



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Archdiocese of Louisville



ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE
Catholic Schools

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Social Media Policy

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Social Media Policy

Introduction and General Guidelines

The mission of the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools is to provide a Christ-centered, academically challenging education in a safe and caring environment. Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools recognizes that social media has become an integral part of our society and can be a valuable tool for communication, collaboration, and learning. However, the Archdiocese also recognizes that the use of social media can pose challenges and risks, particularly for young users. Therefore, this Social Media Policy has been developed to ensure that social media is used in a responsible and appropriate manner within the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic schools by the school community of administrators, teachers, volunteers, parents, and students.

Policy Statement:

The Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic schools expects all students, teachers, staff members, volunteers, and parents to use social media in a responsible, ethical, and respectful manner. This policy applies to all social media platforms, including but not limited to Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and others.

Teachers and other staff members should receive social media training as part of their annual back-to-school orientation within the first month of school. Students should receive instruction every year on the ethical use of social media and technology in general, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through the twelfth grade throughout each school year.

Pillars of Safe and Responsible Internet Use:

The following pillars of safe and responsible internet practice guide the use of social media within the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools:

- **Digital Citizenship:** All users of social media must act as responsible digital citizens. This means using social media to contribute positively to the community and upholding the values of the archdiocese and school, including respect, honesty, and compassion. Student maturity is a determining factor in the use of social media at school. Students under 13 years of age should have limited contact with actual social media unless closely supervised by their parents and teachers. Students over the age of 13 may use social media according to the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools and the individual school the students attend.
- **E-Safety:** All users of social media must take steps to ensure their own online safety and the safety of others. This includes protecting personal information, using strong passwords, and reporting any inappropriate behavior.
- **Cyberbullying Prevention:** All users of social media must take steps to prevent cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else that causes embarrassment or humiliation."¹

Cyberbullying is never acceptable within the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools. Social media requires increased intentionality to strengthen relationships and build healthy communities.

- **Privacy Protection:** All users of social media must respect the privacy of others and protect their own personal information. This includes not sharing personal information such as names, addresses, phone numbers, or photographs without permission.

General Guidelines:

The following guidelines apply to the use of social media within Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools:

- **Respect for Others:** Users of social media must be respectful of others and must not engage in any behavior that is abusive, harassing, threatening or discriminatory. Users must not post or share any content that is disrespectful, inappropriate, defamatory, or otherwise offensive to others.

1. United States government. (2023a, August 1). *What is cyberbullying*. Stopbullying.gov. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>



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- **Truthfulness:** Users of social media must determine the validity of the information they use and must verify the source of that information.
- **Privacy:** Users of social media must respect the privacy of others and must not post or share any personal information or images without the explicit consent of the individual concerned. Students must have a photo/internet waiver on file with the school to have their images used by anyone in the school community. Users must also ensure that their own personal information is protected and not shared without their consent.
- **Intellectual Property:** Users of social media must respect intellectual property rights and must not post or share any content that infringes on the copyright or trademark rights of others. This includes images, written work, music, or other intellectual property.
- **Professionalism:** Teachers, staff members, and volunteers are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism when using social media. They must not post or share any content that is inappropriate or that could damage the reputation of the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools, their school, or the teaching profession at large. Whether Catholic or not, teachers, staff members and volunteers are Christian witnesses representing their schools at all times and cannot espouse any anti-Catholic themed ideas in their personal social media.
- **Use for Educational Purposes:** Social media should be used for educational purposes within the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools, subject to the approval of the appropriate administrator, teacher or staff member at the individual school level. Users must ensure that any content posted or shared is relevant, appropriate, and in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools as well as the individual school affected. Teachers using social media in the classroom must be aware that the site/media is the property of the parish/school and as such should have ID and passwords shared with the appropriate administrators. The content of any school social media should have prior approval from the school administrator.
- **Reporting:** Users who become aware of any inappropriate use of social media must report it to the appropriate teacher, staff member, or administrator.
- **Consequences:** Violations of this Social Media Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion for students, and termination of employment for teachers and staff members. The Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools may also report any violations to law enforcement authorities where appropriate.

The Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools recognizes that social media is an important tool for communication, collaboration, and learning. However, the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools also recognizes that the use of social media can pose challenges and risks. Therefore, this policy has been developed to ensure that social media is used in a responsible and appropriate manner within the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools. By following these guidelines, we can create a safe and respectful online environment that supports our educational goals and values.



Social Media Policy

Social Media Educational Resources for Schools

Social media education is imperative for every student in Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools every year. Content should be age and developmentally appropriate. Resources can be accessed from several different sources. Some of these resources may be paid and others free. The guidelines for the selection of any resource should be:

1. It should reflect the vision of the school and be aligned with the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding the value of human dignity.
2. It should accentuate the positive aspects of social media for students.
3. It should provide examples of how students can develop a positive image online (developing their brand).
4. It should be accessed throughout the school year, fostering student learning over time.
5. It should highlight the dangers of social media for individuals and groups.
6. It should contain a parent education component that will stress cooperative efforts of parents and the school to safeguard and guide each student.



Social Media Policy

Social Media for Administrators, Teachers, Volunteers

Teachers, volunteers, and administrators have the power to be transformative in the world of social media. How they choose to represent themselves and others on social media can set a positive model for students or can do the opposite. As a safety precaution, teachers, volunteers, and administrators should never mix their professional online social media with their personal social media. If a teacher, volunteer, or administrator does wish to communicate events occurring in a classroom or school, they must adhere to several guidelines. There should be no expectation of privacy for school social media accounts.

- Teachers and administrators should be aware of the influence they have on students and should never “friend” or “follow” current students until after their high school graduation.
- Any account created for educational or extracurricular use must be an official school account, not the personal account of a particular faculty/staff member, coach, or moderator.
- Employees should be intentional about seeking express permission before the posting of photos, videos, etc. of students or other employees. Permission should be in the form of a photo/video/internet waiver for students or verbal consent for employees.
- If the school has published content on its official social media site, then employees may “share” or post it on their personal social media accounts.
- All social media communication and settings used by employees with students must be strictly professional and educational.
- All social media shared should be fact-checked for validity, and the integrity of sources should be checked before posting.
- An employee may establish or create a page or group for professional and educational purposes to expedite communication with certain classes, clubs, or extra-curricular activities. However, the content must be exclusively school related and what is shared must never damage the school’s reputation, conflict with the school’s mission and values, or conflict with Catholic Church teachings, regardless of whether the content is contributed by adults or students.
- Employees should never direct message individual students. (Some alternatives would be to substitute a group text to the student and another school affiliated adult or message the student and their parent.)
- When social media is the topic of a class or is an essential part of a class, this should be noted in the advertisement of the class and in the syllabus for the class to inform parents and students.
- Students enrolled in classes that are focused on social media may use social media at school but only for purposes related to the class. Parents may not request that their child be blocked from social media and at the same time be enrolled in these classes.
- If photos of students engaged in classes, clubs, or team activities are posted, a student photo/internet waiver must be on file with the school for each student in the photo.
- Students should not be identified by photo and full name. Use a photo and first name only.



Social Media Policy

Social Media for Parents of Children 12 and Under

“You are the first teachers of your children” (Rite of Baptism)

Parents and other adults in a child’s life have the opportunity to act as positive role models for the responsible use of social media. However, positive modeling needs to be defined within the school community so that the adult community that supports a school is in alignment with the philosophy of the school.

The book, *# Rules of Engagement: 8 Christian Habits for Being Good and Doing Good Online*, (Garrido, 2021)², posits eight rules of engagement for social media that call adults to a conscious and conscientious use of social media. These rules guide an individual’s use of social media. The collection of individuals creates a community that believes:

- in respect for all persons
- in fostering positive relationships with others by honoring their human dignity
- in fact-checking stories before passing them along as truth
- that each of us has biases and we need to be aware of the biases and attempt to balance our views
- in a community that believes it is important to learn from others with differing views and avoid inflammatory content
- in a community that recommends balance in the use of social media to provide time for rest, silence, and reflection.

