



2021-2022

Communications Guide



Office of Strategic Communications

INTRODUCTION

Pinellas County Schools (PCS) is the eighth largest district in the state and the 27th largest in the nation. With 15,000 employees, serving nearly 102,000 pre-K through 12th grade students, we are the largest employer in Pinellas County.

As one of the largest districts in the state and the nation, PCS provides educational services that lead to success stories every day.

All of us, as ambassadors of the district, have numerous opportunities to promote the excellence of PCS educators and the achievements of our students. The district's



Communications Guide, prepared by the Office of Strategic Communications (OSC), is a resource for all Pinellas County Schools employees for communicating within the district and beyond. It will help you effectively communicate with your colleagues and share our success stories with the community.

The guide features a wide variety of information, including tips for working with the media, policies for communicating with staff and families, protocols for special events, Internet guidelines and information about protecting the confidentiality of our students. We hope you find the Communications Guide useful, and we welcome suggestions for making it better in the future.

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Office of Strategic Communications (OSC) is responsible for providing accurate and timely information to School Board members, employees, families, business leaders, the community and the media. The office maintains the PCS Newsroom, which highlights district projects and initiatives and promotes district achievements.

Responsibilities of the Office of Strategic Communications:

- ✓ Keeps School Board members informed of district programs and initiatives
- ✓ Supports the Superintendent by coordinating and directing the communication of strategies, projects and activities of critical importance to the school system
- ✓ Strives to improve the public perception of the school district and generate engagement and support for the education of Pinellas County children
- ✓ Assists district departments and administrators with communication efforts to schools and the public
- ✓ Assists schools in their efforts to communicate positive news and outcomes to families and the public
- ✓ Coordinates media coverage for the district and individual schools
- ✓ Provides media training to employees
- ✓ Executes the district's emergency communications plan
- ✓ Responds to public records requests from the media
- ✓ Maintains the district website and social media accounts

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM	
727-588-6122	
Beth Herendeen Director of Strategic Communications	Sean Clark Manager of Multimedia & TV Operations
Isabel Mascareñas Public Information Officer	Elizabeth Johnson Multimedia Producer
Brian Jones Webmaster	Dale Bottum Multimedia Producer
Demorris Lee Communications Coordinator	Wally Patanow Multimedia Coordinator
Lorri Helfand Communications Coordinator	Dave Cook TV Production Manager
Libby Jourdan Social Media & Marketing Coordinator	Larry Osterman Multimedia Coordinator
Debbie Stotts Secretary	Shawn Briggs Station Technician

COMMUNICATING WITH MEDIA & OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

MEDIA

Contact with the media should be viewed as an opportunity to advocate for students, schools and the district. Responses to the media should be timely, honest and professional. It is a good idea to notify the Office of Strategic Communications when your school receives media attention, so that we can further share good news and accolades. Additionally, there are occasions the office should be notified to assist with controversial or sensitive issues, including:

- When you are not comfortable speaking to the media directly about an incident.
- When you do not have time to respond.
- When the media request is controversial or has the potential for controversy.
- When the request is complex.
- When a public records request is involved.



We will work with you to develop a strategy to best fulfill each individual request. In addition, the Office of Strategic Communications provides media briefings and press releases to reporters to highlight positive stories and newsworthy events throughout the district.

GETTING YOUR NEWS OUT

Here are five critical questions to determine if your school story idea will capture the media's attention:

- 1. Is it timely?** Be sure to promote your story ideas early. Something that happened last week may not be covered. The media like to be notified before the event occurs.
- 2. Is it visual?** Events that attract media attention provide a good photo or video opportunity. This is a necessity for television. Newspapers will often send a photographer to cover stories.
- 3. Is it unique?** Reporters are more likely to cover a story if it is about something new or unusual rather than the "same old stuff."
- 4. Is it linked to a national news event?** Reporters often look for a local twist to a major story.
- 5. Does it involve a prominent individual?** Events involving district, local, state or national dignitaries may also attract media attention.

