



Coldspring-Oakhurst
CONSOLIDATED I.S.D.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES

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INTRODUCTION

Coldspring-Oakhurst Consolidated ISD supports the use of online social media to build and promote a positive relationship between district staff, students and their families, and the COCISD community. At this time, our social media presence includes a district Facebook page, and YouTube channel, as well as a COCISD Athletics Facebook page and a CTE page. Other social media accounts may be considered as needed in the future.

Although COCISD encourages the use of electronic media for communicating, employees must use caution and always exercise the utmost professionalism. The use of social media can easily blur the lines between professional and personal identities. In addition to the professional standards practiced each day during interactions with students in a face-to-face environment, there are also professional standards and expectations that must be upheld online.

Although electronic means of communicating are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents. It is crucial to keep in mind that information produced by district employees in the context of their work is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to COCISD's Acceptable Use Policy and Board Policy.

Employees of COCISD have a responsibility to the school system, colleagues, and students to depict a level of professionalism in all communications. Employees are role models for students and are viewed as leaders within our community. Please always remember that the district's standards of behavior are high.

COCISD has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for employees who choose to utilize electronic forms of communication. These guidelines offer professional recommendations and best practices for communicating via electronic media.

The graphic features a dark red background with a white speech bubble in the center containing the title "Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use". To the left is the Coldspring-Oakhurst Consolidated I.S.D. logo, and to the right is an illustration of a smartphone. Below the title are four guidelines, each separated by a wavy line:

- Remember you are always a school employee - be respectful & kind.
- Don't share confidential information- what you post will be seen by others.
- If you don't want it on the 6 o'clock news, don't share it online.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and correct it quickly. We are all human!

PROFESSIONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees who would like to create and/or administer a social media account on behalf of a COCISD class, team, club, group, department, organization or campus, are expected to:

1. Obtain permission from the campus principal or department director and complete the COCISD [Social Media Request Form](#). Do not create the site until after the request has been processed.
2. Post only things that directly relate to the class, team, club, group, department or building, or to the school or district. Employees should not promote outside organizations on district social media accounts unless there is a direct relationship to the district.
3. Check for media permission from a parent/guardian before posting a photo or video of students.
4. Respect state and federal trademark, copyright and fair use laws when posting to social media, and uphold standards of web accessibility to the highest extent practicable.
5. Monitor comments posted to social media pages on a regular basis.
6. Follow the COCISD AcceptableUse Policy (AUP) and restrict the use of district computers and other technology to educational and professional purposes only.
7. Post information that is factually accurate and free of grammatical or spelling errors.
8. Take responsibility for anything “liked” or shared via social media when representing the district, as this can be construed as an endorsement. Do not share a link without fully reading it first.
9. Adhere to all terms and conditions of individual social media sites or electronic messaging applications.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

When interacting with others on social media, employees are expected to follow the same behavioral standards they would in other communications. Employees are reminded of the following:

- A personal social media account is not an appropriate venue to interact with students, parents or guardians.
- Confidential information(including, but not limited to, student addresses and telephone numbers) should never be posted or solicited online.
- Employees are expected to refrain from reporting, speculating, discussing or giving any opinions on district topics or individuals that could be considered sensitive, confidential or disparaging.
- If you identify yourself as a COCISD staff member online, it should be clear that the views you express are not necessarily those of the district.
- Guidelines regarding the use of student photographs or likenesses, information and classwork apply to social media and other online publications or venues.
- Think before you post — regardless of your privacy settings, assume anything you post is public information. Don't post anything you wouldn't feel comfortable saying publicly.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

ALWAYS A SCHOOL EMPLOYEE

The lines between public and private, personal and professional, are blurred in the digital world. Regardless of whether it is clearly communicated, you will be identified as an employee of the school district in what you do and say online. If you don't want it on the 6 o'clock news, don't share it online.

SCHOOL VALUES

Always represent school district values. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Carefully consider what you post through comments and photos. A violation of these guidelines could be regarded as a form of professional misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

MANAGE 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.

BUILD COMMUNITY/POSITIVELY REPRESENT SCHOOL

Represent the school district and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Under no circumstances should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) or the district in general. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Do not comment on or forward unsupported information (rumors). You are responsible for what you post, even if it's on a personal page, so be certain it's accurate and supports your organization.

OWN AND CORRECT MISTAKES

If you make a mistake, admit the mistake and correct it quickly. Share your error with your supervisor, human resources and the communications department so they can help address the issue effectively. Even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks.

SPELL CHECK AND ABBREVIATIONS

Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Be cautious about using abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon. When in doubt, define the abbreviation at least once in a post or include a definitions page on your site.

