

CCSU Social Media Policy

Caledonia Central Supervisory Union Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA

CODE F6

Policy

The Caledonia Central Supervisory Union (CCSU) recognizes that social media is a prominent personal communication method for our students, staff and community members, and that it has the potential of being a valuable educational tool and a resource for communicating school matters with those parties.

All use of Internet services and social media through the District's internet connection and on CCSU-controlled web portals is subject to the terms of the Responsible Use Policies governing students and staff, in addition to the guidelines set forth in this policy and procedure.

Social Media is defined as any service that uses internet resources to bring multiple people into a conversation. Social Media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+, and sites that allow for public comment boards. Each service comes with its own set of privacy features. However, all internet users should assume there is no privacy for online communications.

The CCSU Board directs the Superintendent or Superintendents designee to create a procedure that outlines the following:

- Use of Social Media by staff that would reflect upon or impact CCSU, its staff and students
- Use of Social Media by students that would impact school climate
- Guidelines for use of Social Media in the classroom
- Guidelines for linking of personal Social Media accounts by staff and students (commonly referred to as "friending" or "following")
- Use of Social Media by the District and Schools for community outreach

Date Warned: 9/20/2019–Danville, 10/14/2019–CCSD, 10/7/2019–Peacham, 4/22/2019–CCSU, Cabot–11/25/2019, Twinfield–12/10/2019

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Legal Reference(s): 47 USC § 254(h)(5) (Children's Internet Protection Act)

Cross reference:

B8 - Staff/Student Conduct and Boundaries, C10 - Prevention of Harassment, Hazing & Bullying, D2 - Responsible Computer, Network and Internet Use

Procedure
Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The Caledonia Central Supervisory Union (CCSU) acknowledges that online activities, particularly social media, are playing an increasingly important role in the lives of all people involved with the Districts. Students, staff, and community members all use social media to various degrees to stay connected and share information. Sites like Facebook and Twitter are increasingly becoming the standard platforms of information dissemination, being an integral part of daily social activity. This landscape is rich with opportunities to expand education but can also be a minefield of unintended consequences.

Participation in social media is a personal choice. The purpose of this procedure is neither to encourage nor to dissuade the use of social media, but rather to set down some guiding principles, and to ensure that all participants make informed decisions. As technology evolves over time, these guidelines will need to be reviewed regularly and adapted to suit the needs of the school community. Free speech protects those who want to participate in social media, but some courts have ruled that schools can discipline teachers and students if their speech, including online postings, disrupts school operations. All use of Internet services and social media through the Supervisory Union’s Internet connection and on CCSU-controlled web portals is subject to the terms of the Responsible Use Policies governing students and staff, in addition to the guidelines set forth in this procedure.

ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Unless otherwise specified, social media is any Internet-based service which allows people to connect in an interactive manner. These services include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, wikis, message boards, and chat.

Each service comes with its own set of privacy features. However, for the most part Internet users should assume there is no privacy for online communications. Some services make your information public by default; others, like Facebook, will allow you to set privacy settings, but still allow those outside of your “friends” list to view information you post regardless. And at any time, participants with access to your information can print it out, copy and paste into an email, make screen captures of the information, or save and distribute it in other forms.

Be very aware of the cost of free internet services. Their operational income comes from selling advertising and data on their participants. When you choose to use a free internet service, you are paying not with money but with data about yourself and your online activities.

I. USE BY FACULTY AND STAFF

A. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

(1) When participating in online discussions about the District, you must identify yourself as an employee, but indicate that your views are your own, and not necessarily representative of the school. As a professional employed by or affiliated with the CCSU, you are a trusted member of the community. For better or worse, your personal activities conducted in public reflect upon you and the District.

(2) Employees participating in social media are responsible for any content that they publish online. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face. Any activity that happens online, even when in a private forum, can be made public (printing, screen-capturing, copy and pasting), can be part of an online archive (e.g. www.archive.org), and/or can be less private than you are led to believe (Facebook). Therefore, you are encouraged to use discretion and proper judgment when posting online at all times. When posting, even on the strictest settings, employees should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.

Remember your association and responsibility with CCSU in online social environments. As an employee of CCSU and/or its member Districts, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you professionally present yourself with colleagues, parents, students and community.

(3) Represent the District values. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. All communications should be done in good taste. Build trust and responsibility in your relationships through positive communication. Do not denigrate or insult others including students, staff, administrators, parents, or other districts. Consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. Be aware that any comment made through electronic means has the ability to be taken, in part or whole, in context or not, and spread in a wide array of formats. Do not comment on nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumors. You are responsible for what you and others post, even if on a personal page; be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. It is good practice to monitor your profile page to ensure that all material posted by others doesn't violate these guidelines. A violation of these guidelines could be regarded as a form of professional misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

B. POSTING OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

We are understandably proud of our students, and when sharing activities with them it is tempting to post photos of the students, work they have done, or quotations that you have heard, on social media.

