# GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE
## COM-G003

The guidelines outlined in this document are designed for the purpose of:

1. **Protecting the students, staff, and CMCSS**
2. **Raising awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students and parents**
3. **Raising awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students and parents**

The following is a set of expectations that all members of the CMCSS professional community will adhere to when communicating with staff, stakeholders, parents and students.

**Does the communication pass the TAP Test?**
Electronic communication with students and parents should always be **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional as defined below.

1. **The communication is <u>transparent</u>.** – ALL electronic communication between staff, students, and parents should be transparent. As a public school district, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility, and accountability with regard to all communications.
2. **The communication is <u>accessible</u>.** - ALL electronic communication between staff, students and parents are a matter of public record and/or may be accessible by others.
3. **The communication is <u>professional</u>.** – ALL electronic communication between staff and from staff to student or parent should be written as a professional representing CMCSS. This includes word choices, tone, grammar and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a CMCSS professional.  Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

If communication meets all three of the criteria above, then it is very likely that the chosen methods of communicating with students and parents are very appropriate; moreover, encouraged.

## Acceptable Communication Methods

**District Email and Phone** - Use of District email and phone is a very appropriate way to communicate directly with students and parents. District email provides the staff member with a record of the communication. For this reason, district-provided email addresses (firstname.lastname@cmcss.net) and district-provided phone numbers and extensions should be used.

<u>**Social Media for Instructional Purposes –** Any content staff members publish, pictures they post, or dialogue they maintain, within any social media, a blog, a discussion thread or other website should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in their role as a CMCSS professional. A good question that staff members should ask themselves before posting or emailing a message is, "Would I mind if that information appeared on the front page of the local newspaper?" If the answer is "yes," then do not post it. Email and social networking sites are very public places.</u>

**GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE**
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## Less Acceptable Communications Methods

**Text Messaging** - Nearly every student has a cell phone today and use of text messaging is rising sharply. This form of communication is typically between individuals and highly personal. Because texting is such a quick and convenient way of communication, a simple message may lead to an extended texting conversation that can get "off topic." Therefore staff members should be aware that text messaging between a staff member and an individual student could easily be misinterpreted. If a staff member plans to use texting for immediate and urgent contact with students/team members, they must be transparent about such use. He/she must make parents aware at the beginning of the school year or season that he/she may use texting. A variety of instructional tools are available which take advantage of texting capabilities. Staff should always communicate with parents ahead of time regarding the use of such tools.

## Unacceptable Communications Methods

**Non-District Email –** CMCSS employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate with students or parents about school matters.

## Important Reminders: Social Media Sites for Personal Purposes

Staff members presently using social media sites to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks should ensure that their privacy settings are set to "Only Friends." If the "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. Employees should not use their District email address or phone number for communications on social media networks for personal accounts.

## Engaging in Social Media:

If you participate in social media, please follow these guiding principles:

- Stick to your area of expertise and provide respectful comments.
- Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
- Respect proprietary information and content, and confidentiality.
- When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.

## Rules of Engagement:

**Be transparent.** Honesty—or dishonesty—will be noticed quickly in the social media environment. Use your real name, identify that you are an employee of CMCSS, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Transparency is about your identity and your relationship to CMCSS. You still need to keep confidentiality around proprietary information and content.

**Be judicious.** Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate the Expectations for Communicating Electronically. All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated. Also

# GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE
## COM-G003

be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

**Write what you know.** Make sure you write and post about your areas of expertise. If you are discussing a topic that CMCSS is involved with but you are not familiar with specific information or policies, you should make this clear to your readers and direct them to someone who can more accurately inform them. Write in the first person. Remember, you may be personally responsible for your content.

**Perception is reality.** In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a CMCSS employee, you are creating perceptions about you and CMCSS. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the values and professional standards of CMCSS.

**It's a conversation.** Communicate with parents/students in a professional manner. Consider content that's open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. You also can broaden the conversation by citing others who are discussing the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated.

**Are you adding value?** There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value. Social communication from CMCSS should help students, parents, and other employees. It should be thought provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, solve problems, or understand CMCSS better—then it's adding value.

**Your Responsibility:** What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of CMCSS is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect.

**Create some excitement.** As employees of CMCSS, we are always creating new and exciting techniques for teaching students. Let's share with the world the exciting things we're learning and doing—and open up the channels to learn from others.

**Be a Leader.** There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. Do not denigrate CMCSS or other employees of CMCSS. Nor do you need to respond to every criticism or barb. Try to frame what you write to invite differing points of view without inflaming others. Some topics—like politics or religion—slide more easily into sensitive territory, so be careful and considerate. Once the words are out there, you can't really get them back. And once an inflammatory discussion gets going, it's hard to stop.

**Did you make a mistake?** If you did, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.

**If it gives you pause, pause.** If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you're still unsure, you might want to discuss it with your supervisor. Ultimately, what you publish is yours—as is the responsibility. So be sure.

# GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE
## COM-G003

## Moderation Guidelines:

Moderation is the act of reviewing and approving content before it is published (This applies to social media content written on behalf of CMCSS). CMCSS does not endorse nor take responsibility for content posted by third parties, referred to as user generated content (UGC). This includes text input and uploaded files (video, images, audio, documents).

**Balanced online dialogue.** Take the Good, the Bad, but not the Ugly. If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then we approve the content, regardless of whether it's favorable or unfavorable to CMCSS. But if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then we reject the content.

## Web Site Posting Guidelines:

  I.  Student Information, Work, and Pictures:
   A.  Web pages hosted from CMCSS's web server may contain a reference to a student. This includes references to students in photographs, video, and/or text.
   B.  The following student information is acceptable to include in conjunction with text or photograph, unless parent(s) request that no information on their child be posted on the school's web page. For complete understanding of student privacy rights, please refer to Student Code of Conduct - Family Educational Right to Privacy Act.
        ○  A student's photograph or exemplary classroom projects may be posted, but the school system is careful not to associate a student's full name in such a way that it can be identified with a photograph of a student.
 II.  On Copyright
        Unauthorized use of copyrighted material is prohibited. All copyrighted material must be properly cited using standard citation information. Giving credit (web address or active link) to a company or individual (celebrity, for instance) that has created text, a graphic, etc. for a school page may be allowed, assuming the site is not blocked by the web filtering hardware and software.

III.  Prohibited Content/Items
   A.  Personal communications information about staff and parent volunteers: non-district email addresses, non-district mailing address, and non-district phone numbers except as approved by the building principal and the parent volunteer whose information is to be released.
        Example: PTSO/PTA/Booster Organization officer/contact requests to have their personal email address listed in the appropriate area on the school's page(s) and principal approves the request.
   B.  Student personal contact information of any kind.

IV.  Compliance with CMCSS Acceptable Use

 V.  Student Safety Issues
        1.  Any online communication should always be at the direction and with the supervision of a teacher.

# GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE
## COM-G003

2. Never provide last name, address, telephone number, or school name online.
3. Never respond to, and always report to the teacher or parent, any messages that make you feel uncomfortable or that are from an unknown origin.
4. Never send a photo of yourself or anyone else.
5. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online.
6. Never open attachments or files from unknown senders.

Always report to a teacher any inappropriate sites that you observe being accessed by another user or that you browse to accidentally.

**Related Documents:**   COM-A002 Social Media Use Policy
HUM-A034 School District Communications System Usage
TCH-A002 Technology Acceptable Usage

**Revision History:**

| Date: | Rev. | Description of Revision: |
|-------|------|--------------------------|
| 12/12/11 | | Initial Release |
| 2/28/18 | | Updated logo. |

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