

 <p>BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS</p>	<p>BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT OFFICE SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR OFFICIAL SCHOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS</p>
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Board Priorities

Priority 3

City Schools will have a respectful culture and climate, and a collaborative environment that supports student achievement.

Priority 4

City Schools and all schools will partner with families, communities, and the public and private sectors to foster shared ownership of schools and to collectively create opportunities for student success.

I Purpose

This document outlines City Schools’ guidance regarding official district and school social media accounts, including existing and new accounts. The guidance *does not* cover personal social media accounts or accounts used for instructional purposes.

This guidance applies to all City Schools employees and is intended to supplement existing Board rules, policies, and state laws. Please also refer to Board policies EGD (Internet Safety/Acceptable Use of Technology), JICK (Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation of Students), and GBEBB (Staff Conduct with Students), along with their accompanying administrative regulations. If employees have questions or need help in setting up a school’s official social media account, please contact City Schools’ communications staff at communications@bcps.k12.md.us.

II Guidance

A. Definitions

“Social media” – websites and applications used for social networking. Some common types of social media are blogs, online social networking, and photo/video sharing

Examples of social media

- Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)
- Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>)
- YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>)
- LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>)
- Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/>)
- Instagram (<http://instagram.com/>)
- Web logs (blogs)

“Social media administrator” – For official *school* social media accounts, the staff member designated by the school principal to post and manage social media accounts. For official *district* social media accounts, the communications director will designate communications staff to manage the accounts. Throughout this document, the singular *social media administrator* is used, but a principal may elect to appoint multiple administrators.

“Official school social media account” – A social media account over which school leadership has editorial control, created to represent the school and share information about it with the school community and public.

“Official district social media account” – A social media account over which the district’s communications department has editorial control, created to represent the district and share information about it with stakeholders.

B. Protocols – Schools

1. Social media sites can be a valuable resource and provide a great benefit to school communities. They can help share news; promote events; connect with parents, students, the community, and alumni; and market the school to prospective students, families, and partners. Though communicating through social media can be rewarding, managing social media accounts takes time and commitment. Too often, accounts are started and then rarely updated or even abandoned, leaving users frustrated, concerned, or with a bad impression. This document is intended to guide schools in their creation and maintenance of successful social media accounts.

City Schools’ communications team is available to help schools set up accounts and answer questions (communications@bcps.k12.md.us).

- a. Principals should identify a social media administrator. This person must be a district employee. While the social media administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school’s social media channels, ultimately the responsibility for the social media content and activity rests with the school principal.

- b. The social media administrator's user name and the password he or she creates for each official social media account must be shared with the district's communications department (communications@bcps.k12.md.us), so that the account can be accessed should the administrator leave the school or the district and that the communications team can respond and assist if problems arise. This log-in combination should be appropriate for the school and not tied to a personal social media account or connected to a personal log-in combination. If the social media administrator leaves the school, the account must remain with the school, and the principal must immediately change all passwords and in some cases user names for official social media accounts. Please email the communications department (communications@bcps.k12.md.us) with updated information as needed, and at least annually.

Because principals are responsible for school social media accounts, principals should know all social media passwords and control who has access to them.

- c. The social media administrator should develop a strategy and plan for each social media account. Consider the school's goals (e.g., attracting more students, engaging parents and community partners, developing partnerships) and resources, and whether the social media administrator has sufficient time on an ongoing basis to execute the plan successfully. Principals should schedule time with the social media administrator to talk about priorities. If a school cannot devote the necessary time and resources to maintain a social media account, it should not open it.
- d. Use a professional City Schools email address that is completely separate from any personal social media accounts when registering a new social media account. Each social media account has an official "name" or "handle." Please base the social media account names on the official name of the school, not an individual's name (e.g., for Baltimore City Public Schools: @balcityschools on Twitter, "City Schools" on Vimeo, and "Baltimore City Public Schools" on Facebook).
- e. Monitor and maintain the social media sites. Social media sites should be updated regularly with fresh content to keep people's interest. The social media administrator is responsible for posting new content regularly and, if comments are allowed, for responding to inquiries in a timely fashion. An inactive account can frustrate users or give the impression that a school is disorganized. Principals should allow the social media administrator enough

time to post content.

- f. Consider whether the school principal and the social media administrator have the capacity to monitor comments or discussions posted to social media accounts, if commenting features are enabled on those accounts. Although social media accounts allow for lively and productive exchanges among interested people, they also can be the target of spam postings and negative comments. More seriously, comments can sometimes violate laws – for example, posting of copyrighted content without appropriate permission, posting of or including links to obscene or defamatory material, or posting confidential student information. When commenting features are enabled, the social media administrator must monitor posts on an ongoing basis, and must be knowledgeable about when and how to respond to posts that may raise concerns (see Section E below) and to delete posts that are clearly spam, include profanity or violate laws. This is an important and time-consuming responsibility. If it cannot be exercised consistently, then consider turning off commenting features and using your social media sites as announcement services rather than for interaction. If commenting is allowed on social media accounts, be prepared for spam postings and inappropriate comments and have a plan for how to respond. For all official school social media accounts, City Schools’ district office reserves the right to delete comments, disable interactive functions, remove content, and close accounts.
- g. If the social media administrator uses the same computer or phone to post on personal and official school social media accounts, he or she should exercise caution and make sure he or she is logged into the right account before posting. Use of personal devices should be limited to times when the social media administrator does not have access to a City Schools device.
- h. Posts that include content from other sources need to adhere to copyright law.
- i. When posting photographs, check whether any students in the picture have completed the Opt-Out Form for Release of Student Directory Information, Media Reporting and Creative Work. Also, review all photos carefully. Photos, like written posts, are a reflection of the school and should be monitored for inappropriate content.
- j. Because of the wide dissemination that is possible through social media, issues of privacy take on heightened importance. Do not post privileged,

