

SCHOOL DISTRICT of BOROUGH of MORRISVILLE

SECTION: OPERATIONS
TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA

ADOPTED: September 24, 2014
REVISED: September 26, 2018

Purpose

The District utilizes social media to support curriculum and instruction and communicate information about District programs and services to students, parents, and the community. This policy is intended to assist School District of Borough of Morrisville ("District") employees, students, and other parties utilizing District social media accounts, and/or District technology resources to access or otherwise use social media accounts, in making good decisions while communicating, blogging, and otherwise using social media sites, in accordance with District policy.

Employees are reminded that they are professionals and are representatives of the District and the community in all aspects of their lives and should conduct themselves publicly in accordance with the responsibilities of public service. Employees are personally responsible for their own online activity and must be mindful that any information, posts, photos, or other online activity is available to the public at large. [\[1\]\[2\]](#)

Definitions

The term **social media** includes, but is not limited to: blogs; wikis; social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, RSS, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, Snapchat, etc.; podcasts; video sharing; instant messaging; email; and all online collaboration information and publishing systems including school-sponsored student/teacher information exchange sites.

Guidelines

General Prohibitions

Employees are prohibited from engaging in any personal online activity, including accessing social media accounts or sites, during work hours or on District technology resources. For the purposes of this policy, "District technology resources" shall be defined as per the definition of this term in Policy 815, Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources. Students are prohibited from engaging in any personal online activity, including accessing social media accounts or sites, while utilizing District technology resources, unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent or designee. [\[3\]](#)

Use of the District's equipment and technology should be used legally, efficiently, and for work or educational purposes only.

All activity using the District technology resources may be monitored by the District in accordance with District policy. [3]

Employees may not use their District email address for any reason that is not related to District business, including outside businesses, personal use, or for creating accounts or profiles on social media sites.

It is prohibited for an employee, student, or other party to establish a social media site on any online forum that is attributable to the District or to represent online that they are communicating the views of the District. Employees, students, or other parties may not use the District's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political party or candidate online or through social media. Further, employees, students, or other parties may not use the District letterhead or logo in any online or social media posting.

Exceptions to the above-stated prohibitions may be made where use of social media is consistent with the educational mission of the District and has been approved in advance by the Superintendent or designee, at his/her discretion, or by a majority vote of the Members of the Board of School Directors present at a public Board of School Directors ("Board") meeting, provided that other requirements to permit the Board to take official action at such meeting are met.

Violations of this policy may result in employee discipline or student discipline in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, as relevant, and/or revocation of or limitations on the ability to use District technology resources. [3]

Official District-Related Social Media Use

A social media account that has been approved by the Superintendent or designee for official District-related purposes ("Official District Account") shall be created using a District-provided email address and access information shall be provided to the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall maintain a list of Official District Accounts and a list of the employees approved to manage and maintain those accounts. No other persons other than approved District employees shall be authorized or otherwise use Official District Accounts.

All posts on an Official District Account must be approved by the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall be required to monitor and review Official District Accounts on a regular basis to ensure their continued appropriateness for their intended use. All Official District Accounts and related social media activities are subject to supervision, monitoring, review, and removal by the Superintendent or designee at any time, with or without notice.

Official District Accounts and related social media activities shall be viewed as an extension of the District. An employee's online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that is required in a classroom or face-to-face encounter within the District. All District policies and practices related to employee conduct extend to use of Official District Accounts and related online activities. [4][5]

Official District Accounts shall not have a comment or other posting feature or shall have this feature turned "off."

Employees are reminded that all activity using District technology resources, including District email accounts, internet or technology infrastructure, may be monitored at any time, with or without

notice and is retained in accordance with District policy and the applicable law. Employees shall have no expectation of privacy in regard to their use of Official District Accounts.

Crowdfunding, Crowdsourcing, and Other Social Media and Online Fundraising Activities

It is the district's policy to ensure, to the best of its ability, that gifts and donations being solicited in the school district's name do not mislead donors, are not misused or misappropriated by the fundraiser or third party fundraising platforms, and to protect against the disclosure of confidential student information in fundraising activities. Donations may not be solicited on behalf of the school district without first obtaining prior written approval from the Board, unless otherwise authorized per District policy. Approval to raise funds or solicit donations via a crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, social media, or other online platform shall be requested through the submission of a written proposal.

Individuals, organizations, groups, and other entities may not represent that they are soliciting donations on behalf of the school district where they have not received prior approval from the Superintendent or designee. Where approval has not been obtained, the individual, organization, group, or other entity must clearly identify and communicate to potential donors that the donations being solicited are for their personal use only and will not be considered a donation to the school district for tax or any other purposes unless and until the donations are approved by the administration, submitted for approval, and formally accepted by, the Board. The district recommends that in such instances, a disclaimer be used, such as:

This fundraising activity has not been sanctioned or endorsed by the School District of Borough of Morrisville. Donations made to *[name of requester]* will not be considered a donation to the School District unless and until the donation is approved by the School District's Administration and accepted by the School Board. The School Board has the right to reject donations.