Schools and departments have an open invitation to submit story ideas to the Office of Strategic Communications using the link on the home page of the Newsroom website, www.pcsb.org/newsroom. Ideas can also be submitted to news@pcsb.org.

- ✓ **Before the media begin taking pictures or taping video, make sure there is a signed Media Release form for each student.**
- ✓ **Check to see if a Directory Information Opt-Out Letter has been completed and filed. This trumps the Media Request Form.**

TIPS FOR TOUGH SITUATIONS

- If you do not want a statement quoted, do not make it. Never assume you are “off the record.”
- Do not argue with the reporter or lose your composure.
- If a question contains offensive language or words you do not like, do not repeat them, even to deny them.
- If the reporter asks a direct question, give an equally direct answer.
- If you do not know the answer, simply say: “I do not know the answer to that question, but I will research the matter and get back to you.”
- Never say, “No comment.”
- When in doubt, call the Office of Strategic Communications for assistance.
- Tell the truth.
- Maintain student confidentiality.
- Do not exaggerate.

OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

When outside organizations contact schools and departments with requests to work with them for partnerships, advertising opportunities or a non-media photo shoot, the following protocol should be followed:

1. The Deputy Superintendent should be notified to give approval from the district.
2. All students who will be shown or interviewed should have signed Media Release Forms.
3. Schools/departments must ensure that the video will not be used for any for-profit purposes.

PUBLIC RECORDS

All public records of the School Board of Pinellas County made or received in connection with the official business of the Board and the School District will be made available upon request of any person for inspection, examination and copying, in accordance with applicable law and the following guidelines:

- The district will not create records in order to respond to a request, but it will provide existing records, in whatever form those records exist.
- Depending on the nature of the request, a service charge will be imposed if identifying, locating, compiling, reviewing and redacting personal student or employee information takes more than 15 minutes to complete. This service charge will be computed to the nearest quarter hour exceeding 15 minutes based on the current rate of pay of the district employee(s) and/or supervisors who perform these services. Estimates will be provided before any work is undertaken.
- Individuals are encouraged, but not required, to submit requests in writing identifying the specific records they desire to inspect or copy.
- Individuals are not required to provide a reason for requested public records, nor do they need to identify themselves (although it's helpful they do so in order to satisfy the request) or the organization they represent.



Public records are satisfied in the order in which they are received. They are fulfilled, according to statute, in a timely manner. Bear in mind that the district can have dozens of public records requests pending at any time. No automatic waiting period is imposed in the satisfaction of a public records request. The only delay is that which is reasonably necessary to allow the district to compile the requested records and protect against disclosure of those records or portions of records that are confidential and exempt.

High school transcripts are not considered public records. If someone requests a copy of a high school transcript or other student record, direct them to the district's Central Records office at 727-793-2701/2731.

Public record requests vs. Information requests

A request for information is different than a public records request. Information requests refer to information that does not already exist in public record form. For example, a person may request staff to create a document that does not already exist, to research an issue or to produce an employee to answer questions. Such requests are not covered by the Public Records Act and not legally enforceable. Nevertheless, such requests may be honored, purely as a public service, when the work involved can be accomplished quickly, or when answering requests are part of the district's duties and responsibilities. Since the Public Records Act does

not cover requests for information, there is no prohibition against imposing conditions on the honoring of such requests, except as may otherwise be provided by the district's own rules, practices, and procedures. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask that such requests be put in writing.

Public records requests are themselves public record unless a specific exemption applies. An example of an exemption would be a request that contains personally identifiable student information, which would make the request confidential and exempt under both federal and state law. The mere fact that an individual asks that the request be kept confidential is not sufficient reason for the district to treat it as confidential.

Refer to School Board Policy 8310 "Public Records Inspection and Examination" at [Public Record Requests](#)

Requests from members of the media:

Isabel Mascareñas, Public Information Officer, Office of Strategic Communications

727-588-6501

MASCARENASI@pcsb.org

301 Fourth St. SW, Largo, FL 33770

Requests from the general public:

Kerry Michelotti, Legal Secretary, School Board Attorney's Office

michelottik@pcsb.org

727-588-6219

301 Fourth St. SW, Largo, FL 33770

COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS, STAFF AND THE PUBLIC

SCHOOL MESSENGER

PCS uses the School Messenger system to send notifications to students, staff and families via phone or email. School Messenger can be a great way for schools to communicate. To ensure that your messages are as effective as possible, please review this list of recommended best practices.



