

Book	Policy Manual
Section	100 Programs
Title	Exemption From Instruction
Code	105.2 Vol V 2025
Status	First Reading

Authority

The Board adopts this policy to ensure that parents/guardians have the right to have their children excused from specific instruction that conflicts with their **sincerely held religious and/or moral** beliefs.[1][2].

Please select both of the first 2 options OR the 3rd option below after reviewing with your school solicitor.

~~{ } The right to be exempt from instruction which conflicts with sincerely held religious beliefs extends to parents/guardians of students enrolled in this district when the students are under the age of eighteen (18), and to the students themselves when the student is eighteen (18) or older.~~

~~{ } The right to be exempt from instruction which conflicts with moral beliefs extends to the parents/guardians of students enrolled in this district.~~

{ x } The rights granted by this policy are granted to parents/guardians of students enrolled in this district when the students are under the age of eighteen (18) and to the students themselves when the student is eighteen (18) or **older**.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall notify parents/guardians of this policy at least annually, at the beginning of each school year, and within a reasonable time after any substantive changes regarding the contents of this policy.

~~{ } The Superintendent or designee shall develop procedures to implement this policy that include directives for staff to provide reasonable and realistic advance notice to parents/guardians when instruction is planned that may conflict with sincerely held religious and/or moral beliefs. Such notice provides parents/guardians the opportunity to opt their child out of the instruction.~~

Guidelines

The district shall excuse any student from specific instruction, subject to the following conditions:

1. To assist the school district in ensuring that the student is excused from the correct specific instruction, the request must be made in writing and must detail the specific instruction from which the student is to be excused, **including the reason(s) for the request.**
2. The written request to be excused shall be sent by the parent/guardian or student **who is eighteen (18) or older** to the

{ } classroom teacher.

{ x} building principal.

{ } Superintendent.

One (1) copy of the request shall be retained in the student's permanent school records, one (1) copy kept by the school principal, and one (1) copy submitted to the teacher from whose instruction the student is to be excused.

3. The written request must contain a statement that the specific instruction described conflicts with the **sincerely held** religious **and/or moral** beliefs of the student or of the parents/guardians.
4. The parent/guardian and/or student may request suggested replacement educational activities. The only permissible educational activity for this purpose shall be **substantially similar** instruction that is consistent with the learning objectives set for the **course**.
5. The building principal shall determine where the student shall report during the time the student is excused.
6. All students excused from specific instruction shall be required to achieve the academic standards established by the district as necessary for graduation.[3][4]

Exemption from Dissection Activities

Students have the right to decline to participate in an education project involving dissection, vivisection, incubation, capture or other harm or destruction of an animal or any part of an animal.[5]

The district must notify students and parents/guardians of their right to decline participation in such activities at least three (3) weeks prior to the start of the education project. Students who do not participate in such activities will be assigned an alternative education project.[5]

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Legal

[1. 22 PA Code 11.7](#)

[2. 22 PA Code 4.4](#)

3. Pol. 102

4. Pol. 217

[5. 24 P.S. 1523](#)

Mahmoud v. Taylor, 606 U.S. ___, 145 S.Ct. 2332 (2025).

Tatel v. Mt. Lebanon School District, 752 F.Supp.3d 512 (W.D. Pa. 2024).

Troxel v. Granville, 530 U.S. 57 (2000).

Book	Policy Manual
Section	100 Programs
Title	Noncurriculum-Related, Nonschool-Sponsored, Student-Initiated Groups
Code	122.1 Vol V 2025
Status	First Reading

NOTE: *It is important to distinguish that Policy 122.1 only applies to **noncurriculum-related, nonschool-sponsored, student-initiated groups seeking permission to use district premises to meet.** In this policy, it is the granting of the opportunity to meet that is approved; not the group itself.*

- *Extracurricular activities that are sponsored or approved by the Board are governed by Policy 122. Extracurricular Activities.*
- *Nonschool organizations, groups and individuals initiating a request for use of school facilities or dissemination of materials are governed by policies 707. Use of School Facilities and 913. Nonschool Organizations/Groups/Individuals.*

Purpose

The district, by making a limited open forum available, provides the opportunity for **noncurriculum-related, nonschool-sponsored, student-initiated** groups of secondary students to meet, without discrimination, on school district premises during noninstructional time for the purpose of conducting a meeting regardless of the religious, political, philosophical or other content of the speech at such meetings.[1][2][3]

Definitions

Noninstructional time - the time set aside by the school before actual classroom instruction begins, after actual classroom instruction ends or during time designated for lunch.

