



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	District Social Media
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to **ensure the orderly operation of the District's schools by establishing** the process and standards for ~~the approval and operation of~~ **school district -owned social media accounts and personal social media accounts**, and to ~~identify the differences~~ **differentiate** between ~~personally owned~~ **personal and third party** social media accounts and those ~~accounts maintained~~ **controlled** by the District.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent shall develop procedures to implement this policy, and may delegate to designee(s) the right to enforce this policy.

Definitions

Social media - a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content, including photos and videos. Social media includes social networks, which are online platforms where users can create profiles, share information and personal messages, and connect with others.

Discriminatory or Harassing Comments - **comments or imagery that attack or mock an individual due to their real or perceived race, color, national origin / ethnicity, gender, age, disability , sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion.**

Limited Public Forum - **a government operated location where the public may comment and post online, subject to viewpoint neutral guidelines.**

Non-public Forum - **a government operated location where the public may not comment or post online; free expression by the public is restricted regardless of message or viewpoint.**

Personal Social Media Account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is ~~attributed to and operated by a school district employee individual school director or school director~~ **attributed to and operated by a school district employee individual school director or school director** for their personal use, **including personal professional development. A personal**

account is not regularly used to promote or communicate about school district events or activities, or the activities of students.

~~and is not approved by the Board as an official communications channel of the district.~~

School District Social Media Account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is approved by the Board and operated by a designated **school** district employee(s) **or school director in their professional capacity**, and **that** is designed to further the educational mission of the **school** district by **communicating with members of** ~~providing information to~~ the school community and general public.

~~**Designated public forum** - created when a district-owned social media account is intentionally opened for use by the public as a place for expressive activity where members of the public may communicate, post or comment on information, subject to viewpoint neutral rules designated by the Board. In terms of social media, this would include the ability of public users to comment on or reply to social media posts, pictures, or videos.~~

Third Party Social Media Account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is operated by a volunteer, student, parent, alumnus, or other member of the public on behalf of a club, foundation, sports team, or other extracurricular group affiliated with the school district. Third party social media accounts are *not* operated by school district employees or school board members.

Authority

~~The Board shall approve all official social media accounts created and/or maintained as district-owned accounts, including social media accounts for individual schools within the district. [1]~~

~~The Board establishes that district-owned social media accounts may operate as a designated public forum, where the public may comment and interact with information posted by the district, subject to the Board's established rules.~~

Guidelines

If any social media post is published using school district technology resources, including computing devices, mobile devices, and networks, the District's acceptable use policy applies and is hereby incorporated by reference. [2]

SCHOOL DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

School District social media accounts must remain professional, and consistent with the educational mission of the school district at all times. The operators of school district social media accounts are responsible for the content and the social media accounts that they manage.

Account Ownership

School District social media accounts are owned by the School District, and operated by school district employees or school directors on behalf of the School District. The Secretary to the Superintendent shall maintain a list of all social media accounts operated by the School District, along with a list of credential to access these accounts.

Photos, Videos, & Livestreams of Students

School District social media account operators may post photographs, videos, and livestreams of students engaged in the educational process or at school-related events unless the student's parents **have opted under FERPA's directory information sharing or if parents have declined to sign the District's media release form. The operators of School District social media accounts are responsible for complying with this provision.**

Public Comments

All School District social media accounts shall operate as either a non-public forum (where the public may not comment on the District's posts), or as a limited public forum, where the public may comment publicly on the District's posts - subject to certain guidelines. Whether a social media account is operated as a non-public forum or limited public forum shall be determined by the account operator.

The Board approves the following rules for public interaction with district-owned social media accounts and directs staff to post this information on the district website and all social media accounts:

The district encourages community members to respond to posts and share comments that are constructive and courteous toward the school community. Statements and opinions expressed by visitors to the account do not reflect the opinions of the district. Questions regarding information should be directed to the building principal or to the Superintendent's office for district-wide information. The district shall review comments and may remove comments which:

School District social media accounts that operated as a limited public forum shall include a prominent link to the following comment guidelines, posted on the School District's website. These comment guidelines may also be posted on the School District social media website:

1. **Comments must be related to the original School District post.**
2. **No personal attacks.** Contain threats or contain personal attacks on individuals in the school community.
3. **No profane, lewd, vulgar, or obscene posts.** Are profane, vulgar, harmful to minors or obscene, in accordance with Board policy.[2]
4. Promote or endorse commercial products, services or businesses.[3]
5. **No posts promoting violence, incite violence, or illegal conduct.** Promote, suggest or encourage illegal activity or incite violence.
6. **No posts that** contain confidential information.
7. Contain false or libelous statements.
8. **No discriminatory or harassing comments including** comments that contain hate speech directed at a protected class of individuals, in accordance with Board policy on discrimination and harassment.[4][5]
9. Are spamming in nature (same comment posted repeatedly).
10. **No posts that include links to external websites.**

Individual comments or posts that violate the above guidelines may be deleted (if possible given the social media platform) without further notice. Posts may not be deleted simply because they are critical of the School District, or because they promote an unpopular opinion, if the post otherwise complies with the above guidelines.

