

**Virgin Islands'
Department of
Education**

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**THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

POLICY NAME	VIDE Social Media Policy			POLICY NO.	V1-07.02.2025
EFFECTIVE DATE	July 2, 2025	DATE OF LAST REVISION		VERSION NO.	1
ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE	Office of Legal Counsel		CONTACT INFORMATION	340-774-0100	
APPLIES TO Apply group names to define applicable areas of staff. (I.e: stx employees, HR department, IT, entire stt-sttj personnel)					
GROUP 1	All VIDE Administrators	GROUP 2	All VIDE Faculty	GROUP 3	All VIDE Staff
GROUP 4	All VIDE Personnel	GROUP 5		GROUP 6	

VERSION HISTORY				
VERSION	APPROVED BY	REVISION DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	AUTHOR
1				

APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Legal Counsel

Chiles Peadar

Date: July 8, 2025

Assistant Commissioner

Victor Somers

Date: August 25, 2025

Commissioner

Winston Hedington

Date: August 25, 2025

SCOPE

This policy applies to Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) administrators, faculty, staff, and personnel.

POLICY STATEMENT

Describe the policy and the reason for the policy.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) recognizes the educational and communicative benefits of social media technology. The social media guidelines outlined in this policy are designed to promote responsible and safe social media use among students and all VIDE employees.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Define any acronyms, jargon, or terms that might have multiple meanings.

TERM	DEFINITION
GVI	Government of the Virgin Islands
VIDE	Virgin Islands Department of Education
Social Media	User-created content online designed in a collaborative environment where users share opinions, knowledge and information with each other. Tools include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, etc.)• Wikis (Wikispaces, Google Sites, etc.)• Social Networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Ning, MySpace, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.)• Photo and Video Sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, etc.)• Social Bookmarking (Diigo, Delicious)• Podcasting and Vodcasting

POLICY SECTIONS

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance regarding the use of social media to ensure appropriate use by VIDE employees of social media tools to enhance communication, internal collaboration, and communication with stakeholders. This policy outlines the measures and procedures needed to ensure compliance with laws and regulations that govern VIDE's social media activities.

NOTIFICATIONS

All VIDE employees will receive a copy of this policy annually. This policy supersedes all previously written memorandums and policies. The Department reserves the right to rescind and/or amend this and all Department policies at any time, with or without notice.

PROCEDURES

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I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Sharing confidential information on social media platforms is prohibited, including internal school discussions, specific information about students and/ or staff, or any material that violates privacy laws.
2. Written permission from the Office of Public Relations is required prior to using any school or VIDE logos or images and use is strictly limited to professional purposes only.
3. Written parental consent is required prior to posting or tagging photos or videos of students. Adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements is mandatory. Obtaining written consent from employees is also required prior to posting or tagging photos or videos of them on one's personal social media page.
4. Do not publish photographs of unknown origin. For example, you may not use images found on the web unless you know the status of their rights protection (i.e., some sites may require crediting the creator even if no fees are involved).
5. Compliance with copyright laws and fair use guidelines is required. Properly attribute sources, obtain permissions when needed, and avoid unauthorized use of copyrighted material. Copyright Law (17 U.S.C. Sec. 10-1511) protects original works of authorship and establishes rights and limitations for the use of copyrighted material on websites.

II. EMPLOYEES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Social Media Communications Involving Students

- a. Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times.
- b. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees' professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy.
- c. School personnel may use only school-controlled technological resources and social media tools (i.e., VIDE issued email) to communicate directly with students or to comment on student matters through use of the Internet.
- d. An employee seeking to establish a social networking website for school related purposes must have prior written approval from the superintendent or designee and principal and meet the requirements of VIDE's Website Content Management Policy and Technology and Internet Use Policy.
- e. The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an extension of the employee's workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, employees are expected to use professional judgment when using social media or other electronic communications.
- f. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students through a personal social network page.
 - i. An internet posting on a personal social media website intended for a particular student will be considered a form of direct communication with that student in violation of this policy.
 - ii. Exception: An employee may communicate with a student using personal social media networks to the extent the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, sport or religious organization.

2. Personal Use of social media by Employees:

These guidelines do not prohibit personal social media use outside of employment, as long as it does not disrupt the school environment, violate VIDE policies, and individuals exercise caution regarding potential online consequences.

- a. As role models for students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not performing their job duties as employees of the Department.
- b. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct.
- c. If an employee's use of social media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- d. Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends or members of the public who can access the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site.
 - i. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees or VIDE business.
 - ii. Employees shall not list current students as "friends" on social networking sites.