Limited open forum - a public secondary school has a limited open forum whenever such school grants an offering to or opportunity for one or more noncurriculum-related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time.[1]

Noncurriculum-related student group - any student-initiated group that does not directly relate to the body of courses offered by the district.[4]

Sponsorship - the act of promoting, leading or participating in a meeting. The assignment of a teacher, administrator or other school employee to a meeting for custodial purposes does not constitute sponsorship of the meeting.[5]

Authority

Meetings of **noncurriculum** student groups (student groups) must be voluntary, student-initiated and conducted in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, regulations, Board policies and school rules.[1][2][3][6]

Such meetings must not be **under the sponsorship of** the school district, its agents or employees.[1]

The meetings of student groups cannot materially and substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of the educational activities in the school.[1]

Availability and assignment of facilities, supplies and equipment necessary, **including access to district-controlled methods of communication such as bulletin boards, a public-address system, and advertisements in the school newspaper**, to conduct such meetings shall be provided in accordance with the Equal Access Act.[1]

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee may establish **standard** procedures regarding the length of meetings, permissible number of meetings per week and other limitations deemed reasonably necessary.

The Superintendent or designee will designate areas within district buildings and outside areas authorized for meetings of student groups. Access to areas which have not been designated as meeting spaces by the Superintendent or designee is prohibited.

A district employee will be assigned to attend and monitor each student group meeting. Monitors will attend the meetings in a nonparticipatory capacity for the purpose of maintaining order. The assignment of a monitor does not constitute sponsorship of the student group or meeting.[1]

District employees will not be required to attend any meeting where the content of the speech is contrary to their beliefs.[1]

District administrators and staff retain the authority to:[1]

1. Maintain order and discipline on district premises.
2. Protect the well-being of students and employees.
3. Assure the attendance of students at such meetings is voluntary.

Guidelines

Students seeking permission to form a student group to meet during noninstructional time must submit a written request to the building principal on the designated district form.

All activities of the student group must be led by the student members of the group. The meetings and activities may not be directed, conducted, controlled or regularly attended by individuals from outside the school.[1]

Guests may be invited but may not be regular participants in the student meetings. All guests must comply with Board policy regarding school visitors.[7]

Materials prepared for dissemination on district premises must comply with the provisions of Board policy relating to the dissemination of materials.[8]

Public funds may not be used for the operation of the meetings beyond the incidental cost of providing the space for the group to meet.

{x } The student group may not be advertised as a school-sponsored activity. All announcements and disseminated materials must include a disclaimer of school sponsorship or endorsement.

Students in violation of this policy and applicable rules may result in loss of the right to meet on school premises and/or disciplinary action.[6]

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Legal

1. 20 U.S.C. 4071 et seq

2. Pol. 103

3. Pol. 103.1

4. Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226 (1990)

5. 20 U.S.C. 4072

6. Pol. 218

7. Pol. 907

8. Pol. 220

Wolfe ex rel. Wolfe v. Twin Valley School District, No. 23-4501 (E.D. Pa. March 26, 2025), 2025 WL 920257

Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	District Social Media
Code	816 Vol V 2025
Status	First Reading

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the process and standards for approval and operation of district-owned social media accounts, and to identify the differences between personally owned social media accounts and those maintained by the district.

The Board respects freedom of expression; such expression will be free from interruption, except when it is in violation of law or Board policy.

