

Social Media Reminders & Recommendations for Charleston County School District Employees

Overview and Introduction

As part of its efforts to consistently adapt to evolving 21st Century methods of communication and to clearly communicate with its key stakeholders, Charleston County School District (CCSD) is incorporating digital tools to reach teachers, students, parents, and community partners. As part of this strategy, CCSD has developed the following set of reminders and recommendations for employees who wish to participate in online social media activities.

In the Summer of 2010, CCSD's Office of Communications will begin using social media accounts to share information regarding district events and key initiatives. Though CCSD employees are encouraged to use these tools, employees are reminded of the importance of maintaining an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability with parents and students. Information that is produced and shared by CCSD employees online is a reflection of the entire district and is subject to the district's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). Employees are asked to please read these recommendations carefully before posting or commenting on blogs or social media websites (Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, etc.).

Please note that this document will change over time. CCSD's use of social media as a strategic and carefully-monitored Communications mechanism will be expanded during the 2010-2011 academic year. As a result, this document will be modified to address any issues or concerns that have developed.

Reminders & Considerations

Whether or not a CCSD employee chooses to participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. Free speech protects educators who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that schools and/or districts can intervene if the speech, including online postings, is found to disrupt school operations.

1. CCSD employees assume responsibility for content they publish online and are encouraged to be mindful that posts may be in the public domain for a long time.
2. Employees' online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that they adhere to in their face-to-face interactions.
3. When posting to blogs, employees are reminded that the information or opinions they express are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of CCSD.
4. Blogs, wikis and podcasts are extensions of the classroom. What is inappropriate in the classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.

5. The lines between public and private domains or personal and professional relationships are often blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying themselves as CCSD employees online, staff members are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. Employees should ensure that the content they post is consistent with their work at CCSD.

Recommendations

1. Employees are encouraged to protect their privacy by using the recommended privacy settings for social media sites. For example, employees who are fans of the district's Facebook page are encouraged to set their privacy setting to "**Friends Only**" which helps protect personal information.
2. Employees are encouraged to refrain from establishing online relationships with (i.e. "friending") parents or students that may compromise their professional roles.
3. When contributing online, employees should not post confidential student information.
4. When posting content to a blog or social media site, employees are encouraged to state that the information or opinions they are expressing are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of their employer. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Charleston County School District's positions, strategies, opinions, or policies." This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt CCSD employees from a special responsibility when blogging or posting.
5. Employees are encouraged to respect copyright and fair use guidelines.
6. CCSD employees are encouraged to use a hyperlink to outside information sources to avoid plagiarizing. When using a hyperlink, be sure that the content is appropriate and adheres to the CCSD AUP.
7. At this time, school employees are currently asked to refrain from establishing separate social media accounts for specific CCSD offices, initiatives, schools or programs without first contacting the Office of Communications.

Incorporating Social Media into CCSD's Communications Strategies: Timeline

June 2010

CCSD Communications Office establishes Twitter and Facebook Accounts

Distribute Social Media Reminders and Recommendations for CCSD employees

July 2010

Begin engaging broader CCSD community in how these and other social media technologies could benefit their departments, schools and programs

CCSD Communications Office will create a marketing and communications plan

Continue to modify Social Media Reminders and Recommendations for CCSD employees

August 2010

CCSD Communications Office will implement the marketing and communications plan

Continue to obtain input about current and future use of social media from CCSD staff members, parents, teachers, and community stakeholders

September 2010 – January 2011

Continue to obtain input about current and future use of social media from CCSD staff members, parents, teachers, and community stakeholders

Examine the potential use of social media accounts by schools, programs and departments