Before the Call:

- Write a script. Consider having other members of your team review the message for clarity.
- Keep your message between 30-45 seconds. Use your school's website or newsletter for a longer communication. Include a direction in your School Messenger communication about where parents can find additional information.
- When scripting your message identify:
 - Who you are.
 - School you are representing.
 - Purpose of the message.
- Mention key information first and make sure to repeat it so parents have a chance to absorb the information or write it down.
- Practice reading the message aloud.

• During the Call:

- Match the tone of your message. If you are relaying serious information, you should use a serious tone, but feel free to sound friendly and warm when appropriate.
- Vary the time and day of week you send out non-emergency calls. This will prevent your messages from becoming predictable or avoidable.
- Except in an emergency, do not schedule calls for disruptive times. Avoid calling too early (before 8 a.m.) or too late (after 9 p.m.).
- Include a way for parents to contact you if they need more information.

After the Call:

- Monitor the call reports for failed calls.
- Be open to feedback from families regarding the call and consider adjusting future messages accordingly.

Best Practices

- When in doubt about sending a School Messenger communication, ask your Area Superintendent for guidance.
- When you have dire news to communicate, such as the arrest of a teacher or a weapon on your campus, discuss your message with your Area Superintendent.
- Consider working with the district's Office of Strategic Communications when crafting a School Messenger communication, especially if the message concerns a sensitive issue.
- Update your call list to ensure that families who have left the district or have moved are no longer on the list. Determine if call failures were due to a change in a family's phone number and update your list accordingly.
- Educate families about School Messenger. Send out some form of communication letting parents know you will occasionally use School Messenger to contact them with important information.
- Encourage your families to let you know the frequency of School Messenger communication they prefer. It's best to tailor the frequency of messages to their preference.

Here are two sample messages to assist you in planning your School Messenger communication:

Sample Message 1 - special event announcement

Hello. This is Mr. Smith, the principal of Jones Middle School, calling to remind you of our upcoming open house, this Thursday, September 19th beginning at 6 pm in our school gym. This year's event will give parents a chance to meet their student's teachers and view many of our students' projects and accomplishments. We hope you will be able to attend and show your support of our school and your child's education. If you need more information, call our office at 123-4567. Again, hope to see you at our open house this Thursday at 6 pm.

Sample Message 2 - standardized testing reminder

Hello. This is Mr. McDonald, the principal of George Washington Middle School, calling to remind all our parents and students that we begin FSA testing on Tuesday, April 2nd. Due to the importance of the test, we hope that you will make every effort to have your child at school, well rested, and focused. If you have any questions, please contact the school office at 123-4567. Once again, FSA testing begins this Tuesday, April 2nd. Thank you for working with us to support your child's education.

SCHOOL MESSENGER HELP

For more comprehensive information about School Messenger, click the School Messenger link on the Pinellas County Schools Technology Wiki at <https://wiki.pcsb.org>.

For assistance building a contact list, contact the Help Desk at 727-588-6060.

For help drafting a message, contact Isabel Mascarenas at 727-588-6501.

You can also request support from School Messenger through the [School Messenger website](#) or by calling 1-800-920-3897.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Under the Florida Public Records Law, most Pinellas County School email messages are public records. Never include anything in an email message that you would be embarrassed to have everyone see.

Other important policies and guidelines:

- Never share your password with others. Doing so enables them to have access to your email and other files.
- PCS email should be used for school-related purposes and job-related duties. Employees can use the email system for occasional personal communications, in the same manner as an employee might reasonably use the district's telephone for occasional personal calls. But the system should never be used to advertise or promote personal businesses.
- Include your name, title, department/location and phone number in your email signature.
- Routinely delete unwanted messages and ones you no longer need. All emails received and sent are archived according to district policy.



