

## **BOARD PROCEDURE**

**Descriptive Code: IFBGA (3)**

### **Internet Responsible Use**

**Date: July 21, 2017**

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The Columbia Count School District (CCSD) provides its employees with access to the Internet. Benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✓ Efficient communication with students and/or their parents or guardians;
- ✓ An online environment to engage and challenge students;
- ✓ Opportunities to teach responsible digital citizenship and internet safety; and
- ✓ Real-time feedback and collaboration from anywhere in the world.

In support of educators' efforts to maximize use of the Internet, this procedure identifies responsible use expectations.

## **Email**

### **Responsible Use**

The CCSD email system is provided as a communications tool for use between members of the CCSD and its stakeholders. As such, content should be professional and in good taste. It is understood that a reasonable amount of CCSD resources may be utilized for personal email, but such use should be kept to a minimum. Use of a CCSD email account for the sending or forwarding of inappropriate messages, chain letters and joke emails is discouraged. Email that is discriminatory in any form is prohibited.

### **Monitoring of Email Accounts**

CCSD employees shall have no expectation of privacy in anything they store, send, or receive on the email system. The monitoring of email accounts must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools or designee and will be monitored, retrieved, and provided by the Chief Technology Officer. Further, personal email cannot be distinguished from district email and, therefore, may become subject to open records requests. This rule applies to any locally-purchased instant or other messaging system not directly under support by the CCSD.

### **Email Process**

The following items are applicable to all CCSD employees who are provided an email account on the CCSD email system:

1. Email addresses will be formatted as *first name.lastname@ccboe.net*.
2. Email accounts will only be created after board approval or administrative approval.
3. The postmaster will ensure all users authorized an email account have one year of active email stored on the email server.
4. All email sent or received from a CCSD email account will automatically be archived for a minimum of three years.

5. Email older than one year will automatically be archived to the user's personal computer system.
6. The technical support specialist will ensure that an Archive.pst is correctly configured on the local computer of the user who owns the email account.
7. It is the user's responsibility to backup or otherwise save any locally archived email.

### **Mobile Email**

It is the user's responsibility to protect email containing personally identifiable information or other data classified under any federal, state, or local mandate from unauthorized access on mobile devices, whether personally owned or school district provided. The following guidelines must be in place prior to mobile devices being used to access CCSD mailboxes:

1. Mobile devices must be access protected. The end user must establish access restrictions to the mobile device.
2. Users must agree to keep mobile devices patched with current security and operating system updates at all times.
3. Mobile device users should familiarize themselves with the process of remotely wiping email from a handheld device and do so as soon as is practical in the event the device is lost or stolen. Several mechanisms are available for this purpose, including, but not limited to, MobileMe and webmail.
4. Mobile device users who lose or misplace a device that has been connected to the CCSD email system must notify the chief technology officer of the device being lost within one day, or as soon as is practical, to ensure unauthorized access is protected.

### **Retention**

Employees utilizing the CCSD email system must comply with the Georgia Records Retention guidelines for local governments. While the CCSD takes every measure to comply with Georgia records retention guidelines, it is the responsibility of the sender of email to comply with email retention requirements, not the recipient.

### **Enforcement**

Any employee of the CCSD found to have violated this procedure may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT**

Websites provide an invaluable tool for the district and schools to communicate with a range of audiences. Our website is a public relations and communication tool in many ways. It serves to

- Inform parents, students, and others of the activities that take place in the CCSD.
- Promote the school district and the services it provides for all students.
- Provide information to the community about their investment in education.
- Promote the accomplishments and activities of the students, teachers, coaches, and staff of the CCSD.
- Provide a communication vehicle between the classroom, school, and home.

It is important that the style and content of our district website, school websites, and teacher websites speak well for the school and district.

### **WEB PUBLISHING GUIDELINES**

Each school should appoint a school web publisher with the following qualities: problem solving skills, good communication skills among all levels, and confident in the use of technology. In addition to keeping the school website current, the school web publisher may also be responsible for approving teacher webpages using district provided software.

