

Broward County Public Schools Social Media Use Guidelines

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) realizes that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in these digital environments is a part of 21st century learning. As such, educational standards are now requiring the use of online educational tools to demonstrate proficiency. To address related issues, BCPS has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for employees, students and the school district community when participating in online social media activities.

Social Media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies that enable all Broward County Public Schools' internal and external stakeholders to connect, collaborate, and form virtual communities via the computer and/or Internet. For some, social media is used mainly for social purposes, but for others, these sites and technologies are used as tools to teach and to connect with the community.

The First Amendment, in general, protects the rights of individuals to participate in social media. However, the laws and courts have ruled that schools can discipline students and staff if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations or constitutes a violation of federal or state laws or School Board policies. The BCPS social media guidelines allow employees to participate in online social activities. However, when participating it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability; keeping in mind that information produced by BCPS staff and students is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to the District's School and District Technology Usage (Policy 5306), Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), Federal and State Statutes, Educator Code of Ethics and the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, and other related applicable policies and guidelines.

By utilizing social media staff, students and parents agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before using, posting, or commenting on any social media sites. It is important to remember that parents and guardians play a critical role in supporting and reinforcing these objectives.

General Etiquette for Social Media:

- **Be Honest/Truthful:** Always be transparent about who you are and who you represent. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
- **Maintain confidentiality:** Do not post any confidential or proprietary information in regards to yourself and/or others. Students can reveal some information about themselves (ethnicity, political beliefs, stance on issues, interests) but should not offer any confidential information (place of residence, phone number, discretely identifiable information, common 'hang-out' locations).
- **Know You Are Always "On":** You must assume that your social media usage is visible to the world. Be sure to manage what and with whom you are sharing. Keep in mind that while we all have occasional frustrations, social media are not the best venues in which to air frustration as those comments are available to everyone.
- **Be Respectful:** Avoid remarks that are off topic or offensive. Always demonstrate respect for others' points of view, even when they're not offering the same in return. Never bully, pick fights, and do not respond to abusive comments. If you are sharing a negative experience, please try to do so in a constructive way.
- **Think Ahead:** Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy and the privacy of others, and confidential or personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time so consider the content and consequences carefully. Show good judgment as future employment and/or academic opportunities may be adversely affected by your comments.
- **The Internet is not anonymous, nor does it forget:** Everything written on the Web can be easily traced back to its author. Information is backed up often and repeatedly, and posts in one forum are usually replicated in others through trackbacks and reposts or references.
- **Avoid "hazardous" materials:** Do not post or link to any materials that are inflammatory, defamatory, harassing or indecent.
- Your online behavior should reflect honesty, respect, and consideration.
- When bringing your own technology to work make sure that you follow the guidelines set out in the BCPS Personally Owned Device Guidelines.

Faculty and Staff Guidelines

- Personal information of the employees and other individuals associated with the services that we are delivering to our students and staff must not be shared on or disclosed through social media. When contributing online, do not post confidential student or employee information. No last names, school names, addresses or phone numbers should appear on social media sites. No student identifiable information, as defined in FERPA, can be posted on social media sites.
- As part of Policy 5306, faculty and staff are prohibited from using student photographs on personal social media sites, and can only use them on District approved social media sites in accordance with Board policies and applicable laws.
- BCPS employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish could be public indefinitely and may be subject to Florida Statutes including the *Florida Public Records Law* and the *Educator Code of Ethics and the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida*. Failure to adhere to these principles and guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action.
- It is recommended that BCPS employees include disclaimers within their personal social media sites that the views posted are their own and not those of BCPS.
- Teachers should monitor content contributed by students to school sponsored social media and must contact the Legal Department if and when First Amendment issues arise.
- Teachers should communicate with parents regarding involvement of their child in any project using online social media sites, applications and services, i.e., blogs, wikis, podcast, etc.
- Remember that **school sponsored** social media sites are an extension of your classroom and workplace. What is inappropriate in your classroom or workplace will be deemed inappropriate online.
- Respect the intellectual property of others, copyright laws, and fair use guidelines. Be sure not to plagiarize and be sure to give credit where it is due.
- When uploading digital pictures or avatars in school sponsored social media that represent yourself, make sure you select a school appropriate image. Also, remember not to utilize images protected by law.
- All postings on social media that are created as part of the official business of BCPS are subject to the Florida Records Retention Schedules and must be retained for the applicable period of time.

Student Guidelines

- Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues including wikis, blogs, photo and video sharing sites are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
- Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom will be inappropriate online.
- Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your teachers and parents.
- Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended when appropriate. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate for a school setting.
- Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. **It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts, images, designs, etc.** When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
- Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify that you have permission to use the image or that it is under Creative Commons' attribution.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
 - Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.
- If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your teacher right away.
- Students who do not abide by these **guidelines** may lose their opportunity to take part in the project and/or access to future use of BCPS online tools. **In addition, disciplinary or legal action may apply.**

Parent Guidelines

- Parents should expect communication from teachers regarding their child's involvement in any project using online social media applications, i.e., blogs, wikis, podcast, etc.
- Parents will not attempt to destroy or harm any information online. Instead they will report objectionable material to a school administrator.
- Parents will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws.
- Parents are highly encouraged to be aware of their child's electronic communications and participation in social media projects.
- Parent participation is encouraged to help ensure that student involvement in social media networking is appropriate and that the privacy concerns are protected.

Referenced from: socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com/

Reference List of District Documents:

School Board Policy 5306: School and District Technology Use

TINKER Rule: Ruling states that school officials may not silence student expression just because they dislike it. They must reasonably forecast, based on evidence and not on an "undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance," that the student expression would lead to either (a) a substantial disruption of the school environment, or (b) an invasion of the rights of others.

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

Children's Online Privacy Protection (COPPA)

Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act

School Board Policy 5.9: Anti-Bullying Policy

School Board Policy 6000.1: Pupil Progression

Student Code of Conduct (in District Discipline Matrix)

Teacher Professional Standards

Education Code of Ethics

Web publishing guidelines

National Education Technology Standards for Students and Teachers

School Board Policy 6318: Copyright

School Board Policy 4212: Intellectual Property