

BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

GR6P-SM: Social Media Creation and Usage

Summary	1
Types of Accounts	1
Opening a School-branded or Individual Account	2
**District Content Usage Policy	2
Best Practices	2
Interacting with Students	3
YouTube Videos	4
Clerical Information	4

Summary

Thank you for striving to share your enthusiasm for student success on social media! Both for your school and the District, social media helps to reinforce the positive contributions of our students and faculty, provides important updates and access to information, and encourages members of our community to “Join the Journey.” By working together, we are better able to amplify positive stories being shared by schools or classrooms, helping gain recognition for the incredible work happening in our District every day and for the great students we get to teach. This procedure is designed to help walk you through the steps of setting up an account and discusses best practices and things to watch out for. Please note that while we encourage social media usage, it should not be used as a substitute for other communication channels.

Types of Accounts

For the purposes of BSD, we break down the types of accounts people use into three categories:

1. **School-branded accounts:** This would be any social media account that uses your school or the District name, image, or likeness; this can include associated nicknames, mascots, or other words directly associated with the brand of your school or the District. *For school-branded accounts, the account holder must share the username and password with your school Administrator and the District Communication Specialist. (Before creating an account like this, please read the section below.)*
2. **Individual accounts:** These accounts are based on your name, which can also be used to highlight your work as an educator.

Regardless of the type of account you have or use, we should all use the best practices when posting (read on for recommendations) and, of course, we have to follow district, state, and federal guidelines regarding student media permissions and FERPA.

Opening a School-branded or Individual Account

The BSD Communication team loves this work and is sometimes even good at it! If you have questions about how to create or set up an account or social media presence, just ask. We can help talk you through the options listed below and provide technical assistance and support.

1. **School-branded accounts:** *Before you create an account like this, it needs to be approved by the District's Communication Specialist*, who will first check all District accounts to avoid unintentional duplicate accounts. This includes all social media platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook (pages and groups), Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.). As mentioned above, for school-branded accounts, the account holder must share the username and password with your school Administrator and the District Communication Specialist. This information will not be used by the District's Communication Team to post content on your accounts without permission. Sharing this information will help us avoid having multiple and/or abandoned accounts as people move on in their careers. (Abandoned accounts look bad and can strand a strong brand/name that then cannot be used moving forward.)
2. **Individual accounts:** You can create an individual account at any time. Because it is a representation of you, you do not have to share this password/login info with your school Administrator and the District Communication Specialist. However, if you use this account to share student or District photos or stories, you must follow the best practices laid out below and alert your building leader and communication specialist that you have created the account so that we can follow and share your content as appropriate. In addition, individual accounts sharing BSD content or stories are subject to the District Content Usage Policy. And regardless of what type of social media account is used, all employees behavior on social media should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration they are expected to adhere to in all forms of communications and interactions.

****District Content Usage Policy**

It's important to note that once a school-branded or individual account is created, content posted to these accounts may be used by BSD, and BSD reserves the right to use and disseminate content posted on these accounts. This primarily applies to photos, but other content may be used as well. This includes sharing content beyond social media in press releases, reports, and other communication items produced by the District.

Best Practices

1. **Put Your Best Foot Forward:** Remember that in addition to representing yourself, you are also representing your school and District! The world of social media is full of arguments to be made and eye-roll-inducing behavior, but engaging in these topics while representing your school and District is just not worth it. BSD employees' behavior on social media should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration they are expected to adhere to in all forms of communications and interactions.
2. **The Right Tool for the Job:** Want to jump on a current social media trend? Make sure it's a good fit for our line of work. If you are at all unsure, the communication team is here to help. Just reach out!
3. **Check and Manage Privacy Settings:** Each social media tool has privacy settings related to visibility, commenting, and re-sharing of content. Choose appropriately in consideration for your students and families as well as what you can realistically invite and manage. Ask a fellow teacher to "follow" or "join" to test and adjust your settings.
4. **Post Often:** The more often you post, the better! Frequent posting helps your account show up for more people/followers. Also, social media platforms favor posts with photos and videos, so you should always try to include them (more below).
5. **Use Photos:** Posting photos of students is highly encouraged, but be mindful of any students who the school may not have permission to photograph. Families grant or deny the ability to share their student's photo each year when completing the Returning Student Registration; you can find this information in PowerSchool. Not honoring family directions can negatively impact the District. (Note that public events such as awards assemblies, plays, graduations, concerts, athletic contests, or similar events that have newsworthy aspects are open to the public and, therefore, are not intended to be part of this procedure, though when possible comply in these larger settings, it is still encouraged to do so.)