“Official” webpages: Webpages created using the district -provided content management system.

“Unofficial” webpages: Webpages created using other web creation programs.

### **CONTENT STANDARDS**

- Content must relate to curriculum and instruction, school-authorized activities, or information about the school/teacher goals.
- All webpages must be grammatically correct with no spelling errors.
- No unlawful copies of copyrighted material may be placed on webpages.
- All communication via district webpages must not contain offensive content. This includes but is not limited to, religious, racial and sexual harassment, violence, and profanity.

### **TECHNICAL STANDARDS**

- A school website must include a link that returns the user to the district website.
- The school district homepage must include a non-discrimination statement in accordance with federal law.
- A teacher website must include email/voicemail and the best time to contact and a link that returns the user to the school website.
- On any homepage, there must be an opportunity to provide feedback by creating an email link to the school web publisher/PR liaison or principal.
- Links that do not support curriculum and instruction, such as links to personal sites, are not permitted. A list of School Partners or Partners in Education is permitted.
- Webpages should be maintained with current and accurate information.

All material posted to the CCSD website must adhere to all provisions set forth in the Network Responsibility Agreement. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) the confidentiality of student records is protected whether records are paper documents or electronic files.

### **Social Media**

The Board of Education recognizes that many of our staff, students, parents and community members are active social media users. The following are guidelines to help employees to use social media in a respectful, relevant way that protects their reputation and that of the school district and that maintains a professional relationship between teachers and students.

For the purposes of this document, social media includes, but is not limited to, social networking and media sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, Tumblr, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, and YouTube. It also includes blogs, comments on websites, discussion forums, and any other online activity involving connecting or communicating with other users.

### **Personal Responsibility**

We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to those concerning non-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. Employees should carefully consider the public forum they are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both their professional reputation and the school district. To that end

- Ideas and opinions should be expressed in a respectful manner.
- Avoid insulting others, including students, staff, parents, our extended school community, or other school systems or districts.
- Do not use racial slurs, innuendos, obscenity or other inappropriate content.
- Avoid posting, sharing, commenting, or otherwise engaging in rumors or unsupported information.
- Represent the CCSD and the students and parents you serve in the best light.
- Posts and comments should help build and support the school community.
- Communications that would be deemed inappropriate or actionable if they occurred inside or outside of the classroom do not become acceptable merely because they are made online.

While these guidelines are in no way intended to limit or infringe upon personal rights to comment upon the workplace under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), it remains good practice to never post anything that would embarrass the CCSD or would call into question one's professional reputation. With this in mind, some specific guidelines to consider include the following:

- Use common sense when posting online, recognizing the personal responsibility for content published. Content includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that is shared or reposted.
- Be mindful that any content published will be public for a long time. Not only can content show up in Google and other search engines, but the FTC allows private corporations to store publicly accessible Facebook posts for a period of some seven years to be used in employee background checks made by current or potential employers. Moreover, even posts that are “private” may be subject to discovery in legal actions.
- Be mindful that once something is posted, it cannot be taken back. In most instances deleting content will not make it disappear. Deleted content can still show up in online searches. Or, with the click of a button, other users can take a screen shot, re-post, or share content with others.
- Before posting or sharing content, one might ask if this is content that would be acceptable if printed in the newspaper, aired on the evening news or read by colleagues, students, parents, or the school board members.
- Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Social networking sites are an extension of an individual’s personality and professional reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. When online, individuals may be connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. Sometimes those connections may be direct and obvious; other times the connections may be indirect or via mutual connections. Therefore, employees should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the CCSD.
- Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration applied offline.
- Protect personal privacy. Users are responsible for understanding and controlling privacy settings on each social network they use. Always assume default settings will make a profile and any content shared publicly accessible. Even with maximum privacy settings in place, content can still find its way into the public domain.
- Use only personal email addresses on social networking sites and while engaging in other off duty social media activities. At no time, except with prior consent, should an employee claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of CCSD. In instances where there could be confusion, add a disclaimer stating that views and content are exclusively one’s own and not representative of the CCSD.
- While the CCSD respects the rights of its employees to exercise their rights under the NLRA, employees should not make any derogatory statements about colleagues or students or other comments that would reflect badly on their professional reputation or the reputation of the school district. Notwithstanding the foregoing, employees may make comments in the exercise of rights under the NLRA.
- Do not post photos or videos that contain identifying information concerning any students without prior parental consent.

