Austin ISD Social Media Guidelines

These guidelines were prepared as a resource for you. It is important to create a safe and transparent atmosphere of trust and individual accountability. Keep in mind that any and all information produced by Austin ISD employees is a reflection on the entire District.

These guidelines were created to provide assistance in the use of social media for communicating with students, staff and the larger Austin ISD community. They are intended to provide support for assessing communication goals and objectives, audience needs and interests, maintaining and creating content, resources, and determining whether a given social media channel is appropriate to meet those essential needs.

By accessing, creating, or contributing to any blogs, wikis, podcasts, or other social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines.

Legal Requirements

Campuses and departments are required to maintain a list of accounts with passwords, and to archive all posts before closing any accounts. Critical incident posts must be archived and those records maintained according to standard records retention schedules. Federal and state student confidentiality and privacy laws apply to all social media posts. Care should be taken to ensure that no personal identifiable information is ever shared on social media without written parental permission. This includes student names, photos, videos and other types of media.

Social media posts are considered public records. Do not delete them.

What is Social Media?

Any user-created content online designed in a collaborative environment where users share opinions, information, and knowledge with each other.

Social media content options, but not limited to:

- Blogs
- Social Media Sites/Apps (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, Google+, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc.)
- Photo and Video Sharing Sites/Apps (YouTube, Vimeo, Tik Tok, Flickr, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Pinterest, Reddit, etc.)

Acceptable Use

Transparency and Personal Responsibility

Users are personally responsible for the content they post on social media sites on behalf of the district.

District staff are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the appropriate security settings for any and all social media (personal or professional) that you may use. Be sure that the settings are such that any personal content may only be viewed by your intended audience. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time - protect the privacy of your students, colleagues and yourself.

It is appropriate for counselors, teachers, principals and district spokespeople to use social media to directly communicate with students, subject to the limitations outlined in DH(REGULATION). It is not appropriate for other Austin ISD staff members to be in contact with students through social media.

Obtain written permission before using any school or district logo or image to ensure it's the most up-to-date graphic as well as appropriate to use. When using social media for Austin ISD or school-related purposes or assets, please follow the Austin ISD Style Guide, www.austinisd.org/communications/brand . If you need assistance, please contact the Department of Communications & Community Engagement.

Copyright and Fair Use Laws

Do not use copyrighted materials without permission. Credit does not equal permission. If another website was the source of information for a post/tweet, properly obtain permission to use the information and source that information or provide a link to where readers can also find that information.

Privacy

Respect student and family privacy. When contributing online do not post any confidential student information. Do not post any names/photos/videos of students on your campus/department site without checking the **SR 290 Form** that the school has from registration of that student. Do not post names/photos/videos of students on your personal accounts/sites.

Do not blur or cover student faces with emojis, circles or other images. If a student does not have a signed media release, or if it's unknown whether the student has a signed release, do not take a photo of that student.

Know and follow the law. Refer to FERPA for specific guidelines on sharing student information. Never post personally identifiable or confidential information about students or their families, especially student information regarding health records, grades, addresses and other protected information. Contact Austin ISD General Counsel with any questions regarding student information.

Appropriate Use

Use an Austin ISD provided email as your e-mail contact for official or school-related pages and any Austin ISD related sites. Do not use your Austin ISD an e-mail or username for any personal accounts.

Never use vulgar, offensive, sexual, hateful, threatening, racist, sexist, homophobic, abusive or discriminatory language in any form or fashion.

Never use social media to criticize Austin ISD employees, students, staff, contractors or board members.

Never post a defamatory remark that could injure someone's reputation or character. The aim of AISD's social media presence is not to libel or slander others, but to educate, engage, uplift and inform. If a post does not fall under one of these categories or align with Austin ISD's mission, it should not be used.

Accessibility Standards

Text:

Write in plain language: Avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms unless they are appropriate.

Don't overuse caps. Full-caps can be difficult to read and misinterpreted by screen readers.

Use camel case for multi-word hashtags.Capitalize the first letter of each word to make hashtags more legible and prevent screen reader gaffs. e.g. #ItsMyBirthday (camel case)

Put hashtags and mentions at the end. Punctuation marks are read aloud by screen readers. Be mindful of how hashtags or @ mentions can disrupt copy.

Limit emoji use. Emoji and emoticons (i.e. ¯_(ツ)_/¯) are read aloud by assistive tech. That means people will hear things like "loudly crying face." Before using one, look up how it translates to text.

Use an adequate font size. Make sure text is legible, especially when used in images or areas that aren't modifiable.

Avoid special characters. In addition to reduced legibility, Voiceover and other assistive tools read special formatting very differently.

Limit line length. Lines that are too long can interfere with readability and retention.

Use inclusive language.

Alt. Captioning:

Convey the content: There's a huge gap between "Image of a chart," and something like, "A bar chart showing the testing data of second graders."

Transcribe text. If the image has wording that is central to its meaning, make sure you include it in the description.

Don't forget GIFs. Twitter recently made alt-text an option for GIFs. If the platform does not support alt-text, include a description in the action.

Audio:

Descriptive audio. Described video is the narrated description of any important non-verbal elements in your video. This track is written and recorded to fit within the gaps between important audio elements. On social media, described video is typically "baked in" and cannot be turned off.

