



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	District Social Media
Code	816
Status	Second Reading
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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 operation of school district social media accounts and personal social media accounts**, and to **differentiate** between **personal and third party** social media accounts and those **accounts 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 operated by a school district employee 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.**

School District Social Media Account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is operated by a **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** the school community and general public.

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.

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.

1. **Comments must be related to the original School District post.**
2. **No personal attacks**
3. **No profane, lewd, vulgar, or obscene posts.**[2]
4. **No posts promoting violence, incite violence, or illegal conduct.**
5. **No posts that** contain confidential information.
6. Contain false or libelous statements.
7. **No discriminatory or harassing comments including** comments that contain hate speech directed at a protected class of individuals[4][5]
8. Are spamming in nature (same comment posted repeatedly).
9. **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.

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.

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]

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

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.**

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.** [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