

CSBA Sample

Board Policy

District-Sponsored Social Media

BP 1114

Community Relations

***Note: The following optional policy is for use by districts that have created an official district (i.e., district-sponsored) social media platform. "Social media" is defined in the accompanying administrative regulation as an online platform for collaboration, interaction, and active participation, including social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, or blogs. Districts that have not created such platforms should delete this policy and regulation. ***

Note: District strategies for effective use of online social media may be incorporated into the district's comprehensive communications plan; see BP 1100 - Communication with the Public.

The Governing Board recognizes the value of technology such as social media platforms in promoting community involvement and collaboration. The purpose of any official district social media platform shall be to further the district's vision and mission, support student learning and staff professional development, and enhance communication with students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members.

(cf. 0000 - Vision)

(cf. 0440 - District Technology Plan)

(cf. 1100 - Communication with the Public)

(cf. 1112 - Media Relations)

(cf. 1113 - District and School Web Sites)

(cf. 6020 - Parent Involvement)

(cf. 6145.5 - Student Organizations and Equal Access)

Note: To minimize liability to the district, it is important that the district's social media policy clearly define the official social media platforms over which it has control and to specify the standards, guidelines, and protocols for their use. An "official district social media platform" is defined in the accompanying administrative regulation. District policy and guidelines do not apply to personal social media platforms that may be created by students, staff members, or other individuals which may sometimes include discussion of district-related issues but are not sponsored by the district.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop content guidelines and protocols for official district social media platforms to ensure the appropriate and responsible use of these resources and compliance with law, Board policy, and regulation.

Guidelines for Content

Note: Because of the open accessibility of social media, content will be posted by members of the public on the district's official platform without prior approval by district staff. By allowing the public to post comments, some legal analysts have opined that a "limited public forum" is created which grants individuals certain freedom of speech rights and limits the district's ability to remove comments or posts. In order to protect against possible constitutional challenges, any removal of content by the district should be based on viewpoint-neutral considerations, such as prohibitions of posts that violate laws against discrimination or harassment or that are unrelated to the purpose of the site. In addition, in order to help maintain the district's ability to remove content, users should be informed of the purpose of the site and the limited nature of the discussion and district staff should regularly monitor sites so that materials are removed in an even-handed and consistent manner. See the accompanying administrative regulation for language regarding removal of posts and monitoring of sites. It is recommended that the district consult legal counsel prior to adopting this policy and regulation to ensure that any provisions related to removal of posts or discipline of students or staff are consistent with law.

Official district social media platforms shall be used only for their stated purposes and in a manner consistent with this policy and administrative regulation. By creating these official sites and allowing for public comment, the Board does not intend to create a limited public forum or otherwise guarantee an individual's right to free speech.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)
(cf. 6145.5 - Student Organizations and Equal Access)

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the limited purpose of the official district social media platforms is clearly communicated to users. Each site shall contain a statement that specifies the site's purposes along with a statement that users are expected to use the site only for those purposes. Each site shall also contain a statement that users are personally responsible for the content of their posts.

Official district social media platforms may not contain content that is obscene, libelous, or so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school's orderly operation.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

Note: Staff and students who post prohibited content on official district social media platforms are subject to discipline in accordance with district policies and regulations. Pursuant to Education Code 48900(r), a student may be subject to suspension or expulsion if he/she engages in an act of bullying by means of an electronic act as defined in Education Code 32261; see AR 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process. AB 746 (Ch. 72, Statutes of 2011) broadened the definition of "electronic act" in Education Code 32261 to include posts on a social networking site.

Note: When staff and students misuse the district's technological resources, they also may be subject to cancellation of user privileges in accordance with the district's Acceptable Use Agreement; see BP/E 4040 - Employee Use of Technology and BP/E 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology.

Staff or students who post prohibited content shall be subject to discipline in accordance with district policies and administrative regulations.

(cf. 4040 - Employee Use of Technology)
(cf. 4118 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action)
(cf. 4119.21/4219.21/4319.21 - Professional Standards)
(cf. 4218 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action)
(cf. 5144 - Discipline)
(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)
(cf. 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology)

Note: Communication on social media platforms may raise legal issues for users regarding public records laws. In addition, individual Governing Board members using social media platforms must be careful not to violate the Brown Act. Pursuant to Government Code 54952.2, a prohibited serial meeting may result from a series of communications involving a majority of the Board to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item of district business outside of an authorized meeting. See BB 9012 - Board Member Electronic Communications. In addition, information posted may be considered a record subject to the Public Records Act (Government Code 6250-6270).

Users of official district social media platforms should be aware of the public nature and accessibility of social media and that information posted may be considered a public record subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act. The Board expects users to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner.

(cf. 1340 - Access to District Records)
(cf. 9012 - Board Member Electronic Communications)

Privacy

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the privacy rights of students, parents/guardians, staff, Board members, and other individuals are protected on official district social media platforms.

Board policy pertaining to the posting of student photographs and the privacy of telephone numbers, home addresses, and email addresses, as specified in BP 1113 - District and School Web Sites, shall also apply to official district social media platforms.

(cf. 5125.1 - Release of Directory Information)

Social media and networking sites and other online platforms shall not be used by district employees to transmit confidential information about students, employees, or district operations.

(cf. 4119.23/4219.23/4319.23 - Unauthorized Release of Confidential/Privileged Information)
(cf. 5022 - Student and Family Privacy Rights)
(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32261 School safety, definitions of bullying and electronic act
35182.5 Contracts for advertising
48900 Grounds for suspension and expulsion
48907 Exercise of free expression; rules and regulations
48950 Speech and other communication
49061 Definitions, directory information
49073 Release of directory information
60048 Commercial brand names, contracts or logos

GOVERNMENT CODE

3307.5 Publishing identity of public safety officers
6250-6270 Public Records Act, especially:
6254.21 Publishing addresses and phone numbers of officials
6254.24 Definition of public safety official
54952.2 Brown Act, definition of meeting

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 17

101-1101 Federal copyright law

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

1232g Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 29

157 Employee rights to engage in concerted, protected activity
794 Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; accessibility to federal web sites

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 34

99.1-99.67 Family Educational Rights and Privacy

COURT DECISIONS

Page v. Lexington County School District, (2008, 4th Cir.) 531 F.3d 275
Downs v. Los Angeles Unified School District, (2000) 228 F.3d 1003
Aaris v. Las Virgenes Unified School District, (1998) 64 Cal.App.4th 1112
Perry Education Association v. Perry Local Educators' Association, (1983) 460 U.S. 37
Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District, et.al. v. Pico, (1982) 457 U.S. 853
NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD DECISIONS
18-CA-19081 Sears Holdings, December 4, 2009

Management Resources:

FACEBOOK PUBLICATIONS

Facebook for Educators Guide, 2011

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California School Public Relations Association: <http://www.calspra.org>

Facebook in Education: <http://www.facebook.com/education>

Facebook for Educators: <http://facebookforeducators.org>

Facebook, privacy resources: <http://www.facebook.com/fbprivacy>

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