School District social media account operators may not block users from accessing the School District's social media posts. The **Technology Team leader** shall refer any user who repeatedly violates the above guidelines to the Superintendent for further investigation and potential legal remedies.

The school district may delete certain of its social media posts, in their entirety and including all comments, at the discretion of the District's administration. The District has no obligation to maintain its social media posts in perpetuity and their temporary presence on the internet is not a warranty of their future presence.

Delegation of Responsibility

~~The Board designates the Superintendent or designee to oversee all district-owned social media accounts and serve as the primary contact person for district-owned social media accounts.~~

~~The Superintendent or designee shall notify students and staff about this policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the district website and by other appropriate methods.~~

~~All district staff assigned to monitor and maintain district-owned social media accounts shall receive training on:~~

- ~~1. Regularly reviewing district-owned social media accounts, in coordination with the district's chief communications representative, to update, remove and/or correct information.[6]~~
- ~~2. Complying with confidentiality provisions of student and staff information, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[7][8]~~
- ~~3. Monitoring content for confidentiality and intellectual property violations, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate district staff to consider further action.[7][8][9]~~
- ~~4. Monitoring content for web accessibility standards and responding to public requests for accommodations.[2][4][5]~~
- ~~5. Monitoring public comments and responding, where appropriate, with clarification or redirection to additional information.~~
- ~~6. Monitoring public comments according to the Board's established rules, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate district staff to consider further action. Staff shall be provided training to assess comments in a viewpoint neutral manner, based on the Board's approved rules, regardless of the specific subject matter of comments.~~

~~The Board authorizes designated district staff maintaining district-owned social media accounts to remove individual posts or comments by public users that violate the established social media rules of this policy. The Board directs that review and consideration of posts or comments shall not discriminate on the basis of content or viewpoint, and staff must always be able to articulate the reason for removing a specific post, in accordance with Board policy. Staff may consult with the Superintendent or designee and the school solicitor in determining appropriate actions. Posts and comments may not be removed solely because they are critical of the district or district leadership, because they promote an unpopular opinion, or because of their viewpoint if the post or comment otherwise complies with the established social media rules.~~

~~Designated district staff may not block users from accessing or commenting on district-owned social media accounts unless the outside account is identified as a security or system threat or spam account. Staff may consult with the Superintendent or designee and the school solicitor in determining appropriate actions.~~

Tagging

School District social media account operators may tag the social media accounts of educational applications, products, and services, so long as the District or its employees do not receive financial or other tangible compensation for the tag.

School District social media account operators shall not tag individual students using their social media usernames or handles, but may tag other adult members of the school district community.

School District social media accounts shall not be used to communicate directly with students. One-to-one communication with a student shall be limited to electronic resources provided or approved by the District such as e-mail or classroom

management applications.

Guidelines

Posting of Personally Identifiable Information

~~The Board authorizes posting of student images in photos or videos depicting the educational process or school-related events on district-owned social media accounts, unless the students' parents/guardians have opted out of sharing directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Board policy, or have declined to sign and return the district's notice of photography permission form.~~[7][8][10][11]

~~The Board prohibits posting of other personally identifiable information of students on district-owned social media accounts without the consent of the parent/guardian, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.~~[7][8]

~~The Board prohibits posting of staff images in photos or videos when a staff member has submitted a request to the Superintendent or designee that their image not be posted publicly online.~~

~~The Board directs district staff to post images and information to social media accounts in a manner that protects the safety and security of students and staff, such as posting images without identification.~~

Accessibility

The Board directs district staff who maintain district-owned social media accounts to post content that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, to the greatest extent possible based on the limitations of the platform. This shall include, but is not limited to:[4][5][12][13][14][15]

1. Including alternate text descriptions or captions for images.
2. Including captions for video content.
3. **Including captions for livestreams.**
4. Avoiding text that is posted as an image.
5. **Avoiding acronyms, wherever possible.**
6. Creating links and attachments in formats that are accessible to screen readers and other assistive technology.
7. Formatting text so that it is accessible to screen readers and other assistive technology.

All district-owned social media accounts shall contain clear contact information that may be used by members of the public to request accommodations or assistance. **The Technology Team Leaders or designee shall ensure that all individuals operating School District social media accounts receive training on social media accessibility.**

Intellectual Property Rights / Copyright

The illegal use of copyrighted, branded or trademarked materials or trade secrets is prohibited on district-owned social media accounts. All content shall be subject to copyright fair use guidelines and applicable laws, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations. **The operator of a School District social media account is responsible for ensuring compliance with this provision.** [9]

~~When an official Board-approved corporate sponsorship or partnership includes connecting with the sponsor on district-owned social media accounts through linking or tagging, such connections shall be addressed in accordance with the provisions of the approved contract or partnership.~~