The solicitation of donations on online crowdsourcing forums or through other internet sources must be through known and trusted fundraising sites that limit the risk of misuse or misappropriation of the funds raised. The Board reserves the right to reject certain sites where such risk is present. Where possible, donations solicited on behalf of the district should be sent from the forum/donation site directly to the building administrator or District administrator, and not to the teacher personally. [6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14]

All persons are encouraged to speak with District administration about the ability to fund the resources requested before seeking outside donations. The solicitation of donations on online crowdsourcing forums or through other internet sources shall be in compliance with Board policy and applicable law. [4][5]

Personal Social Media Use

a. Employees

Although personal, off-hours, and off-location use of social media is largely unrelated to school, certain types of communication by virtue of its subject matter may relate enough to the District and the workplace to result in discipline of an employee by the District. Such inappropriate communications shall include: threatening language or images typed, posted or spoken; information that could create the danger of disruption of the academic environment; stalking of others; knowingly

or recklessly posting false or defamatory information about a person or organization; posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or District policy; posts that interfere with the efficiencies and operations of the District; and/or or posts that may constitute inappropriate communications pursuant to applicable law.

District employees must be aware that inappropriate online communications may subject an employee to discipline by the District in accordance with District policy and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Employees are encouraged to maintain a clear distinction between their personal social media use and use of Official District Accounts and related online activities.

By identifying yourself as a District employee online, your posts might be interpreted as views of the District. Employees may not act in any manner that creates a false impression that they are communicating on behalf of or as a representative of the District unless explicitly authorized to do so by the Superintendent.

To avoid misleading statements, District employees are encouraged to include disclaimers within their personal postings stating that the views are their own and do not reflect those of the District. For example: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the views, positions or policies of the Morrisville Borough School District." The provision of any such disclaimer does not itself exempt employees from compliance with this or other applicable District policies.

The District does not assume liability for an employees' non-school, outside activities online.

b. Students

Certain types of communication on students' social media accounts, though outside of school hours and off school district property, may by virtue of its subject matter relate enough to the District to result in student discipline. Such communications include communications that: substantially disrupt, or cause school officials to reasonably forecast substantial disruption of, school activities, or such other communications as permitted under law. Students may be subject to discipline by the District for such communications on their personal social media accounts pursuant to applicable District policy and regulation and the Code of Conduct. [15][16][17]

The District does not assume liability for a students' non-school, outside activities online.

Confidentiality

It is essential that the confidentiality of District student, employee, and other confidential information is maintained at all times, unless waived by the applicable individual or, in the case of a minor, such individual's parent, in accordance with applicable law. Employees must abide by the established District policies regarding confidential student, employee, and personal information and records as well as applicable local, state, and federal laws when using social media for personal or District-approved uses. Employees should bear in mind that this rule applies even if the District, Board, students, parents/guardians, and current and former employees are not identified by name, but the disclosed information may enable someone to identify the individual. [3][18]

The use of images or photographs or other personal identification of District students unrelated to the employee on a social media account or other online forum, is prohibited without express parental

permission. Employees may not post photographs or other images of District facilities without the authorization of the Superintendent or designee. [3][18]

Employee Communication with Students

All communications with students should be for District-related purposes only and enhance the educational goals of the District. Employees shall not contact students through personal social media accounts, personal email, or through any other electronic means or online interaction, outside of those forums approved for and dedicated to educational use. If an employee finds it necessary to communicate with students using personal technology, s/he must maintain professional interaction at all times in accordance with District policies and applicable laws.

Professionalism

Employees must be cognizant that if they identify themselves as District employees, they should ensure that all content is consistent with how they wish to represent themselves to parents, students and colleagues. Employees should consider whether the disclosure of information will jeopardize their ability to effectively and professionally perform their job.

Because online content is publicly-available and can be disseminated to a mass audience in seconds, the District encourages its employees to familiarize themselves with privacy settings, policies, and protections on any social media site that they subscribe to. Information posted online is often exposed to District parents and students, and may be reported to District administration, and may further result in discipline depending upon the nature of such information and content. The District therefore encourages its employees to give serious consideration before posting any comment, photo, or statement online, and ask themselves whether they would be comfortable with publishing that information directly to students, parents, or colleagues.

Employee Rights

Nothing contained in this policy shall be interpreted, construed or applied in any manner that would restrict employee's personal, off-duty, online speech on matters of public concern, unless the District's interest in restricting such speech outweighs the employee's First Amendment rights.

Nothing contained in this policy shall be interpreted, construed or applied in any manner that would interfere with or restrain any employee's right to engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. This right is not limited to employees who are represented by unions.

Employees must remember that there is no reasonable expectation in privacy for online activities that are posted in plain view or that are voluntarily provided to the District by a third person. Employees have no expectation of privacy when using District Official Accounts, District-provided equipment, or the District's technology infrastructure.

Record Maintenance

Posts on District Official Accounts are records that may be subject to disclosure pursuant to the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law, 65 P.S. §§ 67.101-67.3104. Such posts shall be maintained in accordance with the District's schedule for maintenance of District records. [3][19][20]

Legal

[1. 24 P.S. § 4-407](#)

[2. 24 P.S. § 5-510](#)

3. Pol. 815

4. Pol. 322

5. Pol. 702

6. Pol. 103

7. Pol. 103.1

8. Pol. 104

9. Pol. 348

10. Pol. 448

11. Pol. 548

12. Pol. 317

13. Pol. 417

14. Pol. 517

15. Pol. 218

16. Pol. 220

17. Pol. 249

18. Pol. 216

[19. 65 P.S. § § 67.101-67.3104](#)

20. Pol. 801