

BRAINTREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

IJNDD: Website and Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

This document formalizes the policy for the professional and personal use of websites and social media by Braintree Public Schools' (BPS) employees in a responsible manner. All users, including students, teachers, staff, administrators, and organizations are covered by this policy and are expected to be familiar with its provisions.

For purposes of this policy, "Official Social Media" is understood to be content created by individuals or groups representing Braintree Public Schools, using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies, through and on the Internet. Examples of Official Social Media include but are not limited to, district, school, club, team, PTO, or class websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, blogs, YouTube videos/channels, LinkedIn, Snapchat, NextDoor, and Flickr.

For the purposes of this policy, "Personal Social Media" is understood to be content created by individuals for non-work related activities (e.g., a staff member establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for his or her own personal use). District employees should not use personal social media sites to communicate with students.

For purposes of this policy, "Content" includes comment, information, articles, pictures, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted on official or personal social media sites.

2. User Responsibilities for Official BPS Websites and Social Media

Official BPS Social Media sites will be used solely for communicating information about the Schools, including projects, events, and services. Examples include announcements; newsletters; emergency notifications; Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), sporting, fundraising, or club events and activities; or meetings. School employees and representatives with website access through organizations such as PTO or Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) may not engage in private messaging over official social media accounts. Official Social Media cannot be used to post political information or viewpoints; religious information or viewpoints; commercial information; information pertaining to an employee's or school representative's personal activities, matters, or interests; information which consists of content which is sexual, pornographic, or adult in character; or information which advocates or promotes the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

A. BPS Social Media Administrator Responsibilities

Official Social Media sites for individual schools and PTOs shall be administered and monitored by principals and their site administrators approved by [the principal and Superintendent or designee]. Usernames for these accounts shall be created using official school email addresses and shall be maintained through the Technology Department.

Official Social Media sites for classes, other student groups, clubs, and athletic teams shall be administered and monitored by principals or their designees, the athletic director, coaches, club advisors, and their site administrators approved by [the principal and Superintendent or designee]. Usernames for these accounts shall be created using official school email addresses and shall be maintained through the Technology Department.

Each administrator of an Official Social Media site will confirm with the appropriate principal and/or director that they have read and understand this policy. It is the responsibility of each principal and director to provide a copy of this policy to their respective users.

Principals, their designees, and site administrators shall monitor Official BPS Social Media sites for content requesting responses from the Schools. Site administrators may direct such requests to the principal or director for response. Site administrators shall monitor Content posted on Official BPS Social Media sites for Content in violation of this Social Media Policy.

If a site administrator has reason to believe that any user is misusing the site, it is the responsibility of the administrator to report that potential misuse of the site to district administrators.

B. BPS Social Media Educator Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of educators who are using Official BPS Social Media tools with students to teach students about safe and responsible use of social media (see also BPS Network and Technology Responsible Use Policy and Internet Safety Policy). Educators are responsible for monitoring students' use of these resources and must intervene if students are using them inappropriately. Educators should make sure that students understand and abide by the Acceptable and Unacceptable Uses as stated [below]. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to report any misuse of the Official BPS Social Media to his/her building administrator.

Each administrator of an Official Social Media site will confirm with the appropriate principal and/or director that they have read and understand this policy.

C. BPS Social Media Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of students who are using Official BPS Social Media tools to learn about safe and responsible use of these sites. They are responsible for using these resources appropriately. They must abide by the Acceptable and Unacceptable Uses as stated in Section 9, Part C of this policy. If a student misuses the resources, educators must follow appropriate disciplinary protocols, including but not limited to reporting the misuse to building administrators, who have the right to discontinue a student's access to the official social media.

3. Site and Account Requirements

- A. Staff members will treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom or professional workplace. The same standards expected in district professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on the professional social media site.
- B. Whenever possible, when establishing professional social media sites, users will consider the intended audience for the site and consider the level of privacy assigned to the site. The site should be a private network limited to a particular class or particular grade within a school. It is recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.
- C. Staff members may only create professional social media accounts (i.e., accounts used exclusively for educational purposes) on district approved websites and platforms.
- D. Staff will obtain their supervisor's approval using the "BPS Social Media Registration Form" prior to setting up a professional social media presence. The form can be downloaded from: []
- E. All Official BPS Social Media channels must link to our Disclaimer page, located at [braintreema.gov/disclaimer.html].
- F. All Official BPS Social Media sites should link back to the respective Page(s) on the BPS website where relevant information is available.
- G. All social media sites are subject to Massachusetts public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations, and policies. Any content maintained in an online format (Social Media/Website) that is related to Town Business, including posted communication and communication submitted for posting, may be subject to public disclosure. The site administrators will maintain records in accordance with Massachusetts public records retention laws, rules, regulations and policies. Site administrators will use the following guidance in order to comply with state and federal laws:
 - a. Except for inappropriate postings, staff shall not delete any message posted on a social media site, webpage, blog, homework page, etc. In cases of inappropriate postings, the posting is to be copied and sent to an administrator using your district email account. The posting is then to be deleted from the site.