Every social media platform has an age restriction in place to help protect and honor a child’s dignity. By adhering to these restrictions, children are sheltered from certain risks. These risks include but are not limited to cyberbullying, inappropriate and mature content, and privacy concerns.

Any posts made by parents or other adults regarding the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools, or an individual school, should reflect a spirit of community and collaboration and be consistent with the values of the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Schools and the individual school. Parents should contact the teacher, principal, or other school personnel at the point of contact to discuss any problems that exist or persist. Negative comments by parents made on social media directed at the school, school personnel, parish personnel, or members of other school communities are deemed inappropriate and may result in a student being asked to leave the school if the parent persists.

2. Garrido, A. M., (2021). *#Rules of engagement: 8 Christian habits for being good and doing good online*. Ave Maria Press.



Social Media Policy

Social Media for Parents of Children 13 and Over

Eight rules of engagement for social media use (Garrido²) call adults to a conscious and conscientious use of social media. These rules guide an individual's use of social media. The collection of individuals creates a community that believes in respect for all persons; one that believes in fostering positive relationships with others by honoring their human dignity; one that believes in fact-checking stories before passing them along as truth; one that believes that each of us has biases and we need to be aware of the biases and attempt to balance our views; a community that believes it is important to learn from others with differing views and avoid inflammatory content; one that recommends balance in the use of social media to provide time for rest, silence and reflection.

Parents of young adults can enumerate and model these behaviors with their own social media use and teach their children to do the same. The first step is for students to decide what their digital image will be. This should happen before the first social media app is used since what is posted regardless of the platform is public and permanent. By being conscious of what they post and how those posts might affect others, children are creating their online brand or purpose.

Children should be taught to stand behind what they say. This implies that the child will post truthful information that is appropriate to share. Children need to be taught boundaries in sharing family information and friend information. Asking the question, "May I share this?", can prevent a host of problems. The child also has the right to ask parents not to post personal information such as photos or to share information the child would prefer not be shared. What children post should be consistent with their online brand or purpose.

Children need to be conscious of their audience. If posting regarding a school or club event, the students should be aware that the same rules apply online that apply in school. Children need permission to tag others (students or school personnel) in photos or videos. It is inappropriate for them to make unkind remarks regarding the school, another student, or school personnel. Not only do these cause immediate problems, but online posts are never truly deleted.

Children should be conscious of their audience from a safety perspective as well. Students should only accept friend requests from people they know. If students interact online with someone they do not know, they should not meet that person in real life without first discussing this with a parent or other trusted adult.

Bullying of any kind, including cyberbullying, is not tolerated. If your child is being cyberbullied, or someone you know is being cyberbullied, report the behavior to the school to get help. Students involved in bullying may be subject to school discipline.

The guiding principle is that you the parent are the primary teacher when teaching ethics to your child. However, the school will partner with you to help students have information that will keep them personally safe, teach them how to create their online image, teach them how to respond to others in a kind and thoughtful way, and what to do when a bullying or uncomfortable event occurs.



Social Media Policy

Social Media for Elementary School Students 12 and Younger

Students must learn at an early age what they say and do in public places in the real world and the virtual world combine to create the student's reputation. While the student may feel they are anonymous in a virtual world, they are not. Students should strive to be the same person online that they are in person. They need to understand that their actions have an impact on their classmates, their school, and the school community at large. Most social media platforms are created for students 13 years of age and older. Students in the 12 and younger age group should be guided by parents and teachers into responsible use as they get older. For example, some classrooms may have a protected blog space for students to interact, where students can practice those skills that will help them be responsible social media users in a less restrictive environment when they get older.

Many memory cues have been created to drive this point home to young students. T-H-I-N-K attributed to Alan Redpath is one of the more popular. It is used to have students analyze any picture, video, or message sent to another person, or posted online.

T: True. Is the information that the student is about to post true? Has the student verified the information and the source of the information? This post has the potential to have thousands of views.

