



June 4, 2019

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Approval of Revisions to Cambridge Public Schools  
Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees

- Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees as detailed in the attached document.
- Description: This is a second reading of these proposed Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees.
- Supporting Data: Attached redline of revisions to Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "KS", written over a faint circular stamp.

Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

2

- Draft -

## Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees

### I. Purpose

CPS recognizes the importance of 21st-century methods of communication, networking, and learning. Just as employees are members of real-world communities, online communities can be sources of support, information, and connection. At the same time, participation in these networks can open individuals up to risks that include breaches of data privacy, data mining by marketing companies, online harassment, identity theft, and fraud. The following general policy rules of use and social media guidelines set forth in the Cambridge Public School's Policy Regarding the Personal Use of Social Media by CPS Employees (the "Policy") are meant to encourage employees to participate in relevant online social media activities in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

Whether or not an employee chooses to be active online is his or her their own decision. Free speech protects individuals who want to participate in social media, but as a public employee, you may be subject to discipline if your the laws and courts have ruled that school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including personal online postings, causes a substantial disruption to school operations or otherwise violates this Policy. School staff are expected to exercise sound judgment and to maintain appropriate boundaries with students at all times.

- The use of Social media can sometimes blur the line between professional and personal interactions and as statements intended to convey personal opinions can be mistaken for official expressions of a public employee's position or of the Cambridge Public Schools. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that personal use of social media does not create an appearance of official use by the Cambridge Public Schools. Additionally, as public employees, the same expectation of privacy is not enjoyed as employees in private companies or institutions, and while some consideration will be given to whether an employee has taken appropriate steps to limit the dissemination or visibility of such personal postings, even if marked private, cause a substantial disruption to the CPS community school operations, disciplinary action may result. may be subject to relevant CPS policies and procedures, as well as to relevant local, state, and federal laws. As a CPS employee, when accessing, creating, or contributing to any online community or social media, you are expected to abide by this policy. Additionally, employees are encouraged to abide by the guidelines outlined below.

These guidelines have been created as a resource for the CPS community and complement to the guidelines applicable to professional social media use as defined in the CPS Social Media Policy.

### II. General Policy<sup>1</sup>

The Superintendent and the School Principals/Heads of Upper Schools will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance issues relating to of maintaining a respectable presence in the of their online presence, digital world as well as in person. Such annual reviews shall include informing eEmployees of the expectation to must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process school operations, and of the need to comply with all federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations regarding the protection of confidential student record information, and employee record information and state ethics, and the provisions of this Policy. -The possibility CPS reserves the right to of take disciplinary action, up to and

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Association of School Committee's Social Media Guidelines (October 2016)

including termination of employment, for any inappropriate online conduct, as defined herein, that creates a substantial disruption to the school environment operations, failure to abide by appropriate standards of conduct online.

Inappropriate online conduct includes but is not limited to:

1) ~~Improper fraternization~~ Contact or communications with students using social media, email, text, phone, or other electronic means.

a. ~~Examples of "improper fraternization~~ contact or communications" include, but are not limited to:

~~communications with a student about the employee's personal feelings or experiences, sending or receiving inappropriate pictures to/ or from students and~~

~~engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet or in writing.~~

b. ~~Contact with students should~~ shall only be conducted through the CPS district's approved communication

~~resources, except in emergency situations. Permission to use other forms of contact with students may only be engaged in following~~ must be express, written approval obtained from ~~approved by~~ a Principal/Head of Upper School or supervisor and accompanied by ~~with~~ written consent from the student's a parent/guardian/caregiver before an employee may engage in such contact is ~~authorized.~~

b. ~~CPS staff members will not give out their private contact information or social media handle to students.~~

2) ~~Inappropriateness of p~~ Posting items with salacious or pornographic or sexual content in online forums where students or community members are likely to encounter it.

3) ~~Inappropriateness of p~~ Posting items exhibiting or advocating the use of illegal drugs or alcohol in online forums where students or community members are likely to encounter it.

4) ~~Using social media or any other means to~~ Unlawfully bullying, threatening, harassing, discriminatory, violating civil rights or intimidating individuals or groups, engage in hate speech, condone violence, or promoting illegal activities.

5) ~~Posting C~~ Confidential student record or employee record information should only be shared within CPS networks. ~~Sharing confidential information via personal accounts is prohibited~~

**III. Guidelines for Avoiding the Perils ~~the~~ Appropriate Use of Personal Social Media**

These guidelines have been created as a resource for the CPS community and as a complement to the guidelines applicable to professional social media use as defined in the CPS Social Media Policy and the CPS Acceptable Use Policy. These guidelines relay suggestions for employees to consider in their efforts to maintain an online identify and persona that does not create a substantial disruption to the

educational and workplace environment that may lead to circumstances requiring the imposition of disciplinary action.