- b. Staff shall save all direct messages and communications conveyed through district affiliated social media sites. All email sent or received by district email accounts is archived for a minimum of seven years.
 - c. Staff shall comply with applicable copyright laws when posting information produced by another person or entity and shall cite all third-party sources of information posted or shared.
- H. When a School employee or representative responds to a comment, in his/her capacity as a School employee or representative, the employee or representative should do so in the name of the School or organization, and the employee or representative shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other School employees or representatives except as required for official business.
- I. When posting to Social Media sites, school employees and representatives must do so in a way that is not defamatory. Defamatory communications are those that cause harm to the reputation of another person or cause that person to be ridiculed, held in contempt, or lowered in the estimation of the community. Defamatory statements will not be tolerated. Defamatory statements fall within conduct that is outside the scope of your employment and therefore, the Town of Braintree will not defend you from the consequences of your personal actions, nor will the Town indemnify employees against defamation-like suits that are determined to be in violation of this policy.
- J. BPS employees and representatives may not use Official Social Media to post material which is illegal, which is in violation of federal or state laws regarding discrimination, or which constitutes criminal conduct. BPS employees and representatives may not use Official Social Media to post material which constitutes an unauthorized disclosure of proprietary or confidential information of BPS, personnel or student records or non-public labor relations information.
- K. Site administrators must ensure that they have the right to post any Content being used on Official BPS Social Media. This includes compliance with copyright laws, and federal privacy laws, particularly for images of students or students' personally identifiable information.
- L. Procurement and ethics laws largely prohibit municipal employees or agencies from endorsing products, businesses, or vendors. In addition, School resources, such as Official BPS Social Media entities should not be used for political purposes.
- M. Any posted Content on Official BPS Social Media sites, including articles, pictures, photographs, likenesses, and images cannot under any circumstances identify children under the age of 18 by full name. Individuals who do not wish to be depicted in images must return the form which expressly prohibits the Braintree Public Schools from using such image and likeness online. If such a prohibition exists, the picture, photograph, likeness, or image must be blurred in such a manner that the person cannot be identified or recognized. If that is not possible, the material cannot be used at all. The following additional guidelines apply to posting photos or images of students:
 - a. Images of individual students should not be posted.

- b. Images of groups of students (three or more) are permissible, as long as the parents/guardians have provided media release permission to the school.
 - c. Students depicted in images are not to be identified by name.
- N. Content posted to Official BPS Social Media sites shall conform with accessibility requirements detailed in Level A and Level AA Success Criteria and Conformance Requirements in WCAG 2.0 (incorporated by reference, see 702.10.1). This standard is available for reference at: <https://www.w3.org/>.
- O. Employees or representatives are prohibited from posting communications that could reasonably be construed as creating a hostile environment, defamatory comments, threats, intimidation, or harassment by any member of the public or BPS employees. Postings must be in conformance with all BPS Policies, including but not limited to, those concerning harassment, bullying, ethics and all state and federal law.
- P. BPS reserves the right to deny access to any Official BPS Social Media sites to any person who violates the district's Website and Social Media Policy, at any time and without prior notice.
- Q. Active communication and outreach may lead to increased inquiries from the media. If the site administrator for an Official BPS Social Media site is contacted directly by a reporter, he or she should refer media questions to the Principal's or Superintendent's office.

4. Privacy Protections in Media beyond BPS

In compliance with state and federal privacy laws for minors accessing the Internet using school resources, BPS maintains a list of sites and services, along with the personally identifiable data on students that might be included as part of the terms of use for that site or service. Parents of children 13 and under retain the right to opt their students' out of participation in services that require use of personally identifiable data. BPS administration expects staff and students to adhere to the list of approved sites and services when selecting educational resources for use in the classroom (see also Disclaimers in Section 7).

5. No Expectation of Privacy within BPS

Official BPS Social Media resources are the property of the Braintree Public Schools and are to be used in conformance with these guidelines. BPS administration retains the right to inspect any user's Official Social Media account if a suspected violation of the Website and Social Media Policy or any other district policy has occurred. In keeping with state and federal laws regarding public records, users should be aware that data and messages are regularly archived, even if they appear to have been deleted locally. Use of Official BPS Social Media resources constitutes consent for school and district administrators to monitor and/or inspect any files that users create, any messages they post or receive, and any websites they access should a disciplinary or safety situation warrant such access.

6. Violations

Failure to observe these guidelines may subject users to termination of access to BPS Social

Media and websites. BPS administrators will be notified of any inappropriate activities by users, and users will be subject to recourse through other existing BPS policies as applicable. BPS administrators will also advise law enforcement agencies of illegal activities conducted through Official BPS Social Media sites or accounts and will cooperate fully with local, state, and/or federal officials in any investigation related to these activities.

