Social Media Guidelines for Staff

Carroll County Public Schools recognizes the potential of social media to foster relationships with the community and to celebrate school system and student success. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist CCPS staff in navigating the appropriate use of social media tools in their professional and personal lives as CCPS employees. Social media includes any form of electronic communication through which users communicate and/or create online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and other content. Social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and blogs.

All staff are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the school system and as appropriate role models for students. It is vital that staff maintain professionalism in their interactions with students and the community.

Organizational Use of Social Media
The organizational use of social media is defined as the use of social media by CCPS employees for official business (CCPS work-related purposes). In these instances, community members may reasonably believe that employees are representing CCPS or its views and positions and that employees are communicating with community members (including students, parents, and others) in an official capacity. CCPS employees use these accounts to perform their CCPS duties, conduct official business, represent CCPS, and share information about CCPS programs, services, and activities on behalf of the organization.

1. **You are Always a School Employee**
   The lines between public and private, personal and professional are sometimes blurred in the digital world. Even when you have a disclaimer or use a different username, you will always be considered a district employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be publicly identified as working for and sometimes representing the district in what you do and say online.
   - Always write in the first person and make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the district.
   - Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work and what you do.
   - Do not share FERPA protected information about students or information about other staff. What you post will be seen by others and can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks.
   - Represent district values, expressing ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Outside parties can pursue legal action against you (not your organization) for posts.
   - As an employee of a government agency, you cannot block users on social media as it is a violation of the First Amendment.
   - All media requests should be directed to the Supervisor of Community and Media Relations.
   - Encourage your followers and users to review the Rules of Engagement on the CCPS website.

2. **Be Professional**
   Always be mindful that you are representing Carroll County Public Schools. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner and consider carefully what you post through comments and photos.
   - Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Be sure to cite your source when quoting and use Creative Commons* licensing when possible.
   - Do not alter and use any district or school logo or image without permission from your building administrator if a school logo; of if a district logo, from the Office of Community and Media

Relations.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it quickly. Clearly state if you've corrected a previous post and apologize if appropriate. Even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it.
- Be cautious about posting personal or live video. Video is an especially rich form of communication that often tells more about you than you might realize. Assume the video you post is public and will be viewed by everyone in your personal and professional worlds.

3. **Respect Others and Ensure the Safety of Students**

Respect the privacy and the feelings of others and do not, under any circumstance, post offensive comments about students, colleagues, or the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber-bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offense.

- You are responsible for what you post publicly, so be certain it is accurate and supports, or remains neutral of your organization. If you are about to publish something that makes you hesitate, wait a day and talk to a colleague, administrator or supervisor. Once posted you can't take it back.
- Employees who join or engage in social networks that include students have the responsibility for monitoring content and addressing appropriate behavior or activity, including the protection and safety of minors.
- Permission should be sought when posting photos or videos of fellow employees when possible. Permission should be sought when posting photos or videos that single out or personally identify a student.
- Ensure that parents/guardians have not opted out of their students' being photographed or videotaped prior to posting online.

4. **Manage Staff/Student Relationships Carefully**

Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Do not fraternize with students as though they are your peers or friends.

- The relationship between students and staff is to be one of a professional nature at all times. Because school personnel have the responsibility for the supervision of children, interactions with students should remain clearly within the confines of a professional staff/student relationship. Teachers and other staff are to be exemplars of appropriate behavior. Therefore, Carroll County Public Schools will not tolerate any activity at any time on the part of staff members which violates the professional relationship between students and staff. Although a staff member's behavior may be perceived as welcomed or encouraged by the student, any inappropriate staff interaction with a student will be handled as a very serious matter.
- Inappropriate or offensive content posted to social networks by employees and viewed by students, parents or other staff may be investigated by school and district officials and, if warranted, may result in disciplinary action.

5. **Help Build our Community**

Write what you know, be accurate, and add value to the discussion. A district's most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school.

- Speak in the first person with your own voice and perspective.
- Post regularly. Readers won't have a reason to follow you if they can't expect new content regularly. Respond to other's posts. Answer questions; thank people even if it's just a few

words. Make it a two-way conversation.
- Online posts should be well written. Write for your immediate purpose, but also for a worldwide audience by following writing conventions including correct spelling, proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Negative comments may damage your school or program's reputation and should be taken seriously. Staff who feel that social media followers/users are not abiding by posted CCPS Social Media Rules of Engagement should contact their school administrator and/or the Supervisor of Community and Media Relations for further assistance.

6. **Other Uses - Coaches, Advisors, Fundraisers, Programs**
   Social media networks can be helpful for groups in interacting and sharing information.
   - Inform your supervisor (or designee) when creating social networks for any school-related use.
   - Use district contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) for creating and maintaining accounts.
   - Be proactive by stating clearly that the network you create is school related.
   - CCPS staff are required to use their CCPS email address when registering for an organizational social media account and will not share login credentials with other staff or students.
   - Treat the social media network like a classroom. Monitor closely the interactions between students and deal with inappropriate use immediately.
   - Consult with the Office of Community and Media Relations if further guidance is needed.

Personal Use of Social Media

The line between professional and personal relationships can be blurred within a social media context. Employees should exercise good judgement and common sense while maintaining their professionalism as a CCPS employee.
- Do not use CCPS contact information (email, address, phone, etc.) when registering for or using social media for personal use.
- Do not connect with students via personal social media. Doing so puts you in a teacher-student relationship.
- Consider the privacy settings that you set on your account prior to posting information.
- Do not use CCPS devices or engage in **personal** social media activity during work hours, with the exception of duty-free lunch periods.
- Do not use a personal account to communicate in an official capacity with CCPS students or their parents/guardians.

References

Social Media Guidelines for Schools Wiki - http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com
Intel Social Media Guidelines - http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en_US/social-media.htm
Creative Commons Information - http://creativecommons.org/
Bloomington School District Social Media Guidelines - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nflxpuLjW3uMzig-MZKBADbJcJhIWrA7pPv-05NfqYQ/edit