

Bay City ISD Employee Social Media Guidelines & Expectations

The Bay City Independent School District recognizes the importance of social media as a means of communications. The District encourages the appropriate use of social media as a means to communicate, in accordance with Board Policies, Employee Handbook, and these guidelines.

The District acknowledges that its employees have a constitutional right to speak on matters of public concern. However, when speaking in an official capacity as a District employee, an individual is subject to restrictions imposed by the District. Employees are required to conduct themselves in such a way that their personal and/or professional use of social media does not adversely affect the operations of the District or their position with the District.

Board Policy DH (LOCAL) sets out standards of conduct for employees regarding electronic communications with students and the use of social media. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish protocols for the use of social media by employees and to further outline expectations for its use. Social media includes websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube or other social media and the internet.

A. Best Practices for the Use of Social Media by District Employees

1. Maintain separate personal and professional accounts.
2. Do not accept “friend requests” from students on your personal social media accounts.
3. Do not “follow” students’ accounts using your personal accounts.
4. Do not message or otherwise interact with students using your personal accounts.
5. Do not submit or post confidential or protected information about the District, its students, alumni, or employees. You should assume that most information about a student is protected from disclosure by both federal law (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA) and state law. Disclosure of confidential or protected information may result in disciplinary action.
6. Check your privacy settings. Ensure that you are aware that you know which parts of your social media profile can be viewed by the general public and which parts are accessible only to individuals you have approved. Be aware that social media sites can change their privacy policies and standards at any time, possibly exposing posts that employees believed were private to the public.
7. Even if you are cautious and prudent, elements of your profile may still become accessible to unanticipated parties in a number of ways. For that reason, assume that anything you post to a personal social media site can be viewed by any student, parent, or colleague for decades to come.
8. Recognize that information received or obtained via social media may trigger professional reporting obligations, including the obligation to report child abuse or

neglect to law enforcement/Child Protective Services, and the obligation to report concerns of student bullying or harassment.

9. Do not use language that could be considered defamatory, threatening, violent, obscene, or defamatory. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations. Recognize that online speech can cause harm to your personal or professional reputation or the reputation of others.
10. Do not post or otherwise publish content that is or could reasonably be perceived as bullying, discrimination, or harassment in violation of BCISD policy.
11. Be cautious of security risks when using third-party applications within a social media site. Install malware protection on your computer to protect against spyware and other programs that could cause a security breach. Be alert to the possibility of phishing (or other scams) perpetuated through social media.

B. Expectations for the Personal Use of Social Media

The following rules and expectations apply to the personal social media activities of employees.

1. Do not issue or accept student friend requests or follow individual students on social media using your personal accounts.
2. Sharing school or District social media posts to your personal social media page (i.e. retweeting an @BCISD announcement to your personal Twitter page) is acceptable and encouraged if it is something of interest to you.
3. Never use a social media site to post information about a BCISD student or employee in a way that is or could be reasonably perceived as discriminatory, harassing, or otherwise derogatory.
4. Never use a social media site to post or otherwise publish confidential or protected information about the District, its students, or its employees. Disclosure of confidential or protected information may result in liability for invasion of privacy or defamation.
5. Employees are not permitted to access personal accounts during work hours, with the exception of breaks from work. Any personal use of social media must not impede the employee's performance of their duties.

C. Expectations for the Professional Use of Social Media

Professional use of social media occurs when the use is in furtherance of the employee's job responsibilities (e.g., use of school, department, class, program, or other school account; use to communicate with employees, students, parents or others about school business).

The following rules and expectations apply to the personal social media activities of employees.

1. Comply with all District policies and state laws on the use of district-owned hardware, software and networks apply, as relevant, to the use of social media for a BCISD school, department, class or program.
2. Notify your principal (or designee) and the BCISD Chief Communications Officer if you wish to establish a social media site for a school, department, class, program, or other school account.
3. Do not use personal social media accounts for school-related purposes. Create a separate professional account if you wish to use social media to communicate with students or parents. Contact the BCISD Chief Communications Officer if you need assistance with this process.
4. Refrain from posting non-school related information on a school or District-affiliated social media page.
5. Refrain from posting student names, information, or images without a parental release form on file, which can be confirmed with your campus. Do not use students' last names on social media or internet postings, with or without a release form on file.
6. Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved participants to access the site.
7. Regulate your students' use of the page insofar as students are able to comment, post, message, etc. Behavior that would be considered inappropriate in school or the classroom should be considered inappropriate online. Establish expectations for your students for acceptable use on your social media site that are compliant with the District's expectations for acceptable use. *See example at end of document.*
8. Seek consent before using the BCISD logo or school-specific logos or mascots. The use of the BCISD logo should be approved by the Chief Communications Officer. The use of a campus's logo or mascot should be approved by the principal or their designee.

Employees found to have engaged in inappropriate use of social media or other electronic communication may be subject to disciplinary action.

Establishing a school or District-related social media site

Anyone who wishes to establish a social media site for a BCISD office, school, class or program must first notify their principal (or designee) and the BCISD Chief Communications Officer. If you have questions on content you would like posted to the district's social media pages please contact:

Grant McGalliard, gmcgalliard@baycityisd.org 979-401-1083

Acceptable Use Guidelines Example

The following acceptable use guideline is posted to the school district's Facebook page & campus Facebook pages, and provides an example that can be adopted for other BCISD-related social media sites:

Rules of Engagement and Terms of Use

The purpose of BCISD's Facebook Page is to inform, engage, and inspire our students, parents, staff members, and the community as a whole. Through this page, BCISD will also be sharing the many accomplishments and achievements of our students and staff members and encourage interaction from the community.

This page is managed by the BCISD's Communications Department, which is not responsible for comments made by visitors. BCISD also reserves the right to delete any comments that do not comply with District rules.

While BCISD will also use this page to communicate important information (including weather related school closures) to parents and the community, this page is not intended to replace BCISD's normal emergency notifications or parent messages. If you have an immediate concern, please do not post in "comments" or send messages to the page administration. Instead, contact the campus or department who can best assist you.

Content that violates district rules may be deleted. District rules ban content that:

- Is obscene, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate for the age and maturity of the audience.
- Promotes an action that endangers the health or safety of students, including (but not limited to) encouraging the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Violates intellectual property rights.
- Violates the privacy rights of another individual.
- Contains defamatory (i.e., false and harmful) statements about others.
- Advocates bullying, lawlessness or violence.
- Constitutes a threat or constitutes hate speech.
- Is disruptive to the learning environment.

Commenting or posting to this page/account should not be viewed as a means of communication with the District or its officials. What you write may not be read by a district official promptly or at all. If you wish to speak to a teacher or district official, please call or e-mail the appropriate party.