



Social media guidelines & process

Communications department

Everett Public Schools recognizes that social media is a tool that can facilitate interactive information sharing and collaboration. Social media sites are an important outreach and communication tool for teachers, administrators and school districts.

Social networking can improve interactivity between schools, staff, students, families and the community at large and often reaches new and different populations from traditional media. Social media may be used for many purposes in an educational environment; examples include quick dissemination of time-sensitive information (e.g., emergency information, travel disruptions or changes, or district facility closures) and marketing/promotion of events or programs to the widest possible audience or a targeted audience, such as students in a specific class or club.

PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish standards and responsibility for the use of social media by employees to represent the district, schools, school groups, teams or clubs, or individuals within schools or programs.

COVERAGE

These guidelines cover all district employees who are representing the district; a school; a school group; team or club; or themselves in their official district capacity through professional electronic social media sites. It does not apply to student-led sites on which a district employee is not participating; nor does it apply to peripheral groups such as PTAs or booster clubs. In the event a district employee oversees the site and/or posts to it in their professional capacity, the policy and procedure does apply.

STANDARDS

The same standards of professional conduct that are expected in traditional district settings are expected on professional electronic social media sites.

All use of professional electronic social media sites by schools and staff should be consistent with applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies. These include information technology security policies; acceptable use policies; the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); nondiscrimination policies; copyright and trademark laws; and applicable public records retention policies and schedules.

WHY ARE YOU ESTABLISHING A SOCIAL MEDIA SITE?

Before creating or using a professional electronic media site, a district employee must consider the following in determining whether the use of social media is appropriate:

- Who is the target audience for social media communications?
- What information is the district, school, group or individual attempting to communicate?
- Which social media tools/platforms are the best to distribute the information?
- Who is responsible for managing and monitoring the social media tools/accounts? Will this person represent the district or school appropriately?

CREATING AND ADMINISTERING ACCOUNTS

District employees wishing to create a professional electronic social media site representing the district, their school, school group, team or club, or individuals within schools or programs should:

- First, notify their school principal or department director.
- Second, submit a Social Media Account Request Form to the Communications Office.

The purpose of this notification is for the district, school and department administrators to be aware of such sites and the communications taking place on these sites.

The school or department administrator and the Communications Office shall be given administrative rights and/or passwords to the site at any time, upon request, and reserve the right to remove inappropriate content or otherwise make necessary changes to the site.

Use your school district e-mail to open social media sites, not a private e-mail address.

- All district social accounts connected with a district email [should be registered with the communications department](#).
- Do not assume privacy. Only post information you are comfortable disclosing.
- Use different passwords for different accounts (such as social media and existing work accounts). Using the same password for all accounts increases the chance of the accounts being compromised.
- Do not duplicate user IDs and passwords across multiple social media sites.

If you are planning on opening social media accounts (FB, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) on behalf of the school district, or anything related to the district, its programs, successes, etc., then please keep the following in mind:

FERPA

- No student should be included in any posts, photos, or videos unless they are FERPA cleared. Their FERPA clearance can be found in eSchools. In addition, only directory information pertaining to that student, as defined in [Policy 3250](#), may be shared (if cleared) under FERPA.
- If the event is public, then no FERPA is required, but if it is a school event and invitations are sent to students only, you will need FERPA clearance (e.g. school dances, senior teas, etc.). Sports activities are considered public events and no FERPA is required.

PROTOCOL

- Your social media posts should be from a personal perspective and not give an indication that you are making statements on behalf of the district.
- Be cautious of making “political statements” that could lead to PDC violations- more guidance can be found at www.pdc.wa.gov/learn/guidelines-school-districts

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees should be thoughtful and professional about how they present the district, their school, school group, team or club, or individuals within schools or programs through the professional use of electronic social media sites. Employees must consider these issues:

- Confidentiality. Employees should not post or release proprietary, confidential or protected personally identifiable information, or district intellectual property on professional electronic social media sites.
- Privacy. As in other venues, employees must follow the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and must not post a student's image (including photos and/or video) or other protected personally identifiable information without ensuring the student's guardian has authorized the release of that information.
- Site Monitoring. Sites should be monitored for inappropriate posts or comments; such posts should be removed. Sites should be kept updated. If a site is abandoned, it should be taken down.

