

# Social Media Content and Management Strategy

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## 1 Objectives

- To allow the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) to communicate directly with key online audiences through Twitter as part of a continued effort to be accountable and transparent to the education community.
- To extend the reach of existing OPSBA strategic messaging by building relationships with relevant Twitter users including school board stakeholders, Trustees, journalists, bloggers and the wider education community.
- To provide an informal, human voice of OPSBA through social media to promote comprehension of and engagement with messaging.
- To provide leadership and credibility in the education field by increasing OPSBA's visibility in online communications channels.
- To provide a low-barrier method for audiences to interact with OPSBA.
- To monitor Twitter for mentions of OPSBA and provincial education issues, while engaging with critics and key influencers to address potential issues and correct factual inaccuracies.
- Provide live coverage of OPSBA events, (AGM, Public Education Symposium, etc.) for those who can't attend or are interested in receiving more information.

## 2 Proposition and Management

### 2.1 Positioning and Profile

The Twitter account's profile picture will be OPSBA's logo. OPSBA's mission should be on the left of the profile, with a list of staff who would potentially be tweeting. (See <http://twitter.com/TDSB> or <http://twitter.com/TorontoPolice> for examples) Any potential future social media applications will use similar branding to maintain cohesiveness.

### 2.2 Tone

It is helpful to define a social media voice so that tweets from multiple staff are presented in a consistent tone (including consistent use of pronouns such as 'we' and 'us'). The social media voice will be that of the communications staff of OPSBA, positioning Twitter as a key arm of the main OPSBA website – effectively an outpost where new web content is posted as it becomes available. The tone should be more

informal than that of regular OPSBA documents and also include pronouns to engender the sense of there being an actual person behind the account.

### *2.3 Resources*

The human resource impact of running Twitter and other social media accounts is low relative to other communications tools such as websites, magazines and print newsletters.

OPSBA communications staff will be responsible for tweeting or retweeting at least one to three times each day, with one or two specific team members spearheading the initiative to ensure cohesive tone and follow-through. Regular team meetings will determine proactive content while staff will determine retweets through alliance with the organization's mission statement and multi-year priorities.

### *2.4 Content principles*

*Content for the @OPSBA\_Official Twitter account will have the following characteristics:*

- **Varied** – The channel will cover a broad base of content types and sources to retain follower interest levels. See Section 2.4.1 for more information.
- **Human** – Since Twitter users can be hostile to the over-use of automation (such as generating Twitter content entirely from RSS feeds) and to regurgitation of press release headlines, tweets should be in informal spoken English and written/paraphrased for the channel.
- **Frequent** – A minimum of one to three tweets each work day. This does not count @replies to other users or live coverage of an event.
- **Retweetable** – To make it easy for others to retweet the most relevant or important tweets, they should be restricted to 122 characters if possible, instead of the normal 140 characters. This allows sufficient space for “RT @OPSBA\_Official” to be included in the message, furthering the account's reach.
- **Timely** – Tweets will be about issues of immediate relevancy or upcoming events/opportunities.
- **Credible** – Tweets can occasionally have a fun or entertaining hook, but their relation back to organizational priorities should always be defensible. If possible, there should be hyperlinks to related content or a call to action.
- **Inclusive** – In keeping with the knowledge-sharing culture of social media, the account should take the opportunity periodically to link to relevant content not from OPSBA itself. Using Twitter exclusively for self-promotion can lead to criticism.

#### 2.4.1 Types and sources of content

##### *Existing web content*

- **News, official letters, Presidential speeches and statements published on the OPSBA website** – Paraphrased links to speeches, reports or news releases. There will be an attempt to humanise the tone used in headlines.
- **New campaigns and initiatives**– Must include links to the public OPSBA website or appropriate external site. Internal links are not accessible by most Twitter followers.
- **Appropriate YouTube or website videos** – Links and short commentary to videos posted by OPSBA or partner organizations.
- **Retweets of partner/media/follower posts**
- **Web updates** – Links to updates on the OPSBA website

##### *Exclusive content*

- **Updates on specific initiatives/programs** – For example, “We’re on our way to our Public Ed Symposium to discuss social media protocol. Learn more @ [www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org).”
- **Live tweeting at events** – Announcement and promotion of upcoming OPSBA events and live coverage of those events.
- **Thought leadership** – Highlighting relevant research, events and awards elsewhere that will position OPSBA as a reliable filter of high-quality content.

