



Social Media Policy

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this social media policy is to provide guidelines for the appropriate use of social media by students, staff, and other stakeholders within Hattiesburg Public Schools (HPS).
2. **Scope:** This policy applies to all students, employees, and affiliates of HPS who use social media platforms for school-related purposes or in a manner that may affect the school environment. Social media platforms include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and any other online social networks.
3. **Definitions:** (a) Social Media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. (b) Official Accounts: Social media accounts created and maintained by HPS or its representatives for school-related purposes and (c) Personal Accounts: Individuals create and maintain Social media accounts for personal use.
4. **General Guidelines:**
 - a. Respect and Professionalism: All users are expected to interact respectfully and professionally with others. Harassment, discrimination, and inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.
 - b. Accuracy and Honesty: Information shared must be accurate, truthful, and respectful. Misinformation and false statements are prohibited.
 - c. Confidentiality: Users must not disclose confidential or proprietary information about HPS, its students, or its staff. This includes student records, personnel files, and other sensitive information.
 - d. Representation: Only authorized individuals may create or maintain official HPS social media accounts. Personal accounts must not imply HPS endorsement.
 - e. Student Guidelines:
 - i. Appropriate Use: Students should use social media responsibly and in accordance with the HPS Code of Conduct. Cyberbullying, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior are strictly prohibited.
 - ii. Privacy: Students must respect the privacy of their peers and staff. Sharing personal information without consent is prohibited.
 - iii. Academic Integrity: Students must not use social media to cheat or plagiarize.
 - f. Employee Guidelines:
 - i. Professional Boundaries: Employees should maintain professional boundaries with students on social media. Personal communication with students through social media should be limited to school-related matters.
 - ii. Representation: Employees must clarify when they are expressing personal views rather than representing HPS. Personal posts should include a disclaimer if there is a potential for perceived representation of the school.
 - iii. Use of Official Accounts: Employees managing official HPS social media accounts must adhere to the school's content, tone, and engagement guidelines.
 - g. Content Guidelines

- i.* **Appropriate Content:** Content shared on official HPS accounts should be educational, informative, and reflective of the school's values and mission.
 - ii.* **Visual Media:** Photos and videos of students must not be posted without proper consent from the student's parent or guardian.
 - iii.* **Engagement:** Responses to comments and messages should be timely, respectful, and professional.
- 5. Monitoring and Enforcement:** (a) **Monitoring:** HPS reserves the right to monitor social media activity related to the school and take appropriate action for any violations of this policy. (b) **Enforcement:** Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion for students and disciplinary action up to and including termination for employees.
- 6. Reporting Issues:** Any concerns or violations of this policy should be reported to the school administration or the designated social media coordinator.
- 7. Grounds for Takedown:** Content may be subject to removal if it:
 - a. Violates the HPS Social Media Policy.
 - b. Contains offensive, discriminatory, or harassing language.
 - c. Includes confidential or sensitive information.
 - d. Depicts or encourages illegal activities.
 - e. Misrepresents HPS or its stakeholders.
 - f. Is deemed harmful to the safety and well-being of students, staff, or the community.
 - g. Infringes on intellectual property rights.
 - h. Violates platform-specific terms of service.
- 8. Policy Review:** This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.
- 9. Contact Information:** For any questions or clarifications regarding this policy, please contact the Hattiesburg Public Schools Communications Department at 601-582-5078.