BEST PRACTICES TO MITIGATE SECURITY RISKS

When creating social media accounts that require individual identification, district employees must use their actual name, not pseudonyms. Employees should be mindful of these associated issues:

CONTENT OF POSTS AND COMMENTS

Professional electronic social media sites should be limited to instructional, educational or extra-curricular activity matters. district employees should treat professional electronic media sites and communication like a classroom and professional workplace. The same standards of civility, decorum and professional conduct that apply to district professional settings are expected on professional electronic social media sites.

Employees using social media to communicate on behalf of the district, a school, a school group, team or club, or individuals within schools or programs or themselves in their official district capacity, should be mindful that any statements made are being made in their professional capacity.

Employees may not use professional electronic social networking sites affiliated with the district for political purposes or to engage in private business activities. They should also refrain from posting statements, photographs, video or audio that could reasonably be perceived as:

- Sexually suggestive, malicious, obscene, profane, threatening or intimidating;
- Constituting harassment or bullying;
- Supportive of illegal activity;
- Violating copyright or trademark laws;
- Contributing to a hostile educational or work environment on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, age, honorably-discharged veteran, or military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, disability or any other status protected by law; and/or
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

Employees should always consider whether it is appropriate to post an opinion or discuss areas outside of one's expertise. If there is any question or hesitation regarding the content of a potential comment or post, the employee should not post. It is also not appropriate to engage in online arguments or use a social media site to settle a disagreement with students, parent/guardians, staff or community members.

The district reserves the right to restrict a district employee from representing the district on professional electronic media sites if they have violated this procedure or any applicable law. Employees may appeal this decision to the Superintendent or his/her designee. Employees should be mindful that inappropriate usage of social media may be grounds for disciplinary action.

RECORDS RETENTION

All comments or posts made to professional electronic social media sites are public, not private. This means that all posts become part of the public record and may be subject to disclosure under Washington's Public Records Act (RCW 42.56).

PRIVATE MESSAGING

Account administrators who receive messages through a private message service offered by the social media site should advise users to contact them at their district e-mail address. Private messages that account administrators receive should be treated as constituent e-mails and therefore, as public records. Account administrators or another authorized staff member should reply to such messages using their district e-mail account.

ACCOUNT SETTINGS

Users should set all privacy settings to public.

Follow Everett Public Schools and retweet district social media posts.

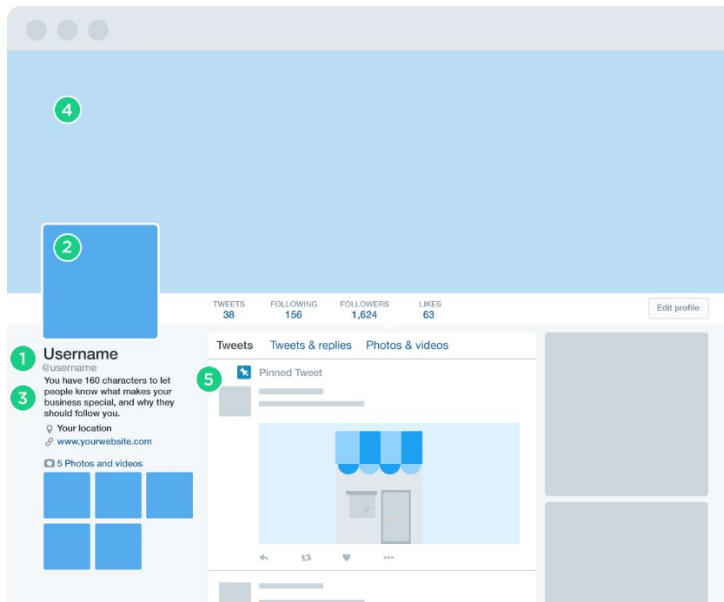
- Twitter - @EverettSchools
- Facebook - @EverettPublicSchools.WA
- Instagram - @EverettSchoolsWA

Establish your social media presence.

Your profile shows the world who you are, and first impressions count. Every element should showcase your best content and accurately reflect your region's identity.

Here's an overview of the five different parts of a social media profile and some best practices to keep in mind as you build your EPS social media accounts.

Below are suggestions for a Twitter account, but the general idea works with Facebook and Instagram as well. NOTE: there is no character limit for Facebook or Instagram, but keeping posts short helps readers get the most from your share and not 'scroll on' because it's too long.



Your Twitter @username can be a name of your choice, but to keep connected to the district, starting with a @EPS_ is preferred. It can contain up to 15 characters. Some examples include:

- @EPS_HawthorneAP
- @EPS_EvergreenMS
- @EPS_JacksonHigh
- @EPS_MonroeRocks

Your username, also known as your handle, is your unique identifier on Twitter.