- Avoid sending large attachments. Instead, place them in an online folder and provide a link.
- Keep the content and the tone of your messages professional.
- When using distribution lists, make sure the message content matches the interests and needs of the list members.
- Never send chain letters via email.
- If you receive a virus warning, contact TechHelp.

Email Do's and Don'ts

DO: Get to the point right away.

If your email must be longer than what fits on a typical screen, provide a brief summary at the top.

DO: Err on the side of brevity

Stick to the facts. Use an easy-to-read font. Refrain from including background images in your emails, and avoid unnecessary attachments.

DO: Write meaningful subject lines.

Make sure they reflect the body of your email.

DO: Let your recipient(s) know if you need a response.

Be clear with your “call to action.” Let recipients know if you need a response by a certain time.

DO: Forward judiciously and provide context for forwarded emails.

Only forward emails that are relevant to the recipient and be sure to tell the recipient why you are forwarding the message to him or her. Begin long emails with a concise summary.

DON'T: Escalate a conflict by email or use email to try to reach consensus.

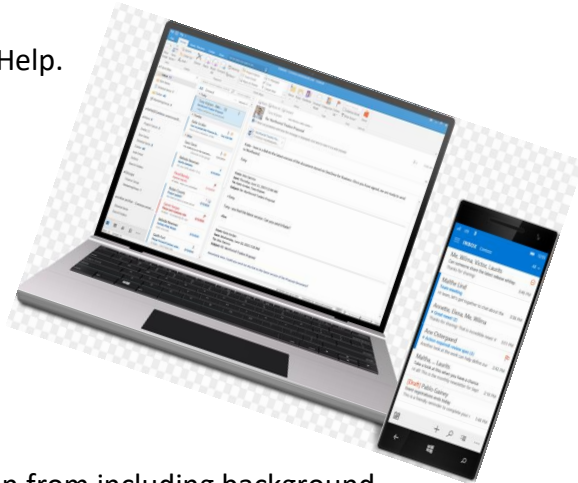
If you receive a rude or angry message, resist the temptation to respond in kind. Pick up the phone or arrange an in-person meeting to resolve any conflict.

DON'T: Hit ‘Reply All’ unless requested or expected.

Reply instead only to the originator, who can consolidate all replies and circulate if relevant.

DON'T: Write anything in an email that could come back to haunt you.

Nearly all district-related emails are subject to public records requests. Do not put anything in an email you would regret a member of the media reading.



TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE



- Before answering a phone call, discontinue any other conversation or activity that can be heard by the calling party.
- Speak clearly and distinctly in a pleasant tone.
- Use the hold button when leaving the line so the caller does not accidentally hear other conversations.
- When transferring a call, be sure to let the caller know where you are transferring them.
- If the caller has reached the wrong department/school, be courteous. Sometimes he or she has been transferred several times with a simple question.
- If you are unsure where to transfer the call, take down the person's contact information and follow up later. The caller will greatly appreciate your efforts.

GREETING THE PUBLIC

The front or central office staff is responsible for setting a positive tone for the rest of the building. They are often the first people parents or visitors meet. If you work in the office:

- Welcome visitors with a warm smile and polite greeting.
- Know the layout of the building and locations of any scheduled conference or meeting.
- Maintain a high level of professionalism.
- Think about what would make you feel welcome when visiting a school campus.
- Remember, you are responsible for creating a welcoming environment.

INVITATIONS

School Board Members

It is customary to invite School Board members to special school and district events. If you wish to invite School Board members to an event, please send *one* invitation to the School Board Office, Administration Building, 301 Fourth St. SW, Largo. Please include a detailed explanation of the event, date and time. Invitations can also be sent via Pony Mail or emailed to School Board members at board@pcsb.org. If possible, allow at least two weeks' notice of the event. If an event is planned, and invitations are forthcoming, please contact the School Board Office at 727-588-6300. Details of the event will be entered onto the School Board Calendar, giving

School Board members notice of the event. The School Board office staff will collect the responses and reply on behalf of the board members.

