



Social Media Guidelines

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Introduction

Social media is a form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as pictures, videos, gifs, and more ([Merriam Webster](#)).

Holyoke Public Schools utilizes social media to help engage families, students, staff, and community members and to distribute information regarding district programs, initiatives, events, and general news and information.

Official district-wide social media platforms:

HPS owns and maintains accounts on the following district-wide social media platforms:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Linkedin](#)

Note: Use of district-approved social media sites for professional purposes must comply with all applicable federal and state laws, including but not limited to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ("COPPA"), the Children's Internet Protection Act ("CIPA"), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), state public records laws, and intellectual property laws.

Overview to Social Media at Holyoke Public Schools:

Holyoke Public Schools views this social media account as an important two-way communication tool. Our content highlights district and school achievements, events, activities, and other information intended to build connections within the Holyoke school community. The following guidelines are in place:

- Our content is provided in both English and Spanish.
- We strive to ensure that all content is current, accurate, and frequently refreshed, with appropriate care taken to avoid grammar, spelling, and factual errors.
- Our content does not violate copyright or intellectual property laws.
- We do not share content that includes confidential or privileged information about students, families, staff, or district/board business and operations (such as grades, attendance records, or other pupil/personnel record information).
- We respond publicly and express our thanks for comments and suggestions posted here.
- We respond privately when posted comments are personal, derogatory, inaccurate, or when they are in violation of our guidelines.
- We let commenters know when we have shared their feedback with the appropriate individual, department, or school, and we follow up as warranted.
- Our social media channels are NOT intended to serve as public forums. All comments posted on our channels must be relevant, respectful, factual, and constructive.
 - We do not permit personal attacks, criticisms, or insults that name or allude to a specific person or persons, nor do we permit comments that bully, intimidate, or harass a specific person or persons.
 - We do not permit any content that is misleading, discriminatory, hateful, threatening, pornographic, or refers to violence, drugs, or unlawful conduct.
- We reserve the right to remove posts and/or block users who do not follow this guidance.
- We report posts or comments to the Holyoke Police Department, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and/or other appropriate agencies if the posts or comments are perceived to include child pornography or other inappropriate images; threats; references or indicators of possible child abuse; information about crimes that have happened or may happen in the future; and the like.

More information about HPS Social Media guidance can be found [here](#).

Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

Holyoke Public Schools' social media platforms are important two-way communication tools to share content about district and school achievements, events, activities, and other information intended to build connections within the Holyoke school community. Official district and school social media pages should be created and maintained solely for this purpose.

HPS employees are expected to use social media in a safe and responsible manner at all times. **Never post photos of or content about students on your own personal accounts.**

All requests to post content about classes, programs, practices, or other school activities or interactions should be routed to the person who maintains social media accounts on behalf of your school and to communications@hps.holyoke.ma.us for possible inclusion on district social media accounts.

Requirements for approved social media accounts

The HPS Communications Department is responsible for posting to, maintaining, and monitoring all of the district's social media channels. The Communications Department also authorizes and monitors all other district- and school-related social media accounts.

- All district- and school-related social media accounts (including accounts for programs, school buildings, clubs, teams, classes, etc.) must be authorized by district Communications staff, who must also be given access to monitor, post to, and edit these accounts.
- To request permission to create a new district- or school-related social media account, please send an email to communications@hps.holyoke.ma.us. Include a description of the social media account you'd like to create, the platform you'd like to use, the purpose and proposed name of the account, and a list of proposed users who will maintain the account.

Approved social media accounts will be listed and linked in an appropriate location on the [HPS website](#).

- Staff are only permitted to communicate with students on approved social media pages and only about matters that reasonably pertain to instruction, educational or extra-curricular programs.
- **Exception:** Employees may communicate via social media with relatives, the children of friends, friends of the employee's children, and members or participants in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organizations, but should do so only after obtaining permission from the child's parents or guardians.

Approved accounts must include language identifying the site as a professional social media site maintained on behalf of HPS or one of its schools, and they must display the official district logo as part of the account's branding/graphics.

- **Note:** It is a copyright violation for the district logo to be used on unapproved social media pages.

Safety and security

All social media users are reminded **not to impersonate other people on social media or create accounts using identities other than your own.**

Facebook and Instagram accounts must have the profanity filter set to “Strong.”

Posts or comments deemed potentially problematic or that contain information unrelated to district or school business must be hidden or deleted immediately.

A record must be made of any posts that include profanity, hate speech, copyrighted material, or which could be perceived as threatening, harassing, racist, biased, derogatory or disparaging to others. After the record has been made (through taking a screenshot, printing, or otherwise archiving it), such posts should be hidden or deleted from the social media site. District leadership, law enforcement, and/or the social media platform itself may also be notified, depending on the nature of the posts.

Permitted content

District and school-related social media accounts may share relevant community events and news.

- Social media posts should not include ads, promotions, or sponsored-content for commercial, private, or political interests unless specifically requested through the Superintendent’s office.
- **Only authorized staff should post information on social media sites related to crisis or emergent situations, school closings or delays, or other matters that may affect the safety, security, and/or continuity of school operations.** All other employees should refrain from posting information, asking questions, or seeking information through social media so as to avoid spreading rumors or sharing sensitive information.

Expectations for district employees

HPS understands that employees use social media both personally and professionally. HPS reminds employees they are role models for students and have an obligation to protect the confidentiality of students’ personally identifiable information at all times. Employees are required to treat social media as an extension of the classroom and/or professional workspace. Use of social media for professional purposes is limited to matters that fall within the scope of an employee’s job responsibilities.

Before posting student work, photographs/videos, or other personally identifiable information, school staff must check the child’s Release of Information status to ensure we have permission to publicly share.

No student photographs can be published for personal or promotional use, or for other non-school-related purposes.

Except with prior consent from the Superintendent or his/her designee, employees should not speak for or issue opinions about Holyoke Public Schools or any individual school or program.

Consequences for blatant disregard of HPS social media guidelines

HPS employees who have questions or are uncertain how to adhere to the district's social media guidelines are encouraged to seek training or further guidance from the Communications Department. Email communications@hps.holyoke.ma.us or call 413-493-1605 for assistance.

Anyone who blatantly disregards the district's social media guidelines could lose access to district- and school-based social media accounts and/or may face possible disciplinary or legal consequences depending upon the circumstances.

Suggested resources

Free tools to make your work look and sound good

- [Canva](#): Free-to-use online graphic design tool that can be used to create social media posts, presentations, posters, videos, logos, and more.
- [Grammarly](#): Free online writing assistant that reviews spelling, grammar, punctuation, clarity, engagement, and delivery mistakes. It uses artificial intelligence to search for and suggest possible alternative ways to phrase content.

Suggested resources from [SocialSchool4EDU](#)

- **How, when, where, and why to post**
 - [Social Media Best Practices](#)
 - [Guide to Responding Online](#)
- **What to post**
 - [20 Calls to Action](#)
 - [25 Reel Ideas](#)
 - [100 Inspiring Ideas](#)

Other resources

- [The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act \(“COPPA”\)](#)
- [The Children’s Internet Protection Act \(“CIPA”\)](#)
- [The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(“FERPA”\)](#)
- [The National Cyber Security Alliance's website for tips and resources on staying safe online](#)
- [The Cyberbullying Research Center's website for information and resources on preventing and responding to cyberbullying](#)