It can contain up to 50 characters and should help people easily find your school. Your name appears on top of your username. Examples include:

- EPS_CascadeHSPrincipal
- EPS_WoodsideLeadership
- EPS_NorthMSAsstPrincipal
- You can also use your name if you prefer.

Your profile photo

Choose a profile photo that visually represents you or your school and fits well in a small space. This image isn't just on your profile page; it will be shown as the icon in every Tweet you post.

Your bio

You have 160 characters to let people know what makes your school special, and why they should follow you. Include useful information, such as a link to your website. Use a unique link, so you can track visitors to your site from Twitter.

Your header image

Consider this a billboard for your school/program/region. You can use a graphic with text or highlight your schools. Swap out this image periodically to spotlight promotions, events, or product news.

Your pinned Tweet

Keep an important Tweet at the top of your timeline by pinning it there. Click on the “more” option on the Tweet you want to pin and select “Pin to your profile page.” Use this feature to make sure visitors to your profile can’t miss your latest news or events.

Twitter profile specifications

The recommended image size for your profile pic is 400x400 pixels; the image will be resized to fit.

- The recommended size for a Twitter header image is 1500x500 pixels. On mobile, it’ll be cropped to a 2:1 aspect ratio.
- Use a GIF or PNG file for vector-based and line art images.
- For photos, upload a JPG or PNG file.

Twitter tips & tricks

Before you tweet, be sure to check FERPA

- It’s critical we check FERPA before posting anything on social media. From the teacher or main office personnel, you can get a list of students who are **not** FERPA cleared before you visit a classroom (that list will be shorter).
- If the event is public, then no FERPA is required, but if it is a school event and invitations are sent to students only, you will need FERPA clearance (e.g. school dances, senior teas, etc.). Sports activities are considered public events and no FERPA is required.

Pin a Tweet to the top of your profile

The half-life of a Tweet is just 24 minutes.

Maximize exposure to important Tweets by pinning them to the top of your feed. That way if someone visits your profile, it will be the first thing they see.

How to do it:

- Click or tap the ^ icon in the top right of the Tweet.
- Select Pin to your profile.
- Click or tap Pin to confirm.

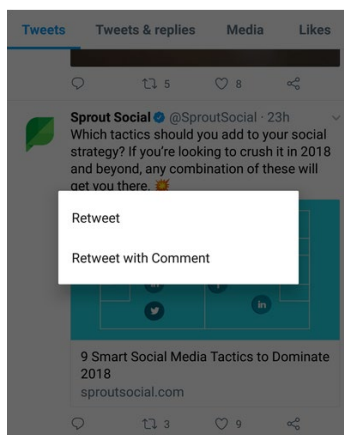
Take advantage of 280 characters

Take your Tweets beyond a couple sentences and expound a little bit and get creative like MoonPie.



Use Retweet with Comment

It has become common practice to retweet people or brands when you want to share something interesting someone else tweeted. However, you can take things a little further and layer on engagement by using retweet with comment instead.



The difference is you're able to add commentary onto the retweet instead of just re-sharing what someone else tweeted. That way it's a bit more personalized and adds additional value for your audience.

String Tweets together with a thread

Another way to share a message that exceeds 280 characters is with a thread.

A thread is a series of Tweets that are linked together so they don't get lost or taken out of context.

How to do it:

- Click the Tweet button to draft a new Tweet.
- To add another Tweet(s), click the highlighted plus icon (the icon will highlight once you have entered in text).
- When you have finished adding all the Tweets you'd like included in your thread, click the Tweet all button to post.

Assume everything you Tweet is permanent

We've all heard the stories of PR nightmares from brands tweeting inappropriate content or giving rude response to customer complaints.

One of the easiest ways to avoid these types of situations is to tweet with the assumption that someone is going to see it. And if the tweet is something you don't want to be public, or goes against what your brand stands for, don't share it.

Even if you leave a Tweet up for two minutes and delete it, there's always the chance that someone took a screenshot and will share it across the web.

Long story short, tweet responsibly.

Create a branded hashtag

Want to get some user-generated content on Twitter? Start by creating your own branded hashtag.

Branded hashtags give you and your audience a way to easily see all the Tweets related to your district and region even if they don't include your Twitter handle. They're also great for tracking Tweets around specific campaigns. The district begins each hashtag with **#EPS_** making each hashtag unique for our district.

EPS Hashtags (some examples)

#EPS_AlwaysLearning
#EPS_OurStudentsRock
#EPS_OurStaffRocks