

Social Media Guidelines for First Christian School Employees & Students

First Christian School recognizes that many of our staff, students, parents and community members are active social media users. As a school, we are also incorporating social media as part of our communications strategy.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you to participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects your reputation, and the reputation of FCS, and that respects the relationship between teachers, students, and parents.

For the purposes of this document, social media includes, but is not necessarily limited to, social networking and media sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, Tumblr, and YouTube. It also includes blogs, comments on web sites, discussion forums, and any other activity online involving connecting or communicating with other users. These guidelines complement, but do not replace, any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet that are in place at FCS.

Your 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. We ask that you carefully consider the very public forum you are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and FCS. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. Seek to build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Avoid insulting others, including students, staff, parents, our extended school community, or other schools. Do not use racial slurs, innuendos, obscenity or other inappropriate content. Avoid posting, sharing, commenting, or otherwise engaging in rumors or unsupported information. Represent FCS and the teachers, students and parents you serve in the best light. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. You are responsible for what you post and 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. Always bear in mind that once posted, you cannot take it back. Some specific guidelines we expect you to follow:

- Use common sense when posting online. While these guidelines are in no way intended to limit or infringe upon your rights to comment upon the workplace/school place, it remains good practice to never post anything that would embarrass you or FCS, or would call your reputation into question.
- You are personally responsible for the content you publish online. "Content" includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that you choose to share or re-post.
- Be mindful that any content you publish will be public for a long time. Not only can your 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.

- You should also be mindful that once something is posted, you cannot take it 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 your content with others. Even if you share your content with a very limited number of people, nothing prohibits your contacts from sharing the information you post.
- Before you post or share content, ask yourself if you would want to see that content in the newspaper or on the evening news. Would you feel comfortable if your content was read by colleagues, your students, parents, your pastor, or the School Board? If the answer is “no,” then the content is best not shared.
- Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality and reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.
- As an employee and student of FCS, content you post should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, content showing or promoting the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, or any activity you are legally prohibited from doing. Remember, even with privacy settings in place, your content could be seen by teachers, students or parents or find its way into the public realm.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. When you are online, you 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. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and studies at FCS.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration you apply offline.
- Protect your privacy. You are responsible for understanding and controlling privacy settings on each social network you use. Always assume default settings will make your profile and any content you share publicly accessible. You should also understand that even with maximum privacy settings in place, content can still find its way in to the public domain.
- Use your personal email addresses on social networking sites and while engaging in social media activities. At no time, except with prior consent from the Head Mistress, should you claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of FCS.
- While FCS respects the rights of its employees and students to exercise their rights, no one should make any derogatory statements about teachers, students, parents, or the Board that would reflect badly on your reputation or the reputation of FCS. You are ultimately responsible for your comments and FCS recommends that you thoughtfully consider your rights and responsibilities prior to posting.

- Do not create any social media account, blog or website intended to represent FCS without express prior consent from the Head Mistress. It is important for us to protect the schools brand, ensure certain brand standards and content guidelines are maintained, and ensure any new accounts fit overall communications and education standards established by the school.

Employee-Student Relations

FCS recognizes the role that communication and collaboration between employees and students plays in the educational process and experience. The school further recognizes that the advancement of electronic communication and social media technologies creates greater opportunity for interactions between employees and students, and provides these additional guidelines for your own and the students' protection.

- Employees are discouraged from connecting with students on 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, you should bear in mind that unless your account has privacy settings correctly configured, everything you post may be publicly accessible to your students whether you are 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 the school'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. With each communication, ask yourself if it's something you would feel comfortable being printed in the newspaper, read by parents, colleagues, or the School Board. 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 school 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 the student is kept professional in its nature and for immediately reporting to the district any inappropriate communication received from a student. This is as much for your protection as the student's. Any content or communication generated either by you, or by a student, which would be inappropriate in the classroom should also be considered inappropriate when shared via social media.

- The school 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.
- 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 FCS.

Disciplinary Action

Actions that are in violation of this policy are subject to disciplinary action. For employees and students, this may include a verbal warning, a written warning, suspension, or termination from the school. At the discretion of the Head Mistress, violations of the social media policy may also impact a student's conduct grade.