

Buena Regional School District Social Media Guidelines

The Buena Regional School District 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. To this aim, the Buena Regional School District has developed the following guideline to provide direction for instructional employees, students and the school district community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that schools can discipline teachers if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. The Buena Regional School District social media guidelines encourage employees to participate in online social activities. But it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by Buena Regional School District teachers and students is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to the district's Acceptable Use Policy. By accessing, creating or contributing to any blogs, wikis, or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before posting or commenting on any blog or creating any classroom blog, wiki and/or podcast.

What is social media?

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website. A large percentage of Internet traffic is centered around the use of social media. Social media includes: Facebook, MySpace, Ning, Twitter, Second Life, YouTube, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing and email.

Be Transparent

How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work and what you do.

Always a School Employee

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. Even when you have a disclaimer or use a different user name, you will always be considered to be a district employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as working for and sometimes representing the school in what you do and say online. Always write in the first person and make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the district.

School Values

Represent the district values. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. All communications should be done in good taste. Build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Do not denigrate or insult others including students, staff, administrators, parents, or other

districts. Don't use ethnic slurs, innuendos, obscenity or any other inappropriate content. Even though you are of legal age, consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. There are school districts who have taken disciplinary action on staff that made posts relative to alcohol and sexual activities.

Build Community/Positively Represent School

Represent the district and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber-bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offence. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Do not comment on nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumors. You are responsible for what you post, be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. If you are about to publish something that makes you hesitate, wait a day, review the guidelines and talk to a colleague or supervisor. Once posted you can't take it back.

Share your Expertise

Write what you know and be accurate. Add value to the discussion. Post something useful. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. A district's most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school. Speak in the first person with your own voice and perspective.

Respect and Responsible

Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful for the opinions of others in your posts or comments. You are responsible for the content you post. Consider the words used to tag content in a social bookmarking site. Consider the avatar you select. Do your tags, descriptions, and your image portray you in a professional manner?

Own and Correct Mistakes

If you make a mistake, admit the mistake and correct it quickly. Clearly state if you've corrected a previous post. Even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it. Apologize if appropriate.

Confidential Information

Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and will be online for a long time. It can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks. Do not write about colleague or student without their permission.