- Respect the privacy and rights of both colleagues and students. Confidential student or personnel information should not be posted online. Be sure not to violate any provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- Do not use any school logo or image without permission.
- Do not create any social media account, blog or website intended to represent the CCSD without express prior consent from the district. It is important to protect the district's brand, ensure certain brand standards and content guidelines are maintained, and ensure any new accounts fit overall communications and education standards established by the district.

### **Employee-Student Relations**

The district recognizes the role that communication and collaboration between employees and students play in the educational process and experience. The district further recognizes that the advancement of electronic communication and social media technologies creates greater opportunity for interactions between employees and students, and, as such, provides these additional guidelines for employees' and students' protection.

- Employees are responsible for their conduct and must recognize the likelihood that any posting will be viewed by students, parents, other staff members, and the community. Thus, any posting that contains content that reflects unprofessional or unethical conduct may be evidence that would support disciplinary or remedial action.
- Each employee is responsible if the content of any posting results in a loss of the employee's effectiveness in performing the duties of the job.
- Sexually provocative postings, postings related to alcohol or drug use, or postings that otherwise suggest conduct inconsistent with the Code of Ethics or norms of the profession should be avoided.
- Students should not be invited to be "friends" or access employees' private social media sites.
- Employees are never under any obligation to accept friend or follower requests from any student or to use personal social media accounts to engage with students or participate in district projects. In addition, unless an account has privacy settings correctly configured, everything posted may be publicly accessible to students, whether connected to them or not.
- Employees must exercise great care in connecting with students on any social media channels. Do not send permission-based friend or follower requests to students, for example Facebook friend requests. Use discretion and carefully consider the guidelines provided by the district before accepting any permission-based friend or follower requests received from students. It is CCSD's recommendation that if an employee decides to accept friend or follower requests received from students that they should accept all such requests, and not selectively limit their interactions to what could be perceived as a few preferred individuals.
- Any employee-student communications or relationships via social media should be of an appropriate professional nature, have content that is

appropriate for both the communications medium and the audience addressed, and must not violate any provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. As with content, always assume any communication can easily end up in the public realm.

- Employees who are connected to or communicate with students via social media must understand they may be granting those students access to all content in their personal social media profiles and should consider the guidelines the district has provided to ensure students are protected from exposure to inappropriate content or content that might compromise the employee's professional reputation.
- Employees are also responsible for ensuring any relationship and all dialogue with students are kept professional in nature and for immediately reporting to the district any inappropriate communication received from a student. Any content or communication generated by an employee or by a student, which would be inappropriate in the classroom, should also be considered inappropriate when shared via social media.
- Similarly, employees should not "text" or call students or allow students to make personal calls to them, not directly related to school work and the teacher/student relationship.
- The district recognizes there may be certain limited exceptions to these guidelines, such as a student being a family member or relative, or in those instances where an employee's interaction with a student is as a result of certain extra-curricular activities such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious organizations or other similar relationships.

### **Reporting of Violations to Policy and Procedure IFBGA (3)**

Any suspected violation of this policy or procedure must be immediately reported to the Superintendent or designee. The review of any electronic equipment or information will be directed by the Superintendent and will be performed by the Chief Technology Officer.

**ADOPTED: 03/14/98**

**REVISED: 08/07/00, 01/22/02, 03/11/02, 10/14/02, 7/29/03, 3/8/04, 4/19/04, 07/06/04, 09/28/04, 5/22/06, 10/19/09, 11/18/13, 7/21/17**

**Columbia County Board of Education**