H: Helpful. Is the information helpful to someone? Does it explain a problem or position held by the student? Does it demonstrate a value for all people, make someone feel good, or help someone learn something?

I: Inspiring. Has the student shared a post or picture they find particularly inspiring?

N: Necessary. Does the post share information that is timely and needs to be shared?

K: Kind. Does the post reflect the student's Catholic values and those of the school regarding respect for the individual?

There is an expectation that students will practice online safety. Every social media site has privacy settings. Parents and teachers can help students set up accounts in safe ways. It is appropriate for students to share among their classmates and others to see their posts but limit it to family members and others parents have approved. Children who create accounts with falsified ages open themselves to inappropriate content and other risks. Students must keep passwords private.

Cyberbullying violates the respect for others. Students should not send mean or harassing messages. Students should not post comments that are mean, not true, or that create rumors. Students should not share embarrassing photos of others. If a student has been bullied online or in person, they should report the incident to his or her teacher or another trusted adult at school.

Students have no right to privacy while using school internet systems. Student online activities are monitored, and the school reserves the right to access, review, copy, store, or delete any electronic communications or files.

The school reserves the right to disclose any electronic activity including electronic communications to law enforcement officials or third parties as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.



Social Media Policy

Social Media for Middle and High School Students 13 and Older

This policy aims to guide students aged 13 and older in the responsible and respectful use of social media platforms, recognizing the impact their online actions can have on themselves, their peers, and the school community. While acknowledging the increased independence of older students, it emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive online presence.

Most social media platforms are created for students 13 years of age and older. Navigating in the world of social media has consequences for students. Students need to consider everything associated with social media as personal and permanent. As students use social media more and more, it is important for them to understand they are building their personal brand. Every effort should be made by students to be the same person online as they are in real life. As students mature, they are exposed to more social media that must filtered through their Catholic lens.

Students will be expected to participate in annual school sponsored updates on the use of social media and the consequences for individuals violating the social media policy.

1. Individual Accountability: Students are expected to recognize the connection between their real-world and virtual personas. Online behavior should align with the values and principles upheld by the school community. Students should strive to be consistent in their character both offline and online.

2. Responsible Social Media Use: Students are encouraged to utilize social media responsibly, understanding that their actions contribute to the overall reputation of the school community. Students will have access to more social media as they mature. The skills learned in earlier years regarding responsible online behavior should be applied in each of these new environments.

3. Guidance: Building on previous prompts, students are encouraged to apply the "T-H-I-N-K" framework (Alan Redpath) before posting any content:

- *True:* Ensure the accuracy of information before sharing.
- *Helpful:* Share content that adds value, explains, or promotes positive engagement.
- *Inspiring:* Encourage the sharing of uplifting and motivational content.
- *Necessary:* Share timely information that holds relevance.
- *Kind:* Reflect Catholic values and school principles regarding respect for individuals.

4. Online Safety: Students are responsible for managing their online safety, including adjusting privacy settings on social media platforms. It is appropriate to share content with classmates and approved individuals. Students should not meet individuals in real life that they have encountered online without discussing this with a parent or trusted adult. Passwords must remain confidential in all circumstances.

5. Cyberbullying Prevention: Cyberbullying in any form is strictly prohibited. Students should refrain from sending mean or harassing messages, posting untrue comments, or spreading rumors. Sharing embarrassing photos of others is unacceptable. Incidents of cyberbullying should be reported to teachers or other trusted adults promptly.

6. School Internet Systems: Students have no expectation of privacy while using school internet systems. The school monitors online activities and reserves the right to access, review, copy, store, or delete electronic communications or files as needed for maintaining a secure and respectful online environment.

7. Disclosure to Authorities: The school retains the right to disclose any electronic activity, including communications, to law enforcement officials or third parties when deemed appropriate and consistent with applicable law. This includes cases of potential harm, illegal activities, or violations of school policies.

8. Consequences for Violations: Violations of this social media policy may result in disciplinary actions, ranging from warnings to more severe consequences such as suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity and frequency of the infraction.