Superintendent

If you wish to invite the Superintendent to an event, please send your written request to the Superintendent's Office, Administration Building, 301 Fourth St. SW, Largo. Please include a detailed explanation of the event, date and time. Invitations can also be sent via Pony Mail or emailed to the superintendent directly at super@pcsb.org.

FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS

The Formal Order of Introductions is the order in which School Board Members and other dignitaries should be acknowledged.

- Federal elected officials or their designees by rank
- State officials by rank, beginning with governor, senators, representatives, etc.
- Judges
- County government officials, including county commissioners and constitutional officers
- City government officials, including mayors and city commissioners
- School Board members: Chairperson first, Vice chairperson second, remaining School Board members in alphabetical order
- Superintendent



FOLLOWING WEB GUIDELINES

DISTRICT WEBMASTER

The district webmaster is responsible for visual appearance and site functionality of the official Pinellas County Schools website. The webmaster also responsible the training, support and access of school and district content managers. The content managers support websites for schools and webpages for departments and programs. All websites sponsored and maintained by Pinellas County Schools, – including all district, school, teacher or classroom webpages for educational purposes — must be on Board affiliated servers and must adhere to the procedures and guidelines in the Communications Guide, together with School Board policy number 7540 and other applicable guidelines, policies and general law.

Any department, program or school that sets up a home page must have its own content manager appointed by the department, program or school supervisor. This person must be technology savvy and attend a Schoolwires/Blackboard Content Management System for School Websites Training Class before getting access to their website. For additional information, please contact the district's webmaster, Brian Jones at jonesbri@pcsb.org or 727-588-5172.

The content manager should communicate with the district's webmaster, who will become familiar with applicable procedures and guidelines. The content managers will assist the supervisor/principal to ensure that guidelines are adhered to and that the content of the webpages meets with the supervisor/principal's approval. The supervisor/principal is the final site-based authority regarding to webpage content and design.

The district webmaster reserves the right to revoke or disable access to webpages or websites at any time he/she determines the content to be in violation of district guidelines or in any other way poses a risk to the district's network, personnel or technological resources. School administration must contact the webmaster to inform him who will need access to school websites and act as school content manager. If a school content manager is no longer managing a school website, the schools' administrator must contact the webmaster Brian Jones at jonesbri@pcsb.org and inform him of a replacement content manager.

PROGRAMS, SCHOOLS AND CONTENT MANAGERS

Standards are established for all Pinellas County Schools webpages to maintain a consistent identity, professional appearance, ease of use and maintenance. It is the responsibility of the department, program or school content manager to obtain the necessary training for creating, troubleshooting and maintaining webpages and websites. Access to the website must be approved by school or district administration. Once approved the content manager must attend a Schoolwires/Blackboard Content Management System for School Websites Training Class before getting access to their school/program website.

Students will not have access to the Schoolwires/Blackboard Content Management System and may not act as a web content manager for the school website. Some exceptions may apply for classes/courses. Please contact the webmaster for details.

5 Steps to Planning Your Web Content



1. Understand Your Audience

Before you begin writing your web content, it's important to know your audience and understand what information they are looking for on your website. You should be able to answer these questions before you begin writing content:

- Who is your audience?
- What is the message you're trying to convey?
- What do you want your users to know or do?
- How does this content fit into Pinellas County School's strategic goals?

2. Generate Content

- Make a list of the top keywords that describe your subject. Determine what is the purpose for each page? Organize content to the needs of the user. What is the most important idea? Give your page titles and links clear names that can be easy to understand. Do not use "click here" for links. Make the link name the subject of the page you are linking to.

3. Review and Edit Your Content

- Are there any places where you could be more specific? Include data, numbers or facts.
- Are your sentences simple and easy to read?
- How long is your text? Find ways to cut extra words or delete unnecessary information.
- Delete any redundancies on your page.
- Consider how your text could be enhanced with images, videos, hyperlinks, subheadings, bullets and other lists.