(1) Positive quotations, without students' last names, are acceptable. Do not post any negative, derogatory, or otherwise ill-suited material about students.

(2) You are not allowed to post photos of students and student work on your personal accounts. You are, however, allowed to publish them on CCSU-controlled forums if you have student and parent permission forms (e.g. school website, Facebook, classroom blog or wiki). Each school's Registrar maintains a file of student media permissions.

(3) Never post any confidential information online, except through a school-approved medium that is protected in accordance with school policy, and meets federal guidelines for student privacy and protection. Your administrator will have specific information regarding which services are safe for sharing confidential information.

II. USE BY STUDENTS

Due to the wealth of new social media tools available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences far beyond the classroom. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone. Below are guidelines students should adhere to when using web tools in the classroom.

(1) Your use of social media is bound by the SU's Responsible Use Policy. Among other things, you are required to use appropriate language and conduct when posting to school-related services. Social media venues including wikis, blogs, photo and video sharing sites 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.

It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.

Additionally, the Responsible Use Policy mandates that you must not share your password with any other students, nor are you allowed to use another person's account. Impersonation of another person is a serious offense.

(2) Be safe online; do not share personal details with anyone you do not know in real life. Never give out personal information including, but not limited to last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birth dates, and pictures.

(3) When linking to other websites, ensure that all content on that website is appropriate for school. Linking to other sites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended, but those sites must be fit for viewing in a classroom setting.

(4) Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts. When paraphrasing another's idea(s), be sure to cite your source with its URL and the date it was accessed. Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image or it is under Creative Commons attribution.

(5) Bullying, threats, intimidation, teasing and ridicule against other students, faculty or staff are unacceptable, even if the posting happens off of school grounds. Any online posting, regardless of whether or not it was created during school or on a CCSU-controlled website, is a violation of student conduct rules if it negatively affects the school climate. Students using online services to harass or disrupt others may be subject to discipline from the school. Students are not allowed to post any personal or confidential information about others on social media without that person's express consent.

III. SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM

When used correctly, social media can add value to the classroom. It allows school members to stay in contact with each other, collaborate easily, and improve camaraderie. Consider using controlled, private social media ("gated communities") such as Class Dojo or Bloomz.

(1) Your students must meet terms-of-service requirements to participate. Students using social media and internet tools must meet certain requirements in order to participate; these requirements vary from service to service, and are derived from the federal regulations in CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) and COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act). In general, students who are 12 and under are barred from accessing social media sites, except those designed specifically for these age groups. Students 13-17 can participate only with parental approval. Students 18+ are free to create their own accounts. District employees are not allowed to

encourage students to participate without meeting the guidelines for minimum age and parental consent.

(2) Social media, as an extension of the classroom, must follow all existing school rules and guidelines. There are times where classroom social media will cross into personal social media, through use of linked accounts, demonstration of hobbies and interests, etc. Anything considered inappropriate for the classroom remains inappropriate in online forums.

(3) Ensure that you receive proper value from participation in social media in the classroom. Social media sites like Facebook are rife with games, chat areas, and non-educational content. It can be more difficult to stay on-task with the “noise” of social media services. Evaluate your methods for use of social media to address minimizing distractions and maximizing educational productivity.

(4) If you would like access to social media for the classroom, please speak with your principal if the social media sites are blocked by the school’s internet filter. To request a permanent bypass for the filter, your principal will need information on the site being used and its purpose.

(5) School-related e-mail needs to be exchanged through the school’s e-mail system of record, due to federal archiving requirements. Currently Google Vault is our system of record for staff. Other email systems and internal messaging systems integrated into learning management systems (LMS) are available, however these school related messaging systems should only be used in a limited fashion so long as Google Vault is our system of record.

For your own protection, personal email accounts should never be used by staff for school purposes. Any account used for school communication can be subpoenaed by the court for legal proceedings, personal or otherwise. Where possible, configure additional messaging systems to automatically forward messages to the @ccsuvt.net email account.

IV. “FRIENDING” BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

There is a complex set of circumstances involved on social media when two accounts become associated. These types of associations go by many different names and allow for many different levels of access to personal information. Common terms for an association between two individuals’ accounts are friending (Facebook) or following (Twitter/Instagram/Snapchat stories). We will use the term “friending” in this document to indicate an association between two accounts that allows for some level of information sharing.