6. **Avoid Sharing Student Information:** Make sure that your posts do not include confidential or protected information about students. You should assume that most information about a student is protected from disclosure by FERPA, State Law, and District policies.
7. **#Hashtags are Key:** Hashtags are a great way to ensure people can find relevant content, especially on Twitter and Instagram. The official hashtag for the District is #bsdvt, which should be used on all social media posts to help anyone searching to see the breadth of things happening in our District. We ask that the majority of your content on Twitter and Instagram include #bsdvt. You should also consider using other hashtags such as:
 - #vted: Vermont Agency of Education monitors social media content with this hashtag, it is a good way to get their attention and/or get them to share your content.
 - #btv: This is the hashtag for Burlington, and/or #vt: This is the hashtag for Vermont
 - #jointhejourney: It's our Vision Statement!
 - Some schools/programs have specific hashtags: #seahorsepride, #champsbeingchamps, #bsdlearns, #bsdvtathletics
 - You can also search for other hashtags appropriate to your post content, such as #STEM, #studentvoice, #schoolfoodrocks, #afterschoolworks, etc.
8. **Responding to criticism/negativity:** While these situations should be limited for teachers and school administrators, we all know that sometimes emotions can run high online. If someone says something negative or critical on your school social feed, one way to respond is with a simple message: "We are sorry to hear you had this experience. Please send Principal (insert name) an email so that we may follow up with you: (insert email)." If this response will not do, the BSD communication team is here to help you craft a response (or choose not to, remember not every comment warrants a response). Please contact BSD's Communication Specialist for support.
9. **Dealing with offensive content:** We seek to use social media to engage with our community, but sometimes other people using these tools post offensive or controversial content. Things in this category are more than a complaint or criticism of the school or administration- they are posts demonizing equity, creating controversy for the sake of controversy, or not living up to our school community values. When this happens, you have several options that the BSD communications team will support you on. You can delete the comment, hide the comment, and/or report it to the social media platform. If the comment is made by someone who is clearly not a member of our community, you can also ban them from commenting in the future. Again, the BSD communication team is here to help you craft a response (or choose not to)... when in doubt, reach out to the District Communication Specialist for support.
10. **Pre-Communication with Families:** Once you create an account, you should let families know that you will be posting and give them information so that they can follow your posts! Share the purpose for your choice of social media, site norms, and selected privacy settings. Assure families that student media permissions are followed.
11. **Do Not Share your Location (in Real Time):** You can never be too safe. If you are traveling somewhere with your group, avoid sharing that you are headed that way or posting live from any one location. An easy way around this is to post content from a field trip after you've returned to the classroom.
12. **Be Cyber Aware:** Social media sites are often a vehicle for propagating phishing schemes and efforts of "bad actors" on the web. Practice good cyber hygiene (keep a strong password, don't forward direct messages or click on questionable links) and report any unusual activity.

Interacting with Students

Staff may not use the direct messaging services of these mediums to communicate directly with students; direct student communication must be through your BSD email account, to protect students and staff.

Additionally, please remember that all BSD employees are considered mandated reporters, and this extends to the realm of social media; please report, as required by law, any information found on a social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.

YouTube Videos

The District maintains a robust [YouTube presence](#), and we want to share your great video content. Schools and programs should not post school-related videos on YouTube accounts other than the District account, or other video platforms. This helps to keep all content organized in one place, which helps viewers discover our content. It also helps to avoid stranded content, which happens when employees leave the District. We have created playlists for several schools and programs to help viewers find the content they are looking for and are happy to do the same for your series of videos! Please connect with the Communication Specialist to learn more about posting video content. As a reminder, YouTube videos can easily be [embedded directly into school websites](#), which makes this an even more powerful social media tool for your school.

Clerical Information

<i>BSD Version:</i>	<i>BSD Procedure GR6P-SM: Social Media Creation and Usage</i>
<i>Date Adopted:</i>	<i>7/24/23</i>
<i>Legal Reference(s):</i>	<i>The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)</i>
<i>Policy Reference:</i>	<i>GR6</i>