4. Add Your Content to Website

- Use Schoolwires/Blackboard CMS Site Manager to add content to the website.
- Build each page using the apps provided in the system.
- Paste content as plain text.
- Check your links to make sure they're working properly
- Check grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Add subheadings, links or anchors when appropriate.
- Use bold type sparingly.
- Rarely use italics. They are hard to read on the web.
- Include informative photos or video to enhance your message only. Keep decorative images to a minimum.
- Ask someone else to review the website.

5. Maintain your web content

Once your new content is live, check and recheck it.

- Make sure links are working properly and pages are live and up-to-date.
- Designate a person responsible for maintaining and updating your content.
- All content should be free of spelling or grammatical errors.

Each webpage representing the district must contain:

- An easy-to-find link that returns visitors to the department, program or school home page.
- An easy-to-find link that sends visitors to the district's home page.
- Contact information for those in charge of the content for the department, program or school.
- A consistent look based on the Schoolwires/Blackboard template settings. This includes page content. Page background color should be white, and text should be black on all secondary pages. Homepage design may vary by template settings.

Any deliberate tampering with or misuse of district web pages, websites, network services or equipment will be referred for possible disciplinary action.

TEACHER WEBPAGES

In addition to following the guidelines and policies for web content covered on other pages in this guide, teachers are the only individuals authorized to upload files to the district or school server for their pages. They will be held responsible for all content placed on their web pages or linked from them. They should not share their user names or passwords with others.

All subject matter on classroom webpages and the related links must relate to curriculum and instruction or school-oriented activities. The content cannot be used as a forum to advance personal beliefs or causes. It should not include references or links to commercial, political, social, religious or philosophical views or organizations or groups outside the scope of curriculum and instruction.

Student attendance, grades or discipline information should NOT be posted on Schoolwires/Blackboard websites. Teachers should use Focus LMS for their secure classroom content. Please contact TIS for instruction and use of Focus LMS at 727-588-6060.

Staff web content hosted on non-district web servers

- Any staff web content containing photos, personal references or other non-educational

information is deemed to be a personal webpage or website. Staff cannot refer students or parents to such sites.

- Personal sites for staff members are not permitted on district or school servers.
- Staff webpages or websites hosted on servers other than those owned by the district that serve only educational purposes must be consistent with the district guidelines and policies that are in place for content hosted on district or school servers. Staff members may refer students and parents to these educational sites.

RESPECTING COPYRIGHT

The district webmaster does not warrant nor guarantee access to or data integrity of student-created web content. Pinellas County Schools is not responsible for student webpages or websites or any content posted thereon, except as part of the established curriculum and instruction.

United States copyright laws must be followed. Keep in mind that federal “fair use” classroom guidelines for teachers do not extend to the reposting of copyrighted material on publicly available webpages or websites.

External links

All external web links must be consistent with the District Strategic Plan, vision, mission, goals and objectives, and are subject to the approval by the department, program or school supervisor. All links are ultimately subject to review by the district’s webmaster.

Advertisements, partnerships and sponsorships

Web content may contain only small acknowledgements of, or links relating to, district partnerships or sponsorships. Advertising not connected to the district or school is not permitted unless approved by the Superintendent or the site-based administrator/principal. Such approval must be in accordance with School Board policy 9700.01. Any question concerning advertising should be brought to the attention of the district webmaster.

GUIDELINES FOR DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA

I. Introduction

The following guidelines have been created to support the use of the Pinellas County Schools Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts. In addition to this document, employees who use social media for school purposes are subject to the rules outlined in PCS School Board policy, PCS Network Acceptable Use Guidelines, PCS Communications Guide and Student Code of Conduct.

Social media usage at PCS is governed by the same policies that govern all other electronic communications. Read and understand these policies before engaging in any social media as part of your official duties. Using the outlined best practices effectively can help you protect your personal and professional reputation and comply with PCS guidelines.