(1) The Caledonia Central Supervisory Union discourages staff to “friend” students on social media. There are many factors that affect the appropriateness of this type of access. Some of these factors include, the frequency and appropriateness of staff’s personal posting, the frequency and appropriateness of students’ personal posting; the nature of the relationship between the staff person and the student; the opinion and involvement of the parents in social media.

(2) Staff choosing to “friend” students must be aware of the mandatory reporting requirements of their license. “Friending” students on social media may provide you additional access to information that would be relevant to mandatory reporting situations; ignoring this information may pose legal and licensure risks to the staff member.

(3) All participants should consider maintaining separate social media profiles for educational and private use if allowed by the site’s Terms of Service. This may be a recommended choice if you have ever or will ever post information about yourself, be it photos, statuses, videos, etc., that you would

not want shown in the classroom. In addition, consider that sites like Facebook and social tagging services allow your “friends” to post these pieces of information about you, without your explicit consent, in a visible location.

V. PARENT SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Classroom blogs, wikis, and other social media are powerful tools that open up communication among students, parents, and teachers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a huge impact on learning. The CCSU encourages parents to become engaged in their child(ren)’s learning, especially in an era where online tools are slowly replacing traditional lectures and textbooks.

(1) Parents have a right to view any online classroom activity. Parents wishing to view online activity should contact their child’s teacher if they would like to be added to any password-protected or privatized online classroom areas. Parents will not be given more than read-only access to school projects without teacher approval on a project-by-project basis.

(2) Teachers should keep a list of online activities in a visible and up-to-date form that parents can access easily. This can reside on a classroom website/blog/wiki, through newsletters, or other accepted communication methods.

(3) Parents without internet access may request printouts of online activities. If the material is in such volume or of a nature where printing would be difficult, parents may be directed to the public computer access at their town’s public library.

(4) Parents who are allowed to participate in (not just view) online and social media activities must follow the same policies, procedures, and classroom rules that students and teachers must abide by. Parents who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner will forfeit the ability to actively engage in these options. This includes using appropriate language and demeanor and not posting personal or confidential information.

VI. USE BY THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT AS AN OUTREACH TOOL

Recognizing that social media is a vital tool in community outreach, CCSU and our schools may utilize social media services under the following guidelines:

(1) There will be a small number of approved staff persons per school and in the Supervisory Union office who are authorized to create posts to CCSU-controlled social media profiles. In case of an emergency take-down request, the master login information for all social media and online tools used for school-related purposes must be housed in the Supervisory Union office. If there is a separate service used in the classroom for which the teacher created an individual account, the teacher must share that information with the school’s administrator and/or the IT Director.

(2) Social media posts will be respectful of all community members. Posts will not attack, blame, or demean any member of the community. Images used in posts will be tasteful, and permission from the students and parents will be obtained prior to posting student photos or images of student work.

(3) Any sites linked to CCSU online profiles must fit the character of the Supervisory Union. They cannot contain vulgarity, nudity, questionable activities, or any content in violation of the Responsible Use Policy.

(4) Anyone in the community is allowed to and encouraged to connect with the CCSU via social media. Any responses or posts that contain profanity or questionable materials that do not comply with the Responsible Use Policy may be removed at any time by the CCSU. Repeated abuse of CCSU social media may result in someone being blocked from participation.

The CCSU recognizes that critiques are necessary to school improvement, and from time to time postings to social media may elicit critical comments from the public. Supervisory Union leadership will make choices whether or not to respond to criticism. Critical comments may be removed by CCSU if they are found to be in violation of the Responsible Use Policy or of this policy.

(5) If a parent or member of the public tries to engage in conversation about a school matter (including but not limited to grades, custody, attendance, health, or behavior) via social media, no answers will be provided beyond directions to get in contact with the school's main office. Any such comments or requests for information may be removed from CCSU social media profiles if they violate student privacy.

VII. INCIDENT RESPONSE

(1) Students found in violation of any of these rules will be handled on a case-by-case basis by School and District leadership, in accordance with policy.

(2) Staff found in violation of any of these rules will be handled on a case-by-case basis by School and District leadership, in accordance with policy and/or the collective bargaining agreement.

(3) Community members in violation of terms in this and other policies will be handled on a case-by-case basis by School and District leadership. They may face termination of their ability to view or respond to CCSU social media or online services and even be subject to legal action.

REFERENCES: This policy is taken with minimal modification from Policy G102 (Policy-G102, Procedure-G102P) from the Milton Town School District (VT). (<https://www.mtsd-vt.org/>, accessed February 2019), which was part sourced from <http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com>, under a Creative Commons license.

Cross reference:

C10 - Prevention of Harassment, Hazing & Bullying

D2 - Responsible Computer, Network and Internet Use

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