



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	District Social Media
Code	816 Vol II 2021
Status	
Last Reviewed	October 18, 2021

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the process and standards for approval and operation of district-owned social media accounts, and to identify the differences between personally owned social media accounts and those maintained by the district.

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.

District-owned social media account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is approved by the Board and operated by a designated district employee(s), and is designed to further the educational mission of the district by providing information to the school community and general public.

Personal social media account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is attributed to and operated by an employee, individual school director or student for personal use and is not approved by the Board as an official communications channel of the district.

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.

Authority

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

All district-owned social media accounts shall display the official name, logo, seal, mascot of the district, or the individual district school.

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.

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:

1. Are profane, vulgar, harmful to minors or obscene, in accordance with Board policy.[2]
2. Contain threats or contain personal attacks on individuals in the school community.
3. Promote, suggest or encourage illegal activity or incite violence.
4. Promote or endorse commercial products, services or businesses.[3]
5. Contain confidential information.
6. Contain false or libelous statements.
7. Contain hate speech directed at a protected class of individuals, in accordance with Board policy on discrimination and harassment.[4][5]
8. Are spamming in nature (same comment posted repeatedly).

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.

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 [7][8][10][11], or have declined to sign and return the district's notice of photography permission form.

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. Avoiding text that is posted as an image.
4. Creating links and attachments in formats that are accessible to screen readers and other assistive technology.
5. 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.

Intellectual Property Rights

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.[9]

Connecting with Other Social Media Accounts

Content or information posted to district-owned social media accounts shall not be connected to other social media accounts through linking or tagging if the outside account is for a commercial application, product or service and the district or its employees would receive financial or other compensation as a result of the connection, 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 shall not be connected to social media accounts of individual students through linking or tagging. 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.

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 directors and employees are strongly encouraged to use privacy settings on social media accounts 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. 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]

Consequences

A district employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and 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