USING CONTENT THAT ISN'T YOUR OWN

Do not utilize protected works. Just because an image, song, movie, etc. is available in an online search, it does not mean you can use it freely. Use work that is available under Creative Commons, a way that allows you to use certain photos without getting written permission from the owner. Always give credit to the owner of the work when necessary. When using a hyperlink to outside sources, be sure that the content is appropriate and adheres to the COCISD Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

The following rules of engagement are displayed on the COCISD Facebook page. These rules provide a guide for the way all social media pages related to the district should be monitored and moderated. It is our policy NOT to delete comments unless they violate one or more of these rules.

COCISD reserves the right to delete or remove any post or comment that violates the following terms of use ~

- No profane, threatening, harassing, bullying, vulgar, obscene or discriminatory material.
- No material that is likely to disrupt the learning environment.
- No comments that portray students and/or staff in a defamatory, abusive, or generally negative tone.
- Respect copyrights and fair use laws; no plagiarism - give proper credit for other's work.
- No comments or posts that do not show proper consideration for other's privacy or are likely to offend or provoke others.
- No spam or unsolicited advertisements—i.e. repeatedly posting the same comment or comments that are simply advertising/promoting a service or product.
- No content that violates or promotes the violation of school rules.
- No political lobbying.

WHAT DOES THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK SAY?

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

Policy CQ

The district's technology resources, including its networks, computer systems, email accounts, devices connected to its networks, and all district-owned devices used on or off school property, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use is permitted if the use:

- Imposes no tangible cost to the district.
- Does not unduly burden the district's technology resources.

- Has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student’s academic performance.

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Each employee is required to read and sign the “Acceptable Use of Technology” form at the beginning of each school year. Employees are required to abide by the provisions of the District’s acceptable use agreement and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary and legal action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management may contact the COCISD Technology Department at 936-653-1118.

E-Mail

E-mail is a District service provided by public funds. It is for instructional, administrative and limited personal use. Sending jokes, chain letters, etc. via e-mail is considered as an inappropriate use of District equipment.

E-mail transmissions and other use of technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time by designated District staff to ensure appropriate use.

The e-mail system is filtered for both content and “junk mail.” E-mail is a public document and can become part of a legal process. Employees must check their e-mail transmissions at least once per school day

Building administrators should approve an e-mail distributed to an entire campus staff.

Revealing personal addresses or phone numbers of others is prohibited.

E-mail should be professional in nature, to the point and signed.

Use good judgment in forwarding any e-mail. Ensure that privacy considerations are taken into account.

Use proper e-mail etiquette as described below.

E-Mail Etiquette

System users are expected to observe the e-mail etiquette as follows:

- Be polite; messages typed in capital letters are the equivalent of shouting and are considered rude.
- Use appropriate language; swearing, vulgarity, ethnic or racial slurs and any other inflammatory language are prohibited.
- Pretending to be someone else when sending/receiving messages is considered inappropriate.
- Transmitting obscene messages or pictures is prohibited.
- Be considerate when sending attachments with e-mail by considering whether a file may be too large to be accommodated by the recipient’s system or may be in a format unreadable by the recipient.

Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

School faculty and staff are expected to behave honorably in both real and virtual (online) spaces. Activities which are improper, unethical, illegal, or which cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents or other members of the school community should be judiciously avoided in both physical space and cyberspace.

See *COCISD Social Media Guidelines and Procedures* located at cocisd.org > Staff > [Employee Handbook](#).

PERSONAL USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Policy CQ, DH

Electronic communications include all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (email), web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic communications also include all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and web-based applications.

As role models for the district's students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee's use of electronic communications interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee's page, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access the employee's page, and for web links on the employee's page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content.

An employee who uses electronic communications for personal purposes shall observe the following:

- The employee may not set up or update the employee's personal social network page(s) using the district's computers, network, or equipment.
- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, meal times, and before and after scheduled work hours, unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the district's logo or other copyrighted material of the district without express written consent.

- An employee may not share or post, in any format, information, videos, or pictures obtained while on duty or on district business unless the employee first obtains written approval from the employee’s immediate supervisor. Employees should be cognizant that they have access to information and images that, if transmitted to the public, could violate privacy concerns.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators’ Code of Ethics, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus. These restrictions include:
 - Confidentiality of student records. [See Policy FL]
 - Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law. [See DH (EXHIBIT)]
 - Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private email addresses. [See Policy GBA]
 - Copyright law [See Policy CY]
 - Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system. [See DH (EXHIBIT)]

See *Electronic Communications between Employees, Students, and Parents*, below, for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS

Policy DH

All employees are expected to comply with [Senate Bill 944](#) concerning public information on personal devices. COCISD will utilize District-provided accounts to store all correspondence and communication related to school business between students and staff, parents and staff, and work-related communication between staff members, on the District Remind application, District-provided email accounts, and other District-provided applications such as Google Classroom. No communication that could be considered Public Information Act (PIA) information should be deleted.