- iii. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social networking sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol or drug use or other behaviors associated with the employees' private lives that would be inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.
 - iv. Employees shall be professional in all internet postings related to or referencing VIDE, students and other employees.
 - v. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment.
 - vi. Employees shall not use VIDE's logo or other copyrighted material of the system without express, written consent from the Department.
 - vii. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family without permission from the student and the student's parent or legal guardian.
 - viii. Employees shall not use internet postings to libel or defame VIDE, students, or school personnel.
 - ix. Employees shall not use internet postings to harass, bully or intimidate other employees or students in violation of state and federal laws.
 - x. Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs.
 - xi. Employees shall not use internet postings to engage in any other conduct that violates VIDE policy and administrative procedures or state and federal laws.
- e. Employees should limit personal technology and social media use to non-work times or hours.
 - f. School employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal use during instructional time or with school system technological resources.

3. Access to Personal social media by VIDE Students:

- a. Employees should not grant access or provide privileges to students to view or interact with their personal social media profiles, except in cases where the students have a familial relationship or other type of appropriate relationship as described in Sec. II(1)(f) of this policy.
- b. Employees shall take reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to restrict students from viewing their personal information on social media websites and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate.

4. VIDE Official Social Media Platforms

- a. For any questions or concerns regarding the use of VIDE's official social media platforms, please refer to the Office of Public Relations for policies and procedures.
- b. Use of VIDE official social media platforms may be subject to the Web Content Management Policy, Policy No. V1-06.10.2025.

5. Enforcement:

- a. VIDE personnel shall monitor online activities of employees who access the Internet using school technological resources and devices.
- b. Additionally, periodic public internet searches may be conducted to determine if an employee has engaged in conduct that violates this policy.
- c. Any employee who has been found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with VIDE's Progressive Discipline Procedures.

EXCEPTIONS

No exceptions.

RELATED POLICIES, LOCAL/FEDERAL STATUTES, AND OTHER REFERENCES

Adapted From:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Copyrights, 17 U.S.C. Sec. 10-1511
- Virgin Islands Department of Education Technology and Internet Use Policy (TIUP)
- Virgin Islands Department of Education Website Content Management Policy
- Virgin Islands Department of Education Employee Handbook

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Office of Legal Counsel	Creation of the policy
Office of Public Relations	Input
VIDE Assistant Commissioner	Pre-Approval of the policy
VIDE Commissioner	Approval of the Policy



APPENDIX A

TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA USE

1. **Respectful and Inclusive Behavior:**
 - a. Treat others with respect, kindness, and empathy in all online interactions.
 - b. Refrain from engaging in cyberbullying, harassment, or hate speech.
 - c. Promote inclusivity by embracing diversity and avoiding discriminatory language or behavior.
2. **Privacy and Personal Information:**
 - a. Safeguard personal information and respect the privacy of others.
 - b. Use appropriate privacy settings on social media platforms to control the visibility of personal data.
 - c. Avoid sharing sensitive or confidential information online, such as addresses, phone numbers, or school-related details.
3. **Responsible Content Sharing:**
 - a. Think critically before posting or sharing content online, ensuring it is respectful, accurate, and appropriate.
 - b. Obtain permission from others before sharing their photos, videos, or personal information.
 - c. Respect copyright laws by giving credit to original creators when using their content and avoid plagiarism.
4. **Digital Footprint and Online Reputation:**
 - a. Understand that online actions leave a digital footprint that can have long-lasting consequences.
 - b. Regularly review and manage personal online presence, considering the potential impact on personal, educational, and professional life.
 - c. Strive to maintain a positive online reputation by engaging in constructive and meaningful interactions.
5. **Online Safety and Security:**
 - a. Be cautious when accepting friend requests or connecting with individuals online, prioritizing known and trusted connections.
 - b. Report and block any instances of suspicious or harmful behavior encountered on social media platforms.
 - c. Learn about privacy settings, account security features, and how to report inappropriate content or conduct.
6. **Critical Thinking and Media Literacy:**
 - a. Develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the reliability and credibility of online information.
 - b. Fact-check information before accepting it as true and avoid sharing unverified or misleading content.
 - c. Be aware of the potential for misinformation, scams, or online threats and seek reliable sources for information.
7. **Promoting Healthy Online Engagement and Seeking Help:**
 - a. Maintain a healthy balance between online and offline activities, limit screen time, and prioritize real-life interactions, hobbies, physical activities, and personal well-being.
 - b. Use social media as a tool for positive communication, learning, and self-expression rather than a sole means of socialization.
 - c. Report any instances of cyberbullying, harassment, or inappropriate behavior to a trusted adult, teacher, or school authority, and seek help or guidance from trusted adults if feeling overwhelmed or concerned about online experiences, while also supporting and assisting peers who may be victims of online harassment or need digital literacy support.