7. Disclaimers

The Braintree Public Schools make no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, for Official BPS Social Media websites and resources. BPS is not responsible for unauthorized financial obligations incurred through Official BPS Social Media access. BPS accepts no liability for users who willfully ignore or violate terms of use on an Internet site or service via a BPS Social Media account. All provisions of this agreement are subordinate to local, state and federal statutes.

8. Personal Social Media Guidelines for Staff

- A. As a recommended practice, BPS employees are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilized.
- B. In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, staff may not communicate with students who are currently enrolled in the District on personal social media sites. This provision is subject to the following exceptions: (a) communication with relatives and (b) if an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case the BPS employee should notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.
- C. Communication directly with students related to academic issues should occur in class or be directed through District-provided email accounts.
- D. It is not recommended that staff members post or tag photos of other employees, volunteers, vendors or contractors on personal social media sites without prior permission of the photographed employee.
- E. The posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites, in violation of federal law, state law, or district policy is prohibited.
- F. BPS employees should not use the BPS logo or make representations that their personal social media sites speak in an official BPS or school capacity. Use of the BPS logo that is automatically populated on personal social media sites, such as LinkedIn, is permitted.
- G. The district has multiple policies regarding student and staff conduct which overlap with this regulation. It recognizes that the use of electronic communication technology in an educational setting presents new challenges to appropriate student and staff conduct.

However, behavioral expectations will not be diminished in these settings and appropriate professional boundaries shall be maintained at all times and through all means of communications. As such, the District retains the right to moderate and restrict student and staff use on District-related pages. The District expects staff and students to maintain the same level of decorum in electronic communications, including the use of social media, as in face-to-face interactions. This regulation is intended to supplement existing regulations, not to supersede them.

9. Personal Social Media Guidelines for Students

- A. Students using personal social media should be aware of privacy laws and websites' privacy policies. Most information posted digitally can never truly be withdrawn and made private again. Many popular social media sites require users to be 13 or older because they collect, and potentially sell or distribute, data in manners not compliant with federal law (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) for students under 13. Students should be aware that if a website asks for a birthdate, this is usually a clue that it tracks a significant amount of user data, and that this tracked data may follow them as a digital footprint for years to come.
- B. Students using personal social media should be aware of formal and informal voices, and the audience which may access or receive the post, comments, photo or image. The manner in which students interact with peers on social media may reasonably differ from expectations for interaction with Official BPS Social Media accounts. Students are expected to maintain the same level of decorum in electronic communications, including the use of official BPS social media, as in face-to-face interactions with teachers, staff, and classmates.
- C. Students who use personal social media to interact with Official BPS Social Media must adhere to all school handbook policies regarding behavior. Interaction with Official BPS Social Media is treated as a school setting. This regulation is intended to supplement existing regulations, not to supersede them.
 - a. Acceptable uses of students' personal social media to interact with official BPS social media include commenting on posts, posting pictures with permission, "following" official accounts, re-sharing official posts in their original form, and posting content to which students have the rights under copyright law.
 - b. Unacceptable uses of students' personal social media to interact with Official BPS Social Media include all negative behaviors noted in BPS school handbooks, including but not limited to posting communications that could reasonably be construed as creating a hostile environment, defamatory comments, threats, intimidation, or harassment of any member of the public or the BPS community. Students must not interact with Official BPS Social Media to post political information or viewpoints; religious information or viewpoints; commercial information; information pertaining to an employee's or school representative's personal activities, matters, or interests; information which consists of content which is sexual, pornographic, or adult in character; or information which

advocates or promotes the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

This policy is in compliance with state and federal telecommunications rules and regulations, including the Children's Internet Protection Act, the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act Amendment, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment.

Acknowledgements: Sections of this document were adapted from Town of Braintree, Gill-Montague Regional Schools, Pembroke Public Schools, the NYC Department of Education, and federal laws.



Braintree Public Schools – Social Media Account Request Form

All accounts representing the Braintree Public Schools are the property of the Braintree Public Schools and may be reviewed as part of any Freedom of Information Act requests. As an employee representing the Braintree Public Schools, all social media accounts must be approved by the Superintendent’s Office. All accounts will be displayed on the Braintree Public Schools’ website to enable residents to verify the validity of the social media account.

Any employee requesting a social media account must first read the Braintree Public Schools’ Website & Social Media Policy.

Building(s) & Grade Level/Department: _____

Date of Request: ____/____/____

Employee Name: _____

Social Media Platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc.): _____

Username of Account: _____

School Email Address for Account: _____

Password for Account: _____

Purpose of Account (be sure to include the club, team, class, or organization that the account will represent)

I have read and will abide by the Braintree Public Schools’ Website & Social Media Policy.

Employee Name (Print)

Employee Signature

Date

Director’s Signature (if applicable): _____

If the account pertains to more than one department at the secondary level, all pertinent directors’ signatures are required.

Principal’s Signature: _____

If the account pertains to more than building, all pertinent principals’ signatures are required.

Superintendent’s Office Signature: _____

Adopted by School Committee 4-9-2018