II. PCS Social Media Accounts

The Office of Strategic Communications (OSC) maintains one central account for each district-wide Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram account. These district-sponsored platforms are used for sharing news and information with district-wide impact. At the Superintendent's discretion, department-based accounts for specific initiatives may be formed. Departments choosing to participate in social media, whether via the Office of Strategic Communications or on their own, must designate, at a minimum, a web content manager to maintain current and relevant content on social media sites. In addition, social media accounts must have a means to document and archive social media exchanges. This is mandatory in order to be recognized as an official PCS social media account promoted on the district's website and other district communication channels.

III. Social Media Posts

PCS employees can submit requests for posts to the district-wide Facebook and Twitter sites to the Office of Strategic Communications via email at news@pcsb.org. It is the discretion of the Office of Strategic Communications to post the requested information based on its district-wide impact or to utilize an external PCS communication vehicle. The district strives to provide site visitors and subscribers with information on major activities and initiatives, as well as "good news" from around the district.



Content will include but will not be limited to:

- Messages from the Superintendent
- Links to Newsroom articles
- Emergency alerts
- Photographs
- Videos
- Calendar events
- District initiatives
- Reminders

Posts involving students, including photos, videos, news about individual students and displays of student work, are subject to the rules outlined in School Board policy and the PCS Media Release Form, which gives parents and students the ability to sign an affirmative consent for inclusion in district media releases.

“Liking,” linking, “retweeting,” or subscribing to posts, other than the district’s, does not constitute an endorsement on the part of PCS. The posting and presence of content on social media does not reflect the district’s agreement with the content and its accuracy.

IV. Public Record

Like other forms of communication in the district, social media posts are public records. Social media posts that occur on district and school social media sites must be archived to comply with state and federal public records laws.

V. Best Practices

When using social media on behalf of Pinellas County Schools, faculty and staff should follow these best practices:

- **Honesty is the best policy.**

Always be transparent about who you are and whom you represent. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself and the district.

- **Confidentiality is of the utmost importance.**

Do not post any confidential or proprietary information about yourself or others. Never offer any confidential information.

- **Respect copyright and fair use guidelines.**

Copyright laws pertain to social media and the Internet, just as they do to other media. Do not post materials for which the district does not own the copyright. Social media postings, including those required for class purposes, are covered by the same copyright considerations as any other form of publication. Posting links to those copyrighted online resources is usually acceptable.

➤ **Be careful what you type.**

Remember you are accountable for the words you write on the Web. You cannot retract a post once it's made. Posts can easily be traced back to their author. Never use school or district social media posts to air political views, religious beliefs or frustrations.

➤ **Double-check linked content.**

When adding a hyperlink to a post, check the link. Make sure it works and that the content is appropriate for students. You are not in control of the content on those links, so be sure it is not offensive, harassing or indecent.

Guidelines for District Social Media Submissions

The following guidelines have been created to support Pinellas County Schools' use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram as district-wide, communication tools for promoting and disseminating timely, positive information about the district to external stakeholders.

Overview

- The Office of Strategic Communications (OSC) will maintain one central account for district-wide Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram communication.
- District departments are invited to submit information to the OSC for posting to these platforms.
- In some cases, the OSC may choose a different communication vehicle, such as the PCS Newsroom or the Monday Update.

Who can submit

- Please check with your principal or department administrator for the appropriate person to submit information.

How to submit

- Social Media submissions can be emailed to news@pcsb.org.

What to include in a social media submission

- Social media submissions must be detailed. If the submission concerns an event, include the date, time and location.
- Timeliness is important. Information about an event should be submitted at least a week before the event will take place.
- If photos or links accompany the text, they should be included in the email submission.

CONNECT WITH US

Public Information Officer

(727) 588-6501

MASCARENASI@pcsb.org

Strategic Communications Office

(727) 588-6122

news@pcsb.org

Multimedia & TV Ops Project Office

(727) 588-6394

clarkse@pcsb.org

Webmaster

727-588-5172

jonesbri@pcsb.org

[Facebook](#)

[Good News Submissions](#)

[IT Factor](#)

[PCS Newsroom](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

Examples of school submissions that would be appropriate for the district's social media platforms. If you have pictures, please provide them:



- McMullen Booth Elementary's kindergarten students LOVE reading. This Valentine's Day they dressed up like characters from the book "Fancy Nancy."

