

Book: Blackhawk SD Policy Manual

Section: 800 Operations

Title: Social Media Use

Code: 817

Status: Second Read

Legal:

1. 24 P.S. 1-101, et seq.
  2. 22 Pa Code 235.1 et seq.
  3. Pol. 248
  4. Pol. 249
  5. 18 Pa.C.S.A. 5703
- 20 USC 1232g  
Pol. 216  
Pol. 320  
Pol. 420  
Pol. 520

Adopted:

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to articulate the guidelines and limitations established by the Board of School Directors regarding the authorized use of social media by individuals associated with the School District which includes, but is not limited to, School District employees, School Board members, coaches, advisors, and students.

### **Authority**

The Pennsylvania Public School Code, 24 P.S. 1-101, et seq., provides the nine (9) elected Board members (hereinafter referred to as "Board") with the collective authority to govern the operations of the Blackhawk Area School District. [1] Much of the Board's authority to oversee the day-to-day operations of the School District has been delegated to the Superintendent. All School District employees are responsible for performing their respective job responsibilities in accordance with the policies of the Board; the Administrative procedures established by the Superintendent; the rules and regulations of the Department of Education; and, the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In accordance with Board policy establishing professional boundaries, school employees should only communicate with students through district-approved communication devices or platforms, such as TeamSnap, ClassDojo, and/or Remind, and shall not follow, accept, or make requests to connect or to be friends with current students on personal social networking or social media platforms.

Employees engaging in inappropriate electronic communications with students, whether via district-approved communication devices and platforms or personal social networking or social media platforms, as defined herein, will be investigated by school officials, and, if warranted, will be disciplined, up to and including termination. [2] Depending upon the nature or severity of the

offense, the District may notify the proper authorities, including the Pennsylvania Department of Education, local police, Childline, and child welfare agencies for further investigation.

Users should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, generate, communicate, post, share, preserve and/or exchange through the use of social media in their capacity as an employee, coach, advisor, or student of the District, including but not limited to; information, thoughts, ideas, messages, data, pictures, videos, and/or computer-generated images.

### **Definitions**

1. The term “social media” is defined as computer-mediated means of allowing people to create, generate, communicate, post, share, preserve and/or exchange information, thoughts, ideas, messages, data, pictures, videos and/or computer-generated images via virtual communities, sites, and/or networks. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Snap-chat, Instagram, Truth Social, and TikTok.
2. The term “computer-mediated means” is defined as the accessing of social media through the use of electronic devices.
3. The term “use of social media” is defined as the utilization of an electronic device to create, generate, post, share, preserve and/or exchange information, ideas, data, pictures, videos, animated images and/or communications via virtual communities, sites, and/or networks.
4. The term “authorized use of social media” is defined as the use of social media in the furtherance of one’s job, educational and/or volunteer responsibilities with the School District in accordance with this Policy.
5. The term “personal use of social media” is defined as the use of a personal social media account for non-work-related social media activity that is not in any way associated with the District.

### **Guidelines for the Use of Social Media**

The Board recognizes that there are legitimate benefits derived from the proper and authorized use of social media by individuals associated with the School District; and, that the improper and/or unauthorized use of social media by individuals associated with the School District may materially and substantially interfere with the School District’s operations and/or the rights of others. As such, the Board establishes the guidelines listed below.

1. School Board members. In the event that the Board wishes to use social media as a means of communication, it will publicly vote to approve the use of social media by the Board and designate the authorized Board member(s) and/or designee(s); it will utilize the social media resources available to the School District; the Superintendent and/or the Director of Technology will coordinate the Board’s use of social media. Log-in credentials shall be maintained by the Data Coordinator and/or her designee.

2. Individual Board members. Unless prior approval is obtained by the Board as indicated above, individual Board members are not authorized to use social media to communicate on behalf of the Board. In the event that an individual Board member uses social media without the prior approval of the Board, he or she is using social media in his or her capacity as a private citizen, not in his or her capacity as a Board member.

3. School District employees. A School District employee may be permitted to use social media in the furtherance of his or her job responsibilities if the employee obtains the Superintendent's prior written authorization; and, if his or her use of social media complies with this Policy. Log-in credentials shall be maintained by the Data Coordinator and/or her designee. Personal use of social media during the school day is not permitted.

4. Coaches and Club/Program Advisors. A School District coach or advisor may be permitted to use social media in the furtherance of his or her responsibilities if the coach or advisor obtains the Superintendent's prior written authorization; and, if his or her use of social media complies with this Policy. Log-in credentials shall be maintained by the Data Coordinator and/or her designee.

5. Students. A Student may be permitted to use social media in the furtherance of his or her educational obligations and responsibilities if one of the student's teachers recommends in writing that the student be permitted to use social media to further his or her educational obligations; if the student obtains the building Principal's prior written authorization; and, if his or her use of social media complies with this Policy.

Taking, sharing, and/or disseminating unauthorized photos/videos of staff and impersonating staff is strictly prohibited.

Taking, sharing, and/or disseminating photos/videos of other students and impersonating other students without their knowledge and/or with the intent to harass, intimidate, or bully other students is subject to disciplinary action and to investigation by the school resource officer and/or law enforcement. [3][4]

Recording others without their consent is a criminal offense under the Pennsylvania Wiretap Law. [5]

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

The District does not actively monitor personal social media accounts for its employees. Nonetheless, should the District administration or School Board's attention be brought to a Personal Social Media Post that demonstrates insubordination, immorality, cruelty, unlawful discrimination, other unlawful act(s), or that impedes the efficient and effective operation of the District, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

Student use of personal social media accounts shall be addressed in accordance with Board policy and applicable state and federal laws. Off-campus student use of personal social media accounts that cause a substantial and material disruption to the operations of the school is also subject to disciplinary action.

### **Prohibited Activity**

Users must refrain from communicating inappropriate materials and information when using **social media of any kind for instruction or personal purposes**, bearing in mind that such

materials may be copied and forwarded by others, including but not limited to: (i) confidential, personally identifiable, and sensitive District information about students, employees, and guests; (ii) child pornography, sexual exploitation, bullying/cyberbullying, inappropriate commercialization of childhood experiences, (iii) defamatory statements and images, (iv) proprietary information of the District and/or a District's vendor, (v) infringed upon intellectual property, such as copyright ownership, and circumvented technology protection measures (vi) terroristic threats, (vii) unlawful threats against students, employees, and guests, (viii) illegal items and activities (ix) to the extent not protected by law, profane, racist, sexist or derogatory content or comments, and (x) any communication that violates District policies or state, local or federal laws or regulations.

### **Rights of the Individuals as Private Citizens**

The Board recognizes and acknowledges that individual School District employees, Board members, coaches, advisors, volunteers or students have the right to express their opinions regarding the educational, financial, operational and other affairs of the School District. However, if an individual makes use of social media as a School District employee, Board member, coach, advisor, volunteer or student, as defined herein, the use of social media must comply with this Policy. Further, the disclosure of confidential information obtained in one's role as Board member, employee, coach, advisor, volunteer, Booster, parent organization member, or student should not be disclosed via social media.

To the extent that any part or all of this Policy is determined to violate an individual's rights under the Constitution of the United States of America; the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; or any Federal or State law or regulation, said part or all of this Policy shall be modified and/or read in a manner consistent with any such provision in the law.