

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

The following guidelines address procedures and best practices for professional-use social media accounts created to represent Bethlehem Central School District (the District) groups, departments, programs, etc., and the District as a whole, and do not apply to personal/individual accounts.

Definitions

Social Media: Includes all methods of interaction online in all forms of user-generated and distributed content including, but not limited to, blogs and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, etc.).

Professional Use: Refers to the creation of social media accounts by staff or students to advance a program or function of the District or represent the District on social media. Content *includes or reflects the opinions or representation* of the District or group within/governed by the District.

Personal Use: Refers to the use of social media for personal use, although this may include some work-related or school-related activities such as networking or promoting a District program or service. Content *reflects the personal opinion* of the account holder.

Guidelines for Professional-Use Social Media Accounts

Upon prior approval, students or employees may use social media for educational or promotional purposes. A student's or employee's professional use of social media must be preapproved by the superintendent, or his/her designees, in consultation with the building principal, and follow the guidelines set forth in the District's Acceptable Use Policy #4526, the Bethlehem Central Social Media Handbook, the Terms of Service of the social network used, and New York State law.

Dignity for All Students Act

Section VIII of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), "Guidance on Bullying and Cyberbullying," outlines the District's responsibility to address cyberbullying not only within our schools, but also incidents that occur off school property that could "foreseeably disrupt" the school environment. This guidance includes any conduct taking place on social media and at any time of the day. Any student disciplinary actions as it relates to conduct on social media and cyberbullying will follow the District's Code of Conduct (Policy #5300).

Monitoring of District-Sponsored Accounts

The District's communications office is responsible for reviewing and approving all social media applications for the District, in consultation with the District superintendent, technology office, Board of Education (the Board), and members of the District leadership team. An application form can be found in the Bethlehem Central Social Media Handbook.

The communications office reserves the right, with superintendent approval, to remove content posted to, or within the comment sections of, District social media sites that:

- is off-topic;
- contains personal attacks;
- contains spam;
- contains offensive language;
- contains private/confidential information; and/or

- contains viewpoints that are not those of the commenter (such as when an account is hacked or used by another person).

Appropriate Use When Utilizing Social Media

District employees are expected to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, District staff, media, and other District stakeholders apply online as in the real world. Employees are responsible for anything they post to social media sites.

The Board requires that all District employees maintain a professional, ethical relationship with students that is conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. The District recognizes that teachers will have direct contact and instructional conversations via electronic means (i.e., email, Google Classroom). Staff members should act as role models for students at all times, whether on or off school property, both during and outside of school hours, and with caution when using communications tools including, but not limited to, email, texts, phone calls, publicly accessible websites, blogs, and/or social networking sites.

Staff must establish appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that could reasonably lead to even the appearance of impropriety.

Note the following guidelines:

- Follow any and all guidelines detailed in the [Bethlehem Central School District Social Media Handbook](#).
- Refrain from reporting, speculating, discussing, or giving any opinions on topics related to the District or employees of the District that could be considered sensitive, confidential, or disparaging.
- Bethlehem Central logos and/or visual identity cannot be used for personal social media use without prior approval from the superintendent. To use such information, contact the [District's Communications Office](#).
- A personal social media account is not an appropriate place to distribute District news, although staff members are encouraged to share and talk about news posted to the District website or Facebook page. Employees with information and news to announce to the public or media should contact the [District's Communications Office](#).
- The District does not routinely monitor personal online accounts, but will address issues that violate personnel, social media, or other guidelines or board policies and state laws (such as DASA).
- Remember that District computers and resources are to be used only for job-related purposes and educational purposes for students, as detailed in the [District's Acceptable Use Policy \(#4526\)](#).
- Respect copyright and fair use: When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the District.
- Guidelines regarding use of student photographs and information apply to online publications, including social media.
- Confidential information should never be posted online.
- Students' addresses, telephone numbers, and other confidential information should never be posted on social media websites.

Cross References: 5300, Code of Conduct
 4526.2, Acceptable Use

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