Definitions

Social media - a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content, including photos and videos. Social media includes **social networks**, which are online platforms where users can create profiles, share information and personal messages, and connect with others.

District-owned social media account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is approved by the Board and operated by a designated district employee(s), and is designed to further the educational mission of the district by providing information to the school community and general public.

Personal social media account - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is attributed to and operated by an employee, individual school director or student for personal use and is not approved by the Board as an official communications channel of the district.

[Choose this option if district establishes one or more social media accounts as a designated public forum and allows comments on posts]

~~{ } **Designated public forum** - created when a district-owned social media account is intentionally opened for use by the public as a place for expressive activity where members of the public may communicate, post or comment on information, subject to viewpoint neutral rules designated by the Board. In terms of social media, this would include the ability of public users to comment on or reply to social media posts, pictures, or videos.~~

[Choose this option if district establishes social media accounts as a nonpublic public forum which disables the ability to comment on posts for one or more accounts]

{x } **Nonpublic forum** - created when a district-owned social media account enables members of the public to read and receive district information, but the district has not designated opportunity for expressive activity by the public, and no commenting or posting of information by members of the public is permitted. In terms of social media, the ability to comment, post or reply is disabled on the district's account for public users.

Authority

The Board shall approve all official social media accounts created and/or maintained as district-owned accounts.[1]

{X } including social media accounts for individual schools within the district.

All district-owned social media accounts shall display the official name and

{X } logo

{X } seal

{X } mascot

of the district.

{X } or the individual district school.

[Choose one or both of the appropriate options on forum, in consultation with school solicitor – the district may designate on the platform which forum type is applicable for the account]

~~{ } The Board establishes that district-owned social media accounts may operate as a **designated public forum**, where the public may comment and interact with information posted by the district, subject to the Board's established rules.~~

{X } The Board establishes district-owned social media accounts as a **nonpublic forum** and directs school staff to disable functions allowing public users to comment or post information on district-owned social media accounts.

[Choose this option and the listing if the district establishes one or more accounts as a designated public forum]

~~{ } The Board approves the following rules for public interaction with district-owned social media accounts and directs staff to post this information on the district website and all social media accounts:~~

The district encourages community members to respond to posts and share comments that are constructive and courteous toward the school community. Statements and opinions expressed by visitors to the account do not reflect the opinions of the district. Questions regarding information should be directed to the building principal or to the Superintendent's office for district-wide information. The district shall review comments and may remove comments which **are in clear violation of law or Board policy, including but not limited to the following:**[2][3][4][5]

1. **Sexual harassment, racial, ethnic, religious or nationality intimidation towards an individual or individuals in the school community.**[6][7][8]
2. **Disclosure of confidential personal information regarding students or staff.**[9][10]
3. **Speech that traditionally has not been protected under the First Amendment, such as obscenity, defamation and speech integral to criminal conduct.**
4. **Speech that is profane.**
5. **Speech that constitutes true threats such as inciting imminent lawless action or subjecting individuals to fear of violence.**
6. Are spamming in nature (same comment posted repeatedly).

Intellectual Property Rights

The illegal use of copyrighted, branded or trademarked materials or trade secrets is prohibited on district-owned social media accounts. All content shall be subject to copyright fair use guidelines and applicable laws, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[11]

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board designates the

Superintendent or designee

Communications Director

Director of Technology

Other _____

to oversee all district-owned social media accounts and serve as the primary contact person for district-owned social media accounts.

The Superintendent or designee shall notify students and staff about this policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the district website and by other appropriate methods.