#### 2.5 Hashtags

It is common practice among Twitter users to distinguish content using keywords, preceded by a # sign (example: #OntEd). This enables other users to search and filter based on those key terms, collaborate and share relevant information, and enables ‘trending’ (as displayed on the Twitter.com homepage). The account will use hashtags when providing live coverage of events and ongoing promotion of OPSBA programs and initiatives.

#### 2.6 Link shortening

- Unless they are already very short, URLs in tweets should be shortened using link compressing site such as ow.ly and bit.ly.

#### 2.7 Retweeting

##### *2.7.1 Reactive Retweeting*

We may occasionally be asked to retweet content from other Twitter users. We will consider these case by case but generally aim to honour such requests from:

- Member school boards and trustees
- Other primary stakeholders and partners

- Media

In the interests of commercial propriety and competitiveness we will **not** honour requests from profit-making organisations unless they are an approved sponsor of an OPSBA event or initiative, as we would not be able to do so fairly.

#### *2.7.2 Proactive Retweeting*

OPSBA staff will actively seek opportunities to retweet content that helps position the organization as a respected and intelligent filter of education-related information, and of being inclusive/supportive of stakeholders. As such we may wish to consider retweeting interesting content that shows up in our Twitter stream:

- Research findings and statistics
- Relevant education events
- Relevant celebrations/commemorations e.g. awards, themed days (e.g. World Teachers' Day)
- Positive news stories that reflect the organization's multi-year priorities

#### *2.8 Following and followers*

The account should actively follow other relevant organizations and professionals. We should not initiate contact by following individual, personal users as this may be interpreted as interfering/'Big Brother'-like behaviour. Those who follow @OPSBA\_Official will be screened by staff to determine whether they should be followed back. Those involved in education and provincial affairs – DSBs, Trustees, MPPs, administrators, academics, educators, etc. – should be followed back. The account will be screened regularly by staff to remove spam accounts and potentially malicious users.

## **3 Promotion**

The Twitter account will be promoted through:

- A prominent link on the OPSBA website
- Requests to promote proactively from member Board Twitter accounts
- Adding links to OPSBA staff email signatures
- Adding the link to Fast Reports, backgrounders, letters, statements and news releases sent to the media
- Emails to key stakeholders
- Notification to member Trustees at Board meetings

## **4 Evaluation of Success**

- Number of followers, relevance and type of followers
- Number of web traffic clickthroughs from Twitter to OPSBA website content
- Feedback from followers
- Number of retweets
- Volume and quality of @replies and direct messages (DMs)
- Third party management tools – Hootsuite and Crowdbooster

## **5 Roles and responsibilities**

Responsibility for the management and moderation of OPSBA's Twitter account will lie with the Web Communications and Policy Officer. Additional communications and web staff will have access to the account through smartphones and the web.

## Appendix A – Twitter Guidelines

*A link to the following text on the OPSBA website will be added to OPSBA's Twitter profile.*

OPSBA's Twitter account is managed by the Association's communications staff, on behalf of all OPSBA staff and members, consistent with the priorities, policies, procedures and practices of the Association.

If you follow us, you can expect tweets nearly every day covering some or all of the following:

- Alerts about new content on our website, online publications, etc.
- Information on new programs, conferences, initiatives and campaigns
- Live coverage of events
- Links to relevant web content from our many partners and stakeholders

### **Availability**

Staff will update and monitor the Twitter account during office hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. During live event coverage, staff may tweet beyond the regular office day. Twitter service may occasionally be unavailable and OPSBA accepts no responsibility for lack of service due to Twitter downtime.

### **@Replies and Direct Messages**

We welcome feedback and ideas from all followers, and endeavour to join the conversation when possible. However, we may not be able to reply individually to all messages received on Twitter.

All @replies and Direct Messages are read, and be assured that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant staff at OPSBA.

To contact us through other channels, please refer to our [Contacts page](#).

## **Appendix B - Social Media Guidelines: Terms of Use**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to ensure the proper use of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association's Web 2.0 technologies (hereafter referred to as "social media") by its employees. Social media applications are tools for communications and users have the responsibility to use these resources in an efficient, effective, ethical and lawful manner.