Many employees use social media or participate in online communities to build their professional network, establish their areas of expertise, or connect with like-minded individuals. Although the lines between public and private, personal and professional, can become blurred in the digital world, employees should be mindful of the impact of their online words and behavior on the CPS community in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

~~The district's most valuable asset is its staff and what employees post or publish online has the potential to reflect positively on the school and community. Employees are encouraged to communicate about their areas of expertise and share accurate and useful information, or their own opinions and perspective.~~

~~Employees are encouraged to represent CPS and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Concerns should be expressed honestly, accurately, and with respect for the privacy and the feelings of others.~~

#### A. Legal Activities that Could Cause Disruption

~~While not prohibited, CPS encourages employees to consider whether posting pictures or other materials, which either (a) demonstrate the employee's use, endorsement or advocacy of alcohol or other legal drugs or substances, or (b) portrays the employee in a more casual or intimate light than students or parents/guardians/caregivers are accustomed to seeing, could cause some disruption to the educational and/or workplace environment, should a parent/guardian/caregiver or student unearth view such material. Once again, although the facts of each case are assessed individually, should students or parents/guardians/caregivers find such pictures or other materials, and should a substantial disruption to the school operations occur, CPS may take disciplinary action. AS a result, CPS advises employees to not publicly post anything that an employee would not be comfortable having displayed before the entire CPS community.~~

#### B. Guidelines for Professional Online Conduct

~~District~~CPS employees with a professional non-CPS online presence are urged to be mindful of the information they post. Online behavior should reflect the same professional and personal standards of honesty, respect, and consideration used in face-to-face and in work-related settings. Material posted or published online should reflect the professional image applicable to the employee's position and not impair the employee's capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents/guardians/caregivers or ability to serve as a role model for children.

Employees, parents/guardians/caregivers, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values, and points of view, and employees are expected to be respectful of others' opinions in posts or comments. Employees should refrain from making offensive comments about students or colleagues, which may amount to cyberbullying.

Copyright and fair use guidelines apply online, and employees who violate these guidelines undermine their credibility as educators. It is unethical to claim the work of others as one's own, and down and

6

linking to or citing sources shows respect for their work of others and demonstrates adherence to professional standards. Appropriate permissions should be obtained before re-publishing music, art, video, or any other copyrighted content, including any school or CPS district logo or image.

~~Employees must take care not to engage in activity anonymous or using a pseudonym that they otherwise would not be permitted to engage in if their identities were known. Employees must not misrepresent themselves by using another's identity to spread rumors or post inappropriate material.~~

Employees who recognize they have made an error in their online conduct that could reflect negatively on them professionally or have a disruptive impact on the school or district should acknowledge and correct it quickly. The Principal/Head of Upper School, Office of Human Resources, or Office of Information Communication & Technology Services can help address the issue effectively. Additionally, an employee may want to contact their union for help in addressing the issue.

### C. Guidelines for Staff-Student Relationship

~~CPS Employees are reminded that posting confidential student record information in their personal social media including pictures, videos, names, or other identifying information about students is prohibited, and staff are expected to abide by the CPS Anti-Bullying Policy, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, Anti-Cyberbullying Policy, this Social Media Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, and this Policy, and to consult the CPS administrative guidelines for Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Media Releases. Media Release Policy and Guidelines. Photos or video taken at school may only be shared if they have already been publicly posted on official CPS accounts.~~

Engaging in personal social-networking friendships with students as well as with parents/guardians/caregivers via social media or in online communities is strongly discouraged prohibited with students, and discouraged as well as with parents/guardians/caregivers is strongly discouraged. CPS The District recognizes that because of the tight-knit community of CPS, many staff members may be family members or close personal friends of CPS parents/guardians/caregivers, and therefore may have relationships with students, as well. It is highly recommended to use caution and establish appropriate boundaries.

~~It is a violation of CPS policy to use improperly fraternize with students. To avoid confusion by any party to the communication or any parent/guardian/caregiver that may see the communication, personal or non-approved e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or social networking sites to engage with students, except in cases of emergency or with prior supervisor approval, employees are strongly discourages against communicating with students via non-CPS approved email, text messaging, instant message or social networking sites.~~

~~CPS employees will shall not give out their private contact information or social media handle to students. Examples include, but are not limited to: communicating with a student about the employee's personal feelings or experiences; sending or receiving inappropriate pictures to/from students; and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet, or in writing.~~

### D. Do not "Friend" your sStudents

Students are free to establish social media groups but CPS employees should maintain a boundary between their personal online identity and these types of student-created online spaces.

