

Colquitt County School District Social and Electronic Media Guidelines

Purpose

Colquitt County School District (CCSD) understands the importance of teachers, students, and families extending the collaborative learning environment by utilizing continuously evolving technology. This technology includes email, video-sharing, communication, social media, blogs, and many other online tools through which people connect and share information. The district also understands the importance of providing an avenue to share the successes of staff and student involvement in athletics, clubs, and organizations using social media. With this in mind, the district has developed the following guidelines to provide directions for staff and students when participating in social and electronic media activities.

Reasons for these guidelines:

1. To protect the student, staff, and district.
2. The digital world can blur the lines between public/private and personal/professional.
3. Even personal social media can fall under staff and student conduct policies and be grounds for disciplinary action and part of a staff evaluation.
 - a. [Computer/Technology Device Maintenance and Guidelines](#)
 - b. [Internet Safety Policy](#)
 - c. [Student Code of Conduct](#)
 - d. [Employee Handbook](#)
 - e. [FERPA](#)

General Guidelines

Some guidelines are general to accommodate the differences in online venues while maintaining a universal code of conduct. Employees and students should respect the Copyright and Fair Use Guidelines in all electronic communication. All communication should be transparent, accessible, and professional.

1. **The communication is transparent.** ALL electronic communication between staff, students, and guardians should be transparent. As a public school district, we must maintain openness, visibility, and accountability regarding all communication.
2. **The communication is accessible.** ALL electronic communication between staff, students, and guardians should be considered a matter of public record, part of the district archives, and/or may be accessible by others.
3. **The communication is professional.** ALL electronic communication from staff to students and guardians should be written as a professional representing the Colquitt County School District. This includes word choice, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a Colquitt County School District professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

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School District, School, or School Activity-Affiliated Social Media Accounts

- Schools and student activity organizations are encouraged but not required to develop a social media presence.
- New social media accounts should be requested by contacting the school principal, department head, or site administrator for initial approval. Once initial permission is given, final approval must be received from the Chief Officer for District and Employee Relations before creating the account.
- No social media account created to represent a school or school-related activity shall be deleted without approval from the Chief Officer for District and Employee Relations for the school district.
- District, school, or school activity social media accounts should have a **minimum of two certified or other approved employees** as administrators on the account.
- All social media accounts representing the district, school, or a related activity should have the proper settings in place and reference the official [Social Media Disclaimer](#) for the account type. See [Social Media Account Set-Up Guide](#) for setting suggestions.
- Social media should promote the accolades of the school staff, students, and related activities.
- Social media can be used to share information with families and the community; however, all social media activity should generally relate to positive information news sharing. Please use the district-approved mass communication tool (REMIND), Infinite Campus, and school email to share official or policy-driven information with guardians and students.
- Content should be monitored as often as necessary—no less than once per day.
- If the designated site manager cannot actively monitor private messages, set up an automatic response message directing individuals to alternate means of contacting the school or group.
- Private messages or conversations initiated through social media accounts should be moved to school email if the conversation becomes a back-and-forth or specific to a student or staff member. Only answer and communicate using Private Messaging for general information like public school operating questions, event ticket sales or times, or referral to a specific department for assistance.
- Students should not be allowed to post unless closely monitored by the staff and under the

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school-approved site.

- Only post about school-related content.
- Accounts should not be used personally by any of the users given access.
- Have and use approved logos and branding elements. [Brand Guidelines](#)

Employee Communication with Students and Families

- District employees should only communicate with students and their guardians using their assigned district email address or Infinite Campus Messaging Tool if discussing a situation specific to the individual student.
- District employees may use REMIND as a means for group communication with classes, teams, clubs or organization members, and guardians to announce information relevant to all in the group.
- Private messages sent to district employees on their personal email accounts, personal social media accounts, or district-approved social media accounts should **not** be continued on those accounts. Direct those conversations to a district email account, Infinite Campus Messaging, or the REMIND group communication tools.

Personal Profiles (Employees)

- Remember your association and responsibility to CCSD in online social environments. Whether you identify yourself as a school employee or not, you are likely associated with your job within the district. Your profile and related content should be consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues, guardians, and students in terms of the school district's image, purpose, mission, and affiliated programs.
- Free speech protects individuals who want to participate in social media. Still, the laws and courts have ruled that school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including personal online postings, disrupts school operations.
- As a general rule, you should not use your work email account to set up a personal profile on any social media platform, subscribe to any communication that is not work-related, or do any personal business such as household bill payments or shopping accounts.
- No confidential identifying personal information of students or co-workers, such as full names, addresses, or phone numbers, should appear on blogs, wikis, or other social media. Pictures should only be posted if all persons in the photo have given consent to publish.
- When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent yourself, make sure you select an appropriate image. Also, remember not to utilize protected images.

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- Avoid defamatory comments, obscene material, or proprietary information.
- Do not post or state anything you would not say at the front of the classroom or to the Board of Education members.
- Assume whatever is posted/written will be seen by everyone.
- Consider whether postings will adversely impact your ability to be a role model for students.
- Accepting a friend request from a student or sending a student a friend request is highly discouraged.
- Set privacy settings to control individuals who will have access carefully. Limit the types of information that your friends can view. Consider creating friend lists and assigning different permissions for different lists.
- Remember that anything you publish will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.
- During a crisis/emergency associated with the school/district, staff should NOT post or ask for information via social media, texting, or email. During these situations, rumors can spread quickly, and staff should be using this time to ensure the safety of those in their care.

Personal Profiles (Students)

- Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
- Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions; however, do it respectfully. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
- Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and inappropriate pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your guardians.
- Do your own work! Please do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. Be aware that it is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste others' thoughts. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
- Please refer to the [Internet Safety Policy](#) for appropriate use of technology while on the district network and if using school-provided technology such as Chromebooks.

Updates and Changes

CCSD reserves the right to change and modify these guidelines as necessary throughout the year. Please check this page regularly for the most current version.