Transcripts:

Descriptive transcript. Sometimes referred to as a media alternative transcript, these transcripts provide descriptions alongside dialogue, much like a script.

Live described video. Live video hosts should be familiar with descriptive video techniques, taking pauses to describe what's happening on screen. Accessible Media Inc. has a good best practices guide.

Color Contrast:

Avoid green and red or blue and yellow combinations, as they're difficult to read.

Text can be difficult to read on images, so consider using a solid background or opaque overlay.

On graphs and charts, consider also using patterns to differentiate data.

Linking:

Visualize links. Add an underline or a hover animation to convey that hyperlinked text is clickable.

Use symbols. In graphs or infographics, use symbols or patterns as an alternative or addition to color. Or, add clarifying labels.

Captioning:

Closed captions are crucial for viewers with hearing impairments. They also enhance the viewing experience for people watching in their non-native language, or viewers in sound-off environments. Captions even benefit children learning to read.

Etiquette

Let proper grammar, punctuation and spelling be your guide, while adhering to the tenor of social media writing styles. Double-check for typos or other errors prior to publishing content. If you are posting in a language other than your native one and you are unsure about your phrasing, have a native speaker read your tweet/post. One exception is the acceptable use of abbreviations/shorthand on Twitter. Exercise judgment when using slang.

Always be polite when responding to community members' comments/questions/concerns.

Feel free to use your own voice and personality when engaging with the public through social media. A voice that is over-institutionalized and rehearsed can repel the audience. Be sure to remain polished and professional.

Political Campaigns

It is Austin ISD Board of Trustees policy that the district's mail and other communications systems, including email, text messaging, social media channels, etc., not be used for distributing materials containing political endorsements or advertisements. Any distributions that contain political endorsements or advertisements are violations of the appropriate use of the district's mail and other communication systems.

Strategies for Starting and Using Social Media

To Start: We highly recommend that you start by researching if your campus/department already has social media accounts tied to them. The goal is there should be only one main account per campus. Specific accounts can be tied to departments, classes, clubs or organizations, but must be run by an Austin ISD employee and information must be shared with The Communications Social Media Specialist.

If there are no accounts tied to your campus, start with one social media platform and create a strategy for posting consistently throughout the entire year. Remember you are required to maintain a list of all accounts and user information. Please also remember to give social media responsibilities to an Austin ISD employee only.

Social media accounts representing Austin ISD cannot be held by a non-Austin ISD employee; PTA, parent, student, external company. These accounts must state, "unofficial" within their title or biography description.

Find and monitor the conversations already taking place in the social media about the district's schools, events and policies.

Identify and follow key influencers in your target area of interest and learn what they find important.

Many people or organizations may follow/friend you or your campus/department but take a moment to ensure that their content is appropriate before returning the following.

Provide value to your audience through exclusive content, multimedia, special events and advice. Does your comment, post or tweet help people improve knowledge or skills, discover something interesting, solve problems or better understand the functions of the district or your campus?

Regularly assess social media efforts against any measurable, pre-defined goals and objectives.

The Communications Department will reach out to your campus/department to update your social media information on your campus' web pages and our documents. This information is also to help promote through the main Austin ISD social media accounts, as well as transfer accounts to others in your campus/department, if needed.

Best practice is for at least 2+ campus employees, including the principal-should have the passwords and access to all social media accounts. The Department of Communications should also have a copy of login credentials for backup. That way, the campus still has access to the account if the primary social media lead leaves.

Monitoring Social Media

Response Times and Responsibilities

Determine the maximum time that is acceptable to respond to and update all social media platforms for your department or campus. Determine who is responsible for various social media accounts and define that person or that group's daily / weekly / monthly workload and tasks.

Make a list of primary and secondary owners on all accounts. Ensure that there is a backup person who has passwords and login information.

If something is posted displaying content that is alarming or upsetting to others, know and report to the appropriate channels (e.g., the counselor, principal, legal department, etc.) and determine what steps should be taken. Have a plan in place. Take a "snapshot" of the post as reference.

Spam and Unused Accounts

Be mindful of interacting, promoting, or following accounts that could be spam. Don't share or promote any links or information before checking the credibility of the event, site, etc.

If an account is tied to your campus/department but is a spam account or has been out of use for over 2+ years, please contact the social media specialist or other staff in the Communications Department. A team member of the Communications Department will research and work to rectify the issue or archive the account. All campus/department accounts related to Austin ISD must stay up and open to public use for any open records requests and legal use.

Crisis Management / Contingency Plans

Twitter and other forms of mobile communication have been proven to be very effective in disseminating important information during crisis situations such as lockdowns or inclement weather.

Should there be a crisis situation, school principals or school security staff would be in charge of sharing information at the campus level or work with senior staff at CAC. Each school should have a chain of command in place including a designated time frame to share information.

Austin ISD Official Social Media Accounts

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/AustinISD

Twitter: @AustinISD

Instagram: www.Instagram.com/AustinISD

YouTube: www.Youtube.com/AustinISD

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/aisd

Tik Tok: @AustinISD

Make sure to use #AISDProud #WeAreAISD or tag us @AustinISD when you post to socials, we will review your content and repost through our platforms for better engagement.