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the superintendent or a campus principal, may use electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the district. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. Electronic communications between all other employees and students who are enrolled

in the district are prohibited. Employees are not required to provide students with their personal phone number or email address.

An employee is not subject to the provisions regarding electronic communications with a student to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization. An employee who claims an exception based on a social relationship shall provide written consent from the student's parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgement by the parent that:

- The employee has provided the parent with a copy of this protocol
- The employee and the student have a social relationship outside of school;
- The parent understands that the employee's communications with the student are exempted from district regulation; and
- The parent is solely responsible for monitoring electronic communications between the employee and the student.

The following definitions apply for the use of electronic media with students:

- *Electronic communications* means any communication facilitated by the use of any electronic device, including a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. The term includes email, text messages, instant messages, and any communication made through an Internet website, including a social media website or a social networking website.
- *Communicate* means to convey information and includes a one-way communication as well as a dialogue between two or more people. A public communication by an employee that is not targeted at students (e.g., a posting on the employee's personal social network page or a blog) is not a *communication*: however, the employee may be subject to district regulations on personal electronic communications. See *Personal Use of Electronic Media*, above. Unsolicited contact from a student through electronic means is not a *communication*.
- *Certified or licensed employee* means a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers.

An employee who communicates electronically with students shall observe the following:

- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students using any form of electronic communications, including mobile and web applications, that are not provided or accessible by the district unless a specific exception is noted below.
- Employees should never text students from their personal cell phones, or instant message/direct message students on any personal social media, messaging app or account. All communication needs to take place via Remind, school email, or other District-provided applications such as Google Classroom. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the district's record retention policy.
- The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page ("professional page") for the purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee's professional page. The COCISD Social Media Request Form must be submitted and approved before the creation of any school-related social media site or account.
- The employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- The employee does not have a right to privacy with respect to communications with students and parents.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics including:
 - Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student records. [See Policies CPC and FL]
 - Copyright law [Policy CY]
 - Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student. [See Policy DH]
- Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with one or more currently-enrolled students.

- Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through email, Remind, or any other form of one-to-one communication.
- An employee may request an exception from one or more of the limitations above by submitting a written request to his or her immediate supervisor.
- All staff are required to use school email accounts or other District-provided applications such as Remind or Google Classroom for all electronic communications with parents. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the district's record retention policy.
- An employee shall notify his or supervisor in writing within one business day if a student engages in an improper electronic communication with the employee. The employee should describe the form and content of the electronic communication.

Guidelines for Use of Social Networks by School faculty and Staff

- Exercise appropriate discretion when using social networks for personal communications (friends, colleagues, parents, former students, etc.)
- Accept social network friend requests only with alumni over the age of 18. Recognize that many former students have online connections with current students, and that information shared between school adults and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.
- Remind all other members of your network of your position as an educator whose profile may be accessed by current or former students, and to monitor their posts to your network accordingly. Conversely, be judicious in your postings to all friends' sites, and act immediately to remove any material that may be inappropriate from your site whether posted by you or someone else.
- Faculty who use social networks should do so using their own name, not a pseudonym or nickname.

See *COCISD Social Media Guidelines and Procedures* located at cocisd.org > Staff > [Employee Handbook](#).

User Responsibility

- All computer workstations should be turned off at the end of each workday.
- Printing of documents should be limited to one copy. Additional copies for classroom or staff training can be made on District copiers.
- Sites accessible via the Network/Internet may contain material that is illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or controversial. Although the District will attempt to limit access to objectionable material by using filtering software, controlling all materials on the Network/Internet is impossible. A user must not knowingly attempt to access

inappropriate material. If a user accidentally reaches such material, they must immediately back out of the area on the Internet. The user must then notify the Technology Department of the site address so that it can be removed from accessibility through the filtering software.

- The District's technology department provides technical support. If an employee is in need of technical assistance, they should contact the District's Department of Technology.

Inappropriate Use of School Computers

- Using the system for any illegal purpose including, but not limited to: hacking, transmission or downloading of pornography, fraud, and participation in terrorist activity or purchasing illegal substances.
- Accessing or borrowing someone's account with or without permission.
- Downloading or using copyrighted information without permission from the copyright holder.
- Posting messages or accessing materials that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal.
- Wasting school resources through the improper use of the computer system.
- Gaining unauthorized access to restricted information or resources.
- Accessing the COCISD network with personal computer equipment.
- Using the network in any way that restricts bandwidth that is not school related. (e.g., music, games, etc.)
- Use of proxies is strictly prohibited.
- Accessing chat rooms and other instant messaging services.
- Creation of or posting of web pages that are commercial in nature.
- Creating or posting viruses or other destructive programs.
- Adding or removing computer files or software.
- Streaming music/video not related to a class project or other approved activity.
- Unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal information regarding students and employees.
- All other inappropriate uses as deemed by school officials.

