



Social Media Guidelines

These guidelines will provide information for CCSD community members who are authorized to speak on behalf of a PTO through social media. Social media forums can include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, etc. We will focus primarily on Facebook as this forum and newly developed school apps seem to be the most widely used among our PTOs and parents. Note that although these guidelines apply to volunteers authorized to speak for a PTO, it is wise to remember that PTO volunteers are not employees of CCSD, and therefore should not represent themselves as such. The purpose of this document is to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when using social media.

Basic Principles for Facebook and other social forums:

Focus areas:

- **Confidentiality.** Don't post about deliberations during board meetings, complaints brought privately to the PTO, etc. Do not post confidential information about a school, its faculty, students, alumni, or employees. District policies, such as the CCSD Student Conduct and Discipline, Rights, and Responsibilities, and federal laws, such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and FERPA (Family Educational Rights Privacy Act) should be consulted for guidance on restrictions on the release of confidential information.
- **Privacy.** Don't post people's names, thoughts or pictures without their permission, and remember that anything you post will live forever.
- **Transparency.** Consider posting page or group guidelines in a prominent area for all members and fans to access. Be open and honest about the fact that you're a PTO board member in any post involving the school or PTO. Clearly define and describe the purpose and function of your page or group. Let your members know the mission/work of your PTO and the limits of your authority to speak on behalf of your school and CCSD. Consider listing the kinds of information visitors can expect to receive by "liking" or "following" your page. Remember your audience; this includes parents and students, current school employees, and peers.
- **Accuracy.** If you make a mistake, correct it - whether it is content or grammar related.
- **Liability.** Board members should be aware that they may be held personally liable for posts that infringe copyright, libel or defame someone, violate obscenity standards, or violate any terms of use for wherever the post is made.
- **Professionalism and respect.** If you wouldn't say it in face-to-face conversation, don't post it. If the conversation is better dealt with privately, send a message, email or call. Many times tone can be misinterpreted in online forums.



Other Helpful Hints:

- **Establish your social media strategy and objectives** – Define and document the following: Why are you using social media? How does it integrate with your other forms of communication? What is your intended audience? What are your key messages? What is your character (voice and tone)?
- **Maintain a consistent schedule of posts** – Voice and tone should be consistent based on your objectives for the site. Get into a rhythm of posting proactively, for instance, once per week, twice per month, etc. As your community grows, you can experiment with increasing your frequency.
- **Speak as a team** – Because you're managing a site as part of your PTO, remember that your page represents a team of volunteers, so be sure to say "we" rather than "I" or "me."
- **Handling negative posts** – Unfortunately, people sometimes use social media to complain or voice negative comments. Be calm, thoughtful, and strategic when dealing with a negative post. Take some time to consider how to respond, and consider going offline. Make sure you know the facts related to the post, and remember that often, people who are upset simply want to know their complaint has been heard. If handled well, this may be an opportunity to strengthen your community by solving a problem or generating a good discussion.