~~District-owned social media accounts may be connected through linking or tagging to social media accounts of parent-teacher organizations, district-related booster organizations or similar school-related groups when the content or information has been reviewed and approved by the district's chief communications representative.~~

Reposts

School District social media accounts may highlight social media posts by others by reposting their messages, so long as the repost follows these guidelines.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ~~Personal Social Media Accounts~~

~~The district shall not authorize, endorse or participate in posting on private social media accounts of individual school directors or school employees.~~ **School district employees may not use personal social media accounts to communicate privately (via direct message or private chat) with students concerning any school district business. One-to-one communication with a student concerning any school district business shall be limited to the electronic resources provided or approved by the District such as e-mail or classroom management applications.**

School district employees are urged to exercise extreme caution before communicating with students via social media about non-school matters. Such electronic communication may cross professional boundaries in violation of the Pennsylvania Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators, and the Educator Discipline Act. School district employees are urged to maintain strict professional boundaries on social media, and to protect against even the appearance of impropriety.

School district employees and school directors shall not post personally identifiable and otherwise confidential information from educational records on their personal social media accounts. Personally identifiable information includes information that could indirectly identify a student through linkages with other information.

School directors and **school district** employees are strongly encouraged to use privacy settings on **personal** social media accounts **to ensure that a professional boundary is maintained between the employee and students and parents.** ~~and to clearly identify that it is their personal social media account and that it does not officially represent the Board or district.~~

~~In accordance with Board policy establishing professional boundaries, school employees should only communicate with students through district-provided communication devices or platforms, and shall not follow, accept or make requests to connect or be friends with current students on personal social networking or social media platforms.[16]~~

The district respects employees' freedom of expression. The district does not actively monitor personal social media accounts of current school employees; however, the district reserves the right to address employees' job-related speech or employee speech posted on social media that has the potential to affect the district's operations. **Nonetheless, should the School District administration or school director's attention be brought to a personal social media post that demonstrates insubordination, immorality, cruelty, unlawful discrimination, or other unlawful act(s), or that impedes the efficient and effective operation of the school district, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.** ~~Speech that takes place off-site and on an employee's own time, including posting on personal social media accounts, may be addressed if the district establishes that the employee's expression infringed on the interests of the district in promoting the efficient and effective functioning and educational purpose of the district. If employee speech or expression would violate law or Board policy in a traditional forum, it is also prohibited in an online forum. When an employee speaks as a citizen~~

~~on a matter of public concern, the district shall consult with the school solicitor in determining the appropriate course of action, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.~~
[\[17\]](#)[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#)[\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#)[\[22\]](#)

Student use of personal social media accounts shall be addressed in accordance with applicable Board policies and administrative regulations related to student conduct, expression and students' individual rights and responsibilities. In accordance with Board policy, the district shall provide education on network etiquette and appropriate online behavior for students, including interaction with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyberbullying awareness and response.[\[2\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[23\]](#)[\[24\]](#)[\[25\]](#)[\[26\]](#)[\[27\]](#)[\[28\]](#)

THIRD PARTY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Third party social media accounts are not operated or controlled by the School District. These accounts are privately created and maintained, and are not actively monitored by the District. Third party social media accounts may not use the School District's logo(s), unless given express written permission by the Superintendent.

The School District encourages the operators of all third party social media accounts to be good-faith ambassadors of the school district, and to operate these private social media accounts in a manner that represents the School District in a positive light.

Consequences for Violation of this Policy

A district employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with applicable law, regulations, Board policy and administrative regulations.[\[16\]](#)[\[21\]](#)[\[29\]](#)

Legal	1. 24 P.S. 510
	2. Pol. 815
	3. Pol. 913
	4. Pol. 103
	5. Pol. 104
	6. Pol. 911
	7. Pol. 113.4
	8. Pol. 216
	9. Pol. 814
	10. 20 U.S.C. 1232g
	11. 34 CFR Part 99
	12. 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq
	13. 29 U.S.C. 794
	14. 28 CFR 35.160
	15. Pol. 103.1
	16. Pol. 824
	17. 24 P.S. 1122
	18. 24 P.S. 2070.1a et seq
	19. 22 PA Code 235.1 et seq
	20. U.S. Const. Amend. I
	21. Pol. 317

22. Pol. 320

[23. 24 P.S. 1303.1-A](#)

[24. 47 U.S.C. 254](#)

25. Pol. 218

26. Pol. 220

27. Pol. 235

28. Pol. 249

29. Pol. 317.1

Knight First Amendment Inst. at Columbia Univ. v. Trump, 928 F.3d 226 (2d Cir. 2019)

Davison v. Randall, 912 F.3d 666 (4th Cir. 2019)

Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 410 (2006)

Mike Campbell v. Cheri Toalson Reish, 986 F.3d 822 (8th Cir. 2021)

Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 U.S. 563 (1968)

Connick v. Myers, 461 U.S. 138 (1983)

Rankin v. McPherson, 483 U.S. 378 (1988)

Pol. 801

Cross References

22 PA Code 235.9