A recommendation for staff wishing to politely decline to “friend” requests from students or parents/guardians/caregivers is to pre-emptively post as follows: If you are a student or parent/guardian/caregiver requesting to be my “friend,” please do not be surprised or offended if I ignore your request. As an employee of Cambridge Public Schools, District CPS procedures and practices discourage me from “friending” students on my personal pages. I would encourage you to “friend” the school/department/CPS social media pages instead.

### **Please Keep in Mind: Tips for Personal Use of Social Media**

#### **Using personal social media to amplify your work**

#### **E. Sharing Information About Your Work and Upcoming Events**

Please keep in mind that the general policy and guidelines, above, along with the CPS Social Media Policy and Acceptable Use Policy are designed to protect student, employee and parent/guardian/caregiver privacy by ensuring that all online services have appropriate data protections in place, and that they will not to prevent such online services from using social media to harvest data collected through their service and use it for marketing purposes, among other purposes. Many social media sites and popular websites, including for sending out event organizing web services invitations engage in data harvesting. Marketing is their the primary source of business revenue for these websites. If an online service is free and encourages you to enter an email address, it is most likely that your information is being collected for marketing purposes.

Therefore, the safest way to promote an event or share about your work is as follows:

1. Send images and a written description to the Office of Technology Communications & Technology Services' ICTS web services team.
2. They will share this information through CPS district and school-based approved social media, and they may post it on the CPS calendar, school or district website, and on FindItCambridge.org.
3. Watch for the posts on CPS Twitter and Facebook accounts, and then re-share via your account.
4. Other appropriate tools for posting / sharing information: Google Sites, Aspen emails, School Messenger, Remind (CPS Paid account -- Not the free version), -Blogger, and many others that can be found on the ICTS website.

#### **F. If it's online, it's not private**

Online postings and conversations are rarely private on the internet. Employees are encouraged to become familiar with the appropriate security settings for social media and online communities. Even if personal information is deleted, it still may be stored on the website's server for a long period of time.

It is very easy for others to copy and paste information about you and send or forward it, or to “tag” or identify photos without the subject's knowledge and permission. Similarly, Facebook's ability to allow “friends of friends” to view your content makes it highly likely that unintended viewers will have access to pictures and other personal content.

It is also a good idea to monitor your profile page to ensure that all material posted by others is accurate and appropriate. Employees should not comment on nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumors. If you are the recipient of negative comments or criticism, keep in mind that your reaction will be public.

### ***Do not "Friend" Your Students***

~~Students are free to establish social media groups, for instance related to clubs, but educators should maintain a boundary between their personal online identity and these types of student-created online spaces.~~

~~A recommendation for staff wishing to politely decline to "friend" requests from students or parents/guardians/caregivers is to pre-emptively post as follows: *If you are a student or parent requesting to be my "friend," please do not be surprised or offended if I ignore your request. As an employee of Cambridge Public Schools, District procedures and practices discourage me from "friending" students on my personal pages. I would encourage you to friend the school/department/CPS social media pages instead.*~~

### GF. Massachusetts Labor Laws and Employee Unions

CPS recognizes that the Massachusetts Labor Law (M.G.L. c. 150E) and regulations promulgated thereunder has a role in some of these matters and that certain online activity may amount to the exercise of concerted protected activity, which will not be subject to discipline. An employee may wish to consult their union with respect to this issue.

---

Adapted From: Social Media Guidelines Wiki Referenced Sites and Resources • Barrow County Schools: <http://www.barrow.k12.ga.us/> • Social Media Guidelines for Educators (Facebook group): <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=80354045978> • Social Media Guidelines for Schools - Andy Mann, Calhoun ISD <http://www.scribd.com/doc/28430149/Social-Media-Guidelines-for-Schools> • Social Media Guidelines for Schools Wiki <http://socialmediaguidelines.pbworks.com/> • Social Media Suggestions: <http://blogs.stvrain.k12.co.us/helpdesk/2010/03/29/social-media-suggestions/> • Think Social Media Guidelines: <http://thinkingmachine.pbworks.com/Think-Social-Media-Guidelines> A list of resources is provided at the end of this document. This is created to be shared, edited, updated and has been licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike license.

---