OPSBA is engaging with Twitter to further its mission of promoting and enhancing public education throughout Ontario. Twitter will increase the reach and public knowledge of the Association's important key messages and initiatives.

### **Goals and Objectives**

- To allow the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) to communicate directly with key online audiences through Twitter as part of a continued effort to be accountable and transparent to the education community.
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### **Ownership**

All social media communications messages composed, sent or received on OPSBA IT equipment are the property of OPSBA.

### **Privacy and Security**

When using social media technologies on Association computers, employees will act in a professional manner by:

- Identifying themselves by name and as an employee of the Association when necessary

- Using appropriate language
- Being aware that what is written will not only reflect on the writer, but on the Association's elected officials and staff
- Not providing confidential information about Association programs, initiatives or negotiations
- Not providing information related to pending organizational decisions that would compromise negotiations

If an employee is in doubt of the appropriateness of content to be added to a site, it is best to refrain. Posting on social media is much like writing on a wall in public with the addition of a name being attached to everything that is written. There are no truly anonymous postings.

### **Management of Public Comments**

Where moderation of comments is an option (i.e. Facebook, but not Twitter), comments from the public will be moderated before posting by OPSBA staff moderators. OPSBA reserves the right to modify or remove any messages or posting that it deems, in its sole discretion, to be abusive, obscene, defamatory, in violation of the copyright, trademark right, or other intellectual property right of any third party, or otherwise inappropriate. Where moderation prior to posting is not an option, sites will be regularly monitored by Association staff.

The following may be removed by OPSBA moderators before being published:

- Potentially libellous comments
- Obscene or racist remarks
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- Plagiarized material
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Comments totally unrelated to the topic of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Hyperlinks to material not related to the discussion

The Association also reserves the right to edit or modify submissions in response to requests for feedback or other commentary. However, the Board is not responsible or liable for content posted by any subscriber in any forum, message board or other social media area.



The Association is not responsible for external comments and content posted on our social media channels and does not necessarily have to take action about inappropriate comments.

Association forums and messaging may not be used for commercial purposes or for organized political activity.

### **Management of Social Media Applications**

OPSBA's communications staff are responsible for social media administration.

Suggestions for content can be directed to the Director of Communications, the Director of Policy and Communication or the Web Communications and Policy Officer. Other applications beyond Twitter may be added in the future, but expansion must be approved by the Executive Director and Director of Communications.

Each branded social media site should have wording that indicates OPSBA ownership of the site and a hyperlink back to OPSBA's main public website. OPSBA's name and logo should appear prominently to help distinguish and brand the site.

### **Hosting of OPSBA Social Media sites**

OPSBA currently uses Twitter exclusively. Future applications could include YouTube or Vimeo for video sharing, Facebook as a social networking tool and Flickr for photo sharing.

### **Social Posting Guidelines**

- a) When posting content relevant to OPSBA on a personal blog or social media site, staff should be sure to say that the information is representative of personal views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of OPSBA. It is best to use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent OPSBA's priorities, strategies or opinions."
- b) The lines between public and private and personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. When staff identify themselves as OPSBA representatives online, they are now connected to colleagues, stakeholders, trustees and the public education community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work as OPSBA staff. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, discriminatory remarks, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any similar conduct that would not be appropriate or acceptable in the OPSBA or member board workplace.
- c) Do not provide OPSBA's or member boards' confidential or other proprietary information and never discuss sensitive matters or plans publicly.



- d) A standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt OPSBA staff from a special responsibility when blogging, tweeting or publishing on any social media site.
- e) A hyperlink to outside sources is recommended. Be sure not to plagiarize and give credit where it is due. When using a hyperlink, be sure that the content is appropriate. Always respect copyright and fair use laws.
- f) Staff should be cautious about how they set up their profile, bio, avatar, etc.
- g) When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent themselves, staff should make sure to select an appropriate image. Do not use copyright protected images and only use the OPSBA logo if you have the authority to do so. For example, you shouldn't use OPSBA in your screen name or other social media ID unless approved by the Executive Director.
- h) Be aware that others can view the sites that you link to.
- i) Be aware of words used to tag or describe hyperlinks.
- j) Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as there is no control over what appears on landing pages (home pages) in the future.