating a school social media account, page or group, the school's email address should be used to ensure that administrative access stays with the school in the event of staff turnover.

2.4 When creating a social media account, page or group for a TVDSB school, department or portfolio, please notify the Communications team to ensure administrative rights may be recovered in the event staff turnover or an emergency. In addition, social media feeds are embedded within school websites (effective 2018) and administrative rights are required for integration.

3.0 Professional Boundaries

3.1 Employees are advised to maintain a formal and professional tone when communicating with students, parents or other staff members on social media. Interactions should be professional and reflect Thames Valley commitments of collaboration, co-operation, honesty, inclusion, respect and responsibility.

3.2 Thames Valley District School Board recommends that educators using social media for classroom purposes create a separate account from their personal social media account, as it is important to maintain a clear distinction between personal and professional social media use. Social media is not a tool to be utilized for direct messaging/communication purposes with students or families.

3.3 In accordance with [Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#), Thames Valley staff are prohibited from issuing or accepting friend and follower requests from students on personal social media accounts. Under no circumstances should private messages on social media channels be exchanged with students. This does not include SMS/text messaging.

3.4 Thames Valley staff are advised not to engage in negative or critical conversations and to maintain a positive tone in their discourse. Inappropriate references to the school board, schools, staff, students or parents is against board policy.

3.5 Posting mature themes, alcohol or vaping/tobacco-related content is prohibited on Thames Valley social media accounts.

3.6 Users should always read any links or articles thoroughly before sharing them to ensure that they align with Thames Valley values and practices. Retweeting, liking or sharing a post on social media is perceived as an endorsement despite any disclaimers on the account that state otherwise.



3.7 It is recommended that employees search hashtags before implementing them in social media use to confirm that the content is appropriate and positive.

3.8 As outlined in the [Code of Conduct/Off-duty Code of Conduct](#), Principals and/or Administration will address known activity that negatively impacts the school board, staff and students if a concern is reported about a personal or professional social media account of a Thames Valley employee.

4.0 Privacy

4.1 Thames Valley staff should always be mindful of the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), the [Youth Criminal Justice Act](#), and [Privacy and Management of Personal Information Procedure](#) when using social media. It is important to respect the privacy and confidentiality of students at all times.

4.2 Do not disclose confidential information regarding schools, students or staff online. Specific details, such as time and location, should not be announced when students or classes are planning to leave TVDSB premises for offsite events, as this could compromise student safety.

4.3 Personal information, such as student names, should not be posted to social media unless informed consent has been received from parents/guardians. Additionally, photos of students and student work should not be published without informed consent.

4.4 It is a courtesy to obtain verbal consent from adults whose photos, videos or work will be posted to social media channels. Exceptions include photographs at public events and Principals, Vice Principals, Trustees and TVDSB staff taken during their time of employment.

5.0 Monitoring Responsibilities/Maintenance

5.1 TVDSB staff are not expected to monitor Thames Valley accounts 24 hours-a-day. Staff should set clear expectations of the hours they will be on social media by outlining their hours of availability in a disclaimer on the social media site.

5.2 School social media accounts, pages or groups can have one or more staff member administrators of the account(s) at the Superintendent/Principal's discretion. The monitoring and maintenance of social media accounts, pages and groups becomes more manageable when run by a team.

5.3 It is recommended that TVDSB social media accounts, pages or groups are monitored regularly to ensure that posts considered to be inappropriate and/or against TVDSB code of conduct are removed in a timely manner. Responsible management of social media does not lie



within posting content, but with the monitoring of comments/posts. Posts and comments that contain inappropriate, personal or promotional content should be deleted promptly.

6.0 Duty of Care

6.1 Thames Valley staff should be aware that the same personal duty of care applies online as it does in the classroom. All expectations and duties apply with respect to conduct and responding to a student in need of protection or in a crisis. TVDSB employees are advised to follow the same practices as when an inappropriate behaviour occurs at school.