



**BRANDYWINE  
HEIGHTS**  
AREA  
SCHOOL  
DISTRICT

Book	BHASD Policies
Section	800 Operations
Title	Employee Use of Social Networks
Code	815.1
Status	Active
Adopted	October 3, 2011

## **Purpose**

The district recognizes the widespread presence of social networking in personal and professional communications. This policy is intended to advise the employee in navigating the fast-changing landscape of the Internet, blogging, and social-networking sites. This policy is intended to assist the employee in making good decisions when communicating and obtaining information online in accordance with district policy. Employees are reminded that they are professionals and are representatives of the district and the community in all aspects of their lives and should conduct themselves publicly in accordance with the responsibilities of public service.

## **Guidelines**

### Interaction With Students Through Blogs And Social Networking

Employees are discouraged from becoming friends with students on social-networking sites. If an employee finds it necessary to communicate with students using personal or district sites, s/he must maintain professional interaction at all times in accordance with the Pennsylvania State Code of Conduct.

### Anonymity

The employee should be honest about his/her identity when utilizing social networking. Employees shall not pretend to be another person. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. Employees who write about political, social, cultural, or education-related matters should include a disclaimer on their site that provides as follows: "The views expressed [in the social media format] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Brandywine Heights Area School District."

### Liability

All social media users are liable for what they post on their own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers and social media users have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, or obscene (as defined by law). Employees should also be aware that the district may conduct web searches in order to determine if it is being referenced in an inappropriate or illegal manner. As a representative of the district, please be aware that your postings may be viewed by students and parents/guardians, and, if inappropriate, may subject the employee to discipline as appropriate. Images, posts, and comments posted on social-networking sites reflect on you and the district.

All information published by the employee on his/her blog or social-networking sites must comply with the district's Acceptable Use and Personal Conduct policies. Further, the employee must comply with confidentiality obligations imposed by law, including HIPAA and FERPA. Employees must respect all copyright laws and must reference or cite all sources as required by law. Under no circumstances may the employee use district logos,

mascots, or images without express written consent. The use of images or photographs of students on a personal blog or social-networking web page are absolutely prohibited.[1]

Under no circumstances should employees discuss situations involving employee or student discipline on their blog or social-networking site. As a general guideline, employees should not post anything that they would not want to read in a newspaper or on a billboard.

### Political Speech

Employees should not use the district's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political party or candidate.

### Protect Your Identity

While employees should be honest about their identity, they should not provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against the employee. Employees should not list their home address or telephone number or work telephone or email address. If an employee creates a personal social media site, a separate email address must be established.

### Monitor Comments

Comments are a major part of the social-networking environment, but employees should review and approve all comments before they appear. This allows the employee to delete any spam comments, block inappropriate posts, and delete any offensive or frivolous comments.

Employees should not permit students to comment on their personal social-networking page or on their personal blog.

### Conduct In The Use Of Social Networking

Under no circumstances shall the use of non work-related social-networking activities interfere with the employee's work obligations.

Employees should be aware that even privacy settings are not foolproof. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after they have been published to the Internet. Sites such as Google constantly crawl the web and archive websites, allowing them to continue to be viewed even after the information has been removed or the site terminated. Employees should not post when they feel angry or passionate about a subject and should wait until they calm down if they are going to reply or post on any blog or social-networking page.

Employees should use care in the photos of themselves that they post. Only pictures that they would be willing to share with the parents/guardians of district students or their employer should be posted. Employees should check pictures posted by their friends to ensure that a search for the employee's name does not bring up images of the employee that they themselves did not post.

### Discipline

Violation of this policy will result in discipline as appropriate, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable district disciplinary policies and procedures.