All district staff assigned to monitor and maintain district-owned social media accounts shall receive training on:

1. Regularly reviewing district-owned social media accounts, in coordination with the district's chief communications representative, to update, remove and/or correct information.[12]
2. Complying with confidentiality provisions of student and staff information, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[9][10]
3. Monitoring content for confidentiality and intellectual property violations, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate district staff to consider further action.[9][10][11]
4. Monitoring content for web accessibility standards and responding to public requests for accommodations.[6][8][13]

[Choose this option if the district establishes a designated public forum]

5. ~~Monitoring public comments and responding, where appropriate, with clarification or redirection to additional information.~~

[Choose this option if the district establishes a designated public forum]

6. ~~Monitoring public comments according to the Board's established rules, documenting potential violations, and notifying appropriate district staff to consider further action. Staff shall be provided training to assess comments in a viewpoint neutral manner, based on the Board's approved rules, regardless of the specific subject matter of comments.~~

[Choose this option if the district establishes a designated public forum]

~~The Board authorizes designated district staff maintaining district-owned social media accounts to remove individual posts or comments by public users that violate the established social media rules of this policy. The Board directs that review and consideration of posts or comments shall not discriminate on the basis of content or viewpoint, and staff must always be able to articulate the reason for removing a specific post, in accordance with Board policy. Staff~~

~~may consult with the Superintendent or designee and the school solicitor in determining appropriate actions. Posts and comments may not be removed solely because they are critical of the district or district leadership, because they promote an unpopular opinion, or because of their viewpoint if the post or comment otherwise complies with the established social media rules.~~

[Choose this option if the district establishes a designated public forum]

~~{ } Designated district staff may not block users from accessing or commenting on district-owned social media accounts unless the outside account is identified as a security or system threat or spam account. Staff may consult with the Superintendent or designee and the school solicitor in determining appropriate actions.~~

Guidelines

Posting of Personally Identifiable Information

The Board authorizes posting of student images in photos or videos depicting the educational process or school-related events on district-owned social media accounts, unless the students' parents/guardians have opted out of sharing directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Board policy.[9][10][14][15]

{X } or have declined to sign and return the district's notice of photography permission form.

The Board prohibits posting of other personally identifiable information of students on district-owned social media accounts without the consent of the parent/guardian, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[9][10]

The Board prohibits posting of staff images in photos or videos when a staff member has submitted a request to the Superintendent or designee that their image not be posted publicly online.

{X } The Board directs district staff to post images and information to social media accounts in a manner that protects the safety and security of students and staff, such as posting images without identification.

Accessibility

The Board directs district staff who maintain district-owned social media accounts to post content that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, to the greatest extent possible based on the limitations of the platform. This shall include, but is not limited to:[6][7][8][16][17][18]

1. Including alternate text descriptions or captions for images.
2. Including captions for video content.
3. Avoiding text that is posted as an image.
4. Creating links and attachments in formats that are accessible to screen readers and other assistive technology.
5. Formatting text so that it is accessible to screen readers and other assistive technology.

All district-owned social media accounts shall contain clear contact information that may be used by members of the public to request accommodations or assistance.

Connecting with Other Social Media Accounts

Content or information posted to district-owned social media accounts shall not be connected to other social media accounts through linking or tagging if the outside account is for a commercial application, product or service and the district or its employees would receive financial or other compensation as a result of the connection.

{ X } When an official Board-approved corporate sponsorship or partnership includes connecting with the sponsor on district-owned social media accounts through **reacting**, linking or tagging, such connections shall be addressed in accordance with the provisions of the approved contract or partnership.

District-owned social media accounts shall not be connected to social media accounts of individual students through linking or tagging.

{ X } District-owned social media accounts may be connected through linking or tagging to social media accounts of parent-teacher organizations, district-related booster organizations or similar school-related groups when the content or information has been reviewed and approved by the district's chief communications representative.

{X } Third-Party Social Media Accounts

Third-party social media accounts - a social media account, regardless of platform, that is operated by a volunteer, student, parent/guardian, alumnus or other member of the public on behalf of groups associated with the district. Third-party social media accounts are not operated by district employees or school directors.

These accounts are privately created, maintained and are not actively monitored by the district. Third-party social media accounts are encouraged to add this line to their description, "This is not a district-owned social media account. The district is not responsible for the content or operation of this social media account."

Personal Social Media Accounts of School Directors

District-owned social media accounts shall not react, link to, post or otherwise interact with private social media accounts of individual school directors.

