

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Operations of School District-owned Social Media Accounts

Purpose

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

Definitions

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 or religion, or which otherwise constitute bullying.

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.

School District-owned social media account - a social media account, regardless of platform, operated by a designated School District employee(s), and is designed to further the educational mission of the School 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, contracted employee, individual school director or student for personal use and is not approved by the Board as an official communications channel of the School District.

Designated public forum - created when a School 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.

Nonpublic forum – created when a School District-owned social media account enables members of the public to read and receive School District information, but the School District has not designated opportunity for expressive activity by the public, and no commenting or posting of information by members of the public is permitted. In terms of social media, the ability to comment, post or reply is disabled on the School District’s account for public users.

Authority

The Board shall have the final approval for all basic policy concerning social media and School District-owned accounts, including social media accounts for individual schools within the School District.[\[1\]](#)

All School District-owned social media accounts shall display the official name and logo of the School District or the individual District school or department.

School 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 established rules.

Account operators must have the profanity filter set to “Strong” on Facebook and Instagram and hide any inappropriate comments. Posts and comments of an inappropriate nature or containing information unrelated to official or School District business must be reported and/or deleted promptly.

Operating as a designated public forum, school sponsored social media accounts are moderated and all comments are subject to review by School District moderators. While comments will not be edited or screened for viewpoint, the following rules for public interaction with School District-owned social media accounts will be posted on the School District website and all social media accounts:

The School 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 School District. Questions regarding information should be directed to the school principal or to the Office of Public Relations and Media Content for School District-wide information. The School District shall review comments and may remove comments which:

1. Are profane, vulgar, harmful to minors or obscene.
2. Contain threats or contain personal attacks of any kind on an individual or group of individuals.

3. Promote, suggest or encourage illegal activity or incite violence.
4. Promote or endorse commercial products, services or businesses.[3]
5. Contain confidential information or divulges personal student or staff 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).
9. Violate social media platforms' Terms of Use.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board designates the Office of Public Relations and Media Content to oversee all School District-owned social media accounts and serve as the primary contact person(s) for School District-owned social media accounts.

The Superintendent or designee shall notify students and staff about this policy through posting on the School District website and by other appropriate methods.

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

1. Regularly reviewing School District-owned social media accounts, in coordination with the Director of Public Relations or their designee, to update, remove and/or correct information.
2. Complying with confidentiality provisions of student and staff information, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[7]
3. Monitoring content for confidentiality and intellectual property violations, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate School District staff to consider further action.[7][8]
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 established rules, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate School District staff to consider further action. Staff shall be provided training to assess comments in a viewpoint neutral manner, based on District policies, regardless of the specific subject matter of comments.

Designated School District staff maintaining School District-owned social media accounts may remove individual posts or comments by public users that violate the established rules.

The 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 established rules. 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 School District or School 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 School District staff may not block users from accessing or commenting on School 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

Account Ownership

School-sponsored social media accounts are owned by the School District, and operated by School District employees on behalf of the School District. The Director of Public Relations or their designee shall maintain a list of all school-sponsored social media accounts, along with a list of credentials to access all school-sponsored accounts. It is the responsibility of the individual who creates the school-sponsored social media account to report the account's credentials to the Director of Public Relations or their designee.

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 School 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 via the School District's Photo, Video, Website and Social Media Release Form have declined to have their child photographed/videotaped.[\[7\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)

The posting of other personally identifiable information of students on School District-owned social media accounts without the consent of the parent/guardian, in accordance with applicable law, regulations, Board policy and administrative regulations is prohibited.[\[7\]](#)

The 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 is prohibited.

The Board directs School District staff to post images and information to social media accounts in a manner that protects the safety and security of students and staff, per Board Policy 220.

Disclaimer

PPS is not responsible for and does not necessarily endorse or oppose any points made by commenters on any PPS social media channels. Commenters are solely responsible for their own comments and are urged to exercise good judgment, including but not limited to the rules and expectations set out above.

Individual comments or posts that violate the guidelines contained herein may be deleted or hidden (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.

Intellectual Property Rights

The illegal use of copyrighted, branded or trademarked materials or trade secrets is prohibited on School 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.[\[8\]](#)

Connecting with Other Social Media Accounts

Content or information posted to School 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 School District or its employees would receive financial or other compensation as a result of the connection.

School District-owned social media accounts shall not be connected to social media accounts of individual students through linking or tagging.

School District-owned social media accounts may be connected through linking or tagging to social media accounts of parent-teacher organizations, School District-related booster organizations or similar school-related groups.

Personal Social Media Accounts

The School 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 the School District.

In accordance with Board policy establishing professional boundaries, School District employees should only communicate with students through School 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.[15]

The School District recognizes an employee's right to free speech, as discussed in Policy 311.

Consequences

A School 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.[15]

Legal References

[1. 24 P.S. 510](#)

2. Pol. 913

3. Pol. 1008

4. Pol. 102

5. Pol. 102.4

6. Pol. 1006

7. Pol. 210

8. Pol. 912

[9. 20 U.S.C. 1232g](#)

[10. 34 CFR Part 99](#)

[11. 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq](#)

[12. 29 U.S.C. 794](#)

[13. 28 CFR 35.160](#)

15. Pol. 923

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. 901