



2018-19 COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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Overview

The goal of the Public Information and Communications Department to help connect schools and the community by every means possible. We value open, honest communication with all stakeholders, and believe in positive working relationships with students, parents, employees, community members, business leaders and representatives of the news media. We believe that public education is stronger when all stakeholders are well-informed and involved in issues affecting Forsyth County Schools.

School and District Stakeholders

Internal Audiences

- Board of Education
- FCS Staff

External Audiences

- Families – Parents/Guardians and Students
- Media
- Community Members, Including Local Government, Alumni, Businesses, Organizations and Residents

Department Team

- Jennifer Caracciolo, Director of Public Information and Communications
- Lakeisha Mose, Communications Developer (Web, Digital and Graphic Services)
- Ben Cook, Communications Designer (Video and Graphic Services)
- Hannah Samples, Communications Facilitator (Community Relations and Events/Programs)
- Anita Seay, Communications Assistant

For staff roles and responsibilities visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/pr

Advertising in Schools

Contact: Hannah Samples

If materials meet the requirements of [Policy KJ](#), they can then be electronically submitted as a PDF to Hannah Orr for approval of placement or distribution in schools. Materials must include the name of the organization/business, contact name and phone/email address. Approved fliers will be posted at www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/fliers. Schools are not responsible for copying of materials or returning excess materials.

Board of Education Presentations

Contact: Sandi Abbott

Format

Board action and presentation templates, as well as supporting PowerPoint presentations/electronic information, must be posted in [eBoard/simbli](#) the Friday before the scheduled Board meeting. During the meeting Board members will access the information electronically, so please do not bring print materials for distribution.

PowerPoint presentations/electronic information will be