- The Gibbs High School Fishing Club caught a lot of fish at a recent Saturday outing at Madeira Beach Fundamental School. Madeira Beach Fundamental allows the club to use its facilities for the fun outings.



- The bonds began to form before the members of Seminole High's Girlfriends club arrived at Bear Creek Elementary. The fourth and fifth grade girls had written letters to the high schoolers introducing themselves.



USING THE PCS LOGO

The Pinellas County Schools (PCS) brand is a powerful marketing and communications asset. The purpose is to build a relationship with potential and current stakeholders.

Figure 1: Logo Option One



Figure 2: Logo Option Two



In order to ensure consistency, it is critical that careful attention is paid to the proper use of the PCS logo, typefaces, color palettes and their applications. There are two approved logo options available to suit your needs (**Figure 1 & 2**). The logo will be used on all PCS materials. The following guidance will assist you in determining the appropriate logo and application for your use:

- Print:
 - Available in black and white, 3-color and dark background option
 - Use at 300 DPI or greater
 - Use on brochures, flyers and other printed materials
- Electronic media:
 - Available in black and white, 3-color and dark background option
 - Use at 72 DPI or smaller
 - Use on PowerPoint, electronic signature and multimedia elements

The logo files are accessible through the Intranet/Staff Page, www.pcsb.org/staff. Click on the shortcut “PCS Logos and Letterhead.” Download the appropriate logo based on your needs. If an alternate file type is needed, please contact Central Printing at 727-588-6387 for assistance.

IMPORTANT LEGAL FORMS

Pinellas County Schools values the confidentiality of all students. In that spirit, the district adheres to federal and state laws that govern the release of a student's likeness, voice and certain educational information.

The district distributes two forms that comply with these laws. The forms permit or prohibit the use of specific student information or photos on the district's website or in videos, and they deal with the release of those items to the news media and to other people or organizations that request them.

The Media Release Form

Once signed, the [Media Release Form](#) is good for the entire time a student is enrolled in the district. This form gives the district or the media permission to produce, reproduce, broadcast or publish a student's name, likeness and voice. Before communicating that permission, please make sure a parent, or an adult student, has not opted out using the Opt-Out Letter.

The Directory Information Opt-Out Letter

This Opt-Out letter can be found in [The Code of Student Conduct](#). It trumps the Media Release Form if it was signed after the Media Release Form was signed.

The first portion of this form relates to the release of specific student information. The form lets a parent or adult student prohibit the release of certain information, such as name, yearbook photographs, enrollment status and dates of attendance. If a student has an Opt-Out Letter on file, adhere to the privacy requests marked on the form. The second part of the form allows a parent to prohibit the release of their child's name, address and telephone number to military recruiters and/or institutions of higher education. Although many parents don't return the form, the Opt-Out Letter is federally mandated and must be presented to families each year.

If you have any questions about the Media Release Form or the Directory Information Opt-Out Letter, please call the School Board Attorney's Office at 727-588-6219.

Helpful Telephone Numbers

Main Switchboard: 727-588-6000

Personnel: 727-588-6198

Public Information Officer: 727-588-6501

School Board Members: 727-588-6300

Strategic Communications: 727-588-6122

Strategic Partnerships: 727-588-6405

Student Assignment and Registration: 727-588-6210

TIS Help Desk: 727-588-6060

Transportation: 727-587-2020

Emergency Information

Emergency messages such as school closings due to hazardous weather, will be communicated through the district's emergency phone line: 727-588-6424 and on the district's website: www.pcsb.org.



301 Fourth St. SW
Largo, FL 33770

P.O. Box 2942
Largo, FL 33779-2942

www.pcsb.org

School Board of Pinellas County

Lisa N. Cane
Nicole M. Carr, Ph.D.
Carol J. Cook
Bill Dudley
Caprice Edmond
Laura Hine
Eileen M. Long

The School Board of Pinellas County, Florida, prohibits any and all forms of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation or disability in any of its programs, services or activities.