Consequences of Violations

- Employees and students who are authorized to use the systems are required to abide by the provisions of the District's Technology Acceptable Use Policy and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary or legal action. District administrators will make the final determination as to what constitutes inappropriate use. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the Director of Technology.

Computer Software

- It is the practice of the District to respect all computer software copyrights and to adhere to the terms of all software licenses to which the District is a party. The Director of Technology is charged with the responsibility of enforcing these guidelines.
- District employees, students, and volunteers may not duplicate any licensed software or related documentation for use either on the District's premises or elsewhere unless the Department of Technology is authorized to do so by agreement with the licensor. Unauthorized duplication of software may subject the employee and/or the school District to both civil and criminal penalties under the United States Copyright Act.
- All computer software on District equipment must be installed by the Department of Technology or designee. Software acquisition channels are restricted to ensure that the school District has a complete record of all software that has been purchased for District computers and can register, support, and upgrade the software. Software on District computers must be approved by the Director of Curriculum and the Department of Technology.

Web Authoring

- The District and each campus have an authorized web site. Students, District employees, and community members are strictly prohibited from authoring a private website which represents itself as the official site for the District. District employees, trustees, and members of the public are not permitted to publish personal web pages using District resources.
- Teachers and other instructional personnel are strongly encouraged to develop professional web pages in coordination with the Director of Technology or designee. Web pages should be used to enhance flow of information from the campuses to the students and parents.

Electronic Records Retention Requirements

- Electronic records are the information that is maintained in electronic format in a computer for and the product of computer processing. This includes any information produced by e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, etc. These procedures apply to any electronic mail messages created, received, retained, used, or disposed of using the COCISD's electronic mail system. COCISD's approved retention schedule lists the record series that are created and the retention period for each series. It is the content and function of an e-mail or other electronic message that determines the retention period for that message. All electronic messages sent or received by COCISD are considered a COCISD record. Therefore, all electronic messages, including e-mail, must be retained or disposed of according to the COCISD's retention schedule. Electronic messages usually, but not always, fall into the Correspondence and Internal Memoranda record series.
- COCISD will electronically archive all email sent to cocisd.org accounts.

Disclaimer

- The Computer Use and Data Management Guidelines apply to all computers owned by COCISD. The District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the services it is providing and is not responsible for any damages suffered by users. This includes loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by its negligence or user errors or omissions. The District is not responsible for phone/credit card bills or any other charges incurred by users. Use of any information obtained via the Network/Internet is at the user's own risk. The District will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials on any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the District's electronic communications

*PUBLIC INFORMATION ON PRIVATE DEVICES***Policy DH**

Employees should not maintain district information on privately owned devices. Any district information must be forwarded or transferred to the district to be preserved. The district will take reasonable efforts to obtain public information in compliance with the Public Information Act. Reasonable efforts may include:

- Verbal or written directive
- Remote access to district-owned devices and services

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL USE

The community expects educators & staff members to be keenly aware that their actions reflect on the profession and the campuses they represent. They also expect COCISD employees to demonstrate the highest level of professional judgment. We hope you use this helpful guide in making responsible decisions on social media.



SET YOUR LEVEL OF PRIVACY:

What information about you can people access online? Make sure your social media settings aren't left wide open, and make sure to consider your audience when tagging someone in a post or using a hashtag both of those actions will make a post more visible.

KNOW COPYRIGHT LAWS:

The laws are more relaxed surrounding education, but not on social media. Credit your sources or use public material!

DON'T USE THE INTERNET TO VENT:

Again, nothing online is private. If you have a negative opinion, keep it off the internet, because it will definitely be seen by someone who you wouldn't want to see it.

NETWORK WITH PEERS:

Social media can be a great tool to connect with other professionals and educational groups.

REMEMBER WHAT ACCOUNT YOU'RE USING:

Always make sure you keep your audience in mind when posting on social media, and know that nothing is ever totally private! And NEVER use direct messaging to communicate with a student.

REMEMBER THE TEXAS EDUCATORS' CODE OF ETHICS:

Per the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, the Texas Educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty and good moral character.

FACT CHECK YOUR POSTS:

Don't post dubious information, and don't try to communicate anonymously. It never has positive results.

To learn more about COCISD's Social Media Policy and guidelines, go to cocisd.org > Human Resources > Employee Handbook

Be Smart About Posting Online! In the end, just thinking things through will help you avoid a lot of trouble. Don't be afraid to post with personality, just remember who could see it.