School **directors are** strongly encouraged to use privacy settings on social media accounts and to clearly identify that it is their personal social media account and that it does not officially represent the Board or district.

The Board acknowledges that a school director's activity on their personal social media account could be deemed a public record and subject to a Right-to-Know request if the activity documents a transaction or activity of the district and is created, received or retained pursuant to law or in connection with a transaction, business or activity of the district.[19][20]

The Board further recognizes that the determination of whether an activity on a school director's personal social media account qualifies as a public record must involve an analysis of the status of the account. Such analysis may include factors such as whether the account is either public or private and whether the account has the characteristics of an official district-owned social media account.

Personal Social Media Accounts of District Employees

District-owned social media accounts shall not react, link to, post or otherwise interact with private social media accounts of individual school employees.

{ X } District employees are strongly encouraged to use privacy settings on social media accounts and to clearly identify that it is their personal social media account and that it does not officially represent the Board or district.

To maintain professional boundaries, district employees must comply with Board policy regarding online communication with students.[21]

The district does not actively monitor personal social media accounts of current school employees; however, the district reserves the right to address employees' job-related speech or employee speech posted on social media that has the potential to affect the district's operations. Speech that takes place off-site and on an employee's own time, including posting on personal social media accounts, may be addressed if the district establishes that the employee's expression infringed on the interests of the district in promoting the efficient and effective functioning and educational purpose of the district. If employee speech or expression would violate law or Board policy in a traditional forum, it is also prohibited in an online forum. When an employee speaks as a citizen on a matter of public concern, the district shall consult with the school solicitor in determining the appropriate course of action, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[2][22][23][24][25][26]

Student Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

Student use of personal social media accounts shall be addressed in accordance with applicable Board policies and administrative regulations related to student conduct, expression and students' individual rights and responsibilities. In accordance with Board policy, the district shall provide education on network etiquette and appropriate online behavior for students, including interaction with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyberbullying awareness and response.[6][13][27][28][29][30][31][32]

Consequences

A district employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy and administrative regulations.[21][25][33]

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Legal

[1. 24 P.S. 510](#)

[2. U.S. Const. Amend. I](#)

3. Lindke v. Freed, 601 U.S. 205 (2024)

4. Markey v. Thompson, 790 F. Supp. 3d 407 (E.D. Pa. 2025)

5. O'Connor-Ratcliff v. Garnier, 601 U.S. 205 (2024)

6. Pol. 103

7. Pol. 103.1

8. Pol. 104

9. Pol. 113.4

10. Pol. 216

11. Pol. 814

12. Pol. 911

13. Pol. 815

14. [20 U.S.C. 1232g](#)
 15. [34 CFR Part 99](#)
 16. [42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq](#)
 17. [29 U.S.C. 794](#)
 18. [28 CFR 35.160](#)
 19. [65 P.S. 67.102](#)
 20. *Penncrest School District v. Cagle*, 341 A.3d 720 (Pa. 2025)
 21. Pol. 824
 22. [24 P.S. 1122](#)
 23. [24 P.S. 2070.1a et seq](#)
 24. [22 PA Code 235.1 et seq](#)
 25. Pol. 317
 26. Pol. 320
 27. [24 P.S. 1303.1-A](#)
 28. [47 U.S.C. 254](#)
 29. Pol. 218
 30. Pol. 220
 31. Pol. 235
 32. Pol. 249
 33. Pol. 317.1
- Knight First Amendment Inst. at Columbia Univ. v. Trump*, 928 F.3d 226 (2d Cir. 2019)
- Davison v. Randall*, 912 F.3d 666 (4th Cir. 2019)
- Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 547 U.S. 410 (2006)
- Mike Campbell v. Cheri Toalson Reish*, 986 F.3d 822 (8th Cir. 2021)
- Pickering v. Board of Education*, 391 U.S. 563 (1968)
- Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138 (1983)
- Rankin v. McPherson*, 483 U.S. 378 (1988)
- Pol. 801
- Pol. 913

