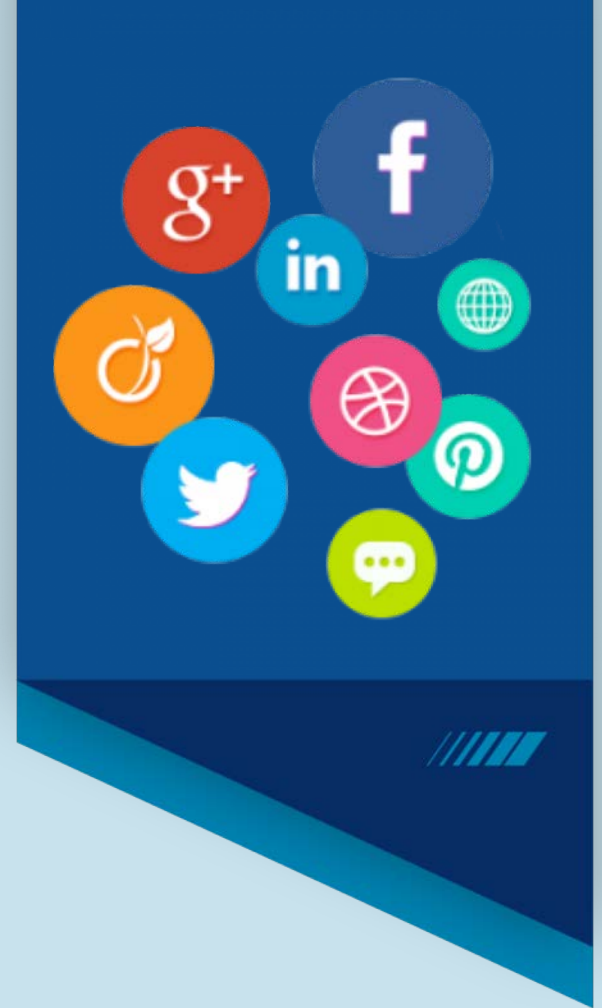


Freedom of Expression and Teachers' Responsibilities as Social Media Users



Employer's Right Regarding Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right, but not one which is without limits. The courts have established that the Employer has a right to expect integrity and loyalty from its employees. Teachers in turn can expect to be able to freely express their opinions on matters within their professional expertise.



It is recognized that teachers are professionals and their opinions on pedagogical and educational issues are valued. It therefore follows that teachers may publicly express their opinions in accordance with the following guidelines without fear of reprimand or discipline from the Employer:

- Teachers are free to publicly express their opinions on pedagogical issues and general classroom management. These opinions must be based on facts and expressed in a constructive and objective manner.



- Teachers may not act in ways or speak in words that would discredit or bring disrepute to the education system. This would be viewed as going further than what freedom of expression would allow and teachers could be advised to cease.
- Teachers must accept that they cannot rely on the fact that they may be speaking as parents or in any other capacity, and thus go beyond what they, as teachers, might be allowed to declare or do.
- Teachers must exercise caution when solicited to join a parental group that wishes to lobby the Employer on school closures, for example. Courts have stated that teachers cannot be protected by saying that they are acting as parents rather than teachers.



However, nothing in labour relations would prevent teachers from expressing their concerns and worries to their Employer within the framework provided and in accordance with established procedures. For example, the local branch or liaison committee may become a mechanism for teachers to express their opinion on matters which are common to all the branch membership.



If a teacher or a group of teachers wish to express discontent to the Employer in relation to a policy, this can be done by asking to meet with the district administration.

In addition, if the subject being discussed is relevant to the Collective Agreement, it is possible to use existing procedures and mechanisms provided such as the provincial Employee/Employer Relations Committee, the local liaison committees or to speak with a staff member at the NBTF.



Tips when Communicating with Parents or Students

The NBTF recommends that online communication with parents and students should only occur using platforms provided to you by the employer. This means only using your work-issued email. If you wish to use programs or software other than those approved and provided by the employer, you must contact your school administration.



- ❑ Send and post communications that are respectful and consistent with a positive learning environment (Policy 703)
- ❑ Never criticize colleagues, students or the school administration or share confidential information about them.
- ❑ Do not write personal messages and comments on social media during work hours.
- ❑ Pay attention to "Like" and "Share" messages in social media that demonstrate adherence to them.



If you send an email or other type of message:

- NEVER use your personal email address to communicate with students and parents or for any other messages related to your work.
- Do not send emails or text messages in a familiar tone to students, parents or others.
- Never use inappropriate vocabulary and always use a grammar checker.
- Answer complicated emails by phone*

** If you are calling a parent, it is a good idea to block your phone number by dialing *67 before the parent's phone number.*



If you send an email or other type of message (continued):

- Sign your emails with only your name and your title.
- Avoid including unnecessary attachments.
- Do not write your text in capital letters.
- Respect people's privacy (get consent before sharing or posting messages or photos of another person).



Separate your private life from your professional life in social networks!



Never become “friends” with a student or a parent on Facebook, Instagram or other personal accounts.



Be careful what you post on social media!



Social Media Users Should Avoid:



- Reproducing material without citing sources or permission.

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/fra/lois/C-42/Index.html>



- Compromising the safety of others by disclosing personal information (address, phone number, email address) or arranging a meeting with a stranger.



Finally...

- ❑ If you have a personal social media account(s), we also recommend that you do not make posts during the workday, and that you do not post any non-work-related activities that you may have done during the workday
- ❑ **Don't post a comment you wouldn't want to see on the front page of a newspaper**



Warning

Failure to comply with standards, rules, policies and laws may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

****Ignorance is not a defence.****



Please visit the Canadian Teachers' Federation website for more information.

<https://www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/Issues/Cybertips-for-teachers.aspx>



NEW BRUNSWICK TEACHERS' FEDERATION
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