proprietary, harmful or confidential information about students. Also, use only the first names of students when posting information about them.

- k. All school social media accounts represent their school communities. Before posting, social media administrators should always make sure their posts are professional and cast their school communities in the best possible light. Think before you post.
- l. When creating, exchanging, publishing, or otherwise distributing information in public forums, including social media, the following posts are prohibited: product advertisements; political lobbying or religious promotion; unauthorized copyrighted material or any other global communication that is disruptive to City Schools' operations; confidential City Schools information to unauthorized people or that violates City Schools' data protection guidelines.

C. Protocols –District

1. City Schools' official district social media sites will be managed by the communications department.
 - a. Individual district offices, departments, and divisions cannot create public social media accounts. However, private, invitation-only, moderated social media communities around a particular purpose (for example, communicating with new teacher hires who do not have district email addresses yet) are allowed.
 - b. Any district office, department, or division that would like to post on one of the official district social media accounts should email their request and desired post to communications@bcps.k12.md.us.
 - c. City Schools' official district social media sites will "like" or "follow" only
 - Other organizations, not private individuals (the exception is for individuals who tweet or use Facebook in their capacity as public figures – e.g., the governor, the mayor, the secretary of education, the state superintendent of education)
 - Individual schools within the district that have their own Twitter or Facebook accounts
 - School districts or superintendents in Maryland

- School districts or superintendents included in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) or the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE)
- City, state, or federal government agencies (or their chief executives using social media in their public capacity) related to education
- State or national education organizations with which the district has an existing relationship
- Grant-making organizations and foundations that support education initiatives
- Baltimore education organizations
- Partners with which the district has an existing relationship at the district (rather than individual school) level – e.g., Maryland Science Center
- Education media outlets (e.g., EdWeek)
- Baltimore media outlets

d. District sites will also adhere to guidance C.1. a-l above.

D. Key Principles for Use of Social Media – All district and school-based staff

1. Always keep the best interest of students, schools, and the district in mind when posting on social media. At City Schools, employees are held to high professional standards. These same standards apply when using social media.
2. Exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when posting content on social media. Take a minute to think about and proofread your posts before publishing them. Don't write anything you would not mind reading on the front page of the newspaper or hearing on the news.
3. Write interesting and relevant posts. Think about the information your school community needs to know or should know.
4. Maintain separate professional and personal accounts. If you are using social media on behalf of a school, use a dedicated account for the school and not a personal account.
5. Be judicious when deciding who to "like" or "follow." Because "liking" on Facebook or "following" on Twitter implies at minimum an interest in another person or organization – and possibly an endorsement or recommendation – use good judgment when making such connections.
6. Do not post privileged, harmful, or confidential information about students.

7. When in doubt, consult Board policies and district administrative regulations for additional guidance.

E. Reporting Misuse of Social Media

1. If posts to school or district social media accounts whether direct posts or comments incite violence or threaten the safety or security of any member of the school community, the social media administrator must immediately notify school police and appropriate school and/or district leadership.
2. If posts to social media accounts are used as a form of online bullying, the social media administrator must immediately notify appropriate school and/or district leadership so that action as outlined in the Code of Conduct can be taken.
3. If school social media accounts are used in a manner that demeans, condemns, or berates others, including students or staff; embarrasses, defames, or harasses another student as defined by Board policy and district regulations; or in any manner violates local, state, or federal laws, and the person who posted the content can be identified, staff will use the procedures outlined in the Code of Conduct, Board policies JICK, JKA, and EGD, and accompanying regulations.

F. Violation

1. Employees found to be in violation of this guidance document, Board policies, City Schools' regulations, or federal, state, or local laws may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense.
2. Employees who suspect that a City Schools' employee has violated this social media guidance should contact the Investigations Unit at 1-800-679-0185 or 443-642-4935.

III Governing Policies and Documents

- Internet Safety/Acceptable Use of Technology (Board policy EGD and accompanying regulation EGD-RA)
- Staff Conduct with Students (Board policy GBEBB and accompanying regulation GBEBB-RA)
- Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation of Students (Board policy JICK and accompanying regulation JICK-RA)
- Student Discipline (Board policy JKA and accompanying regulation JKA-RB)
- Code of Conduct
- Opt-Out Form for Release of Student Directory Information, Media Reporting, and Creative Work

Contact Office

Engagement Office

Executive Director of Engagement or Director of Communications

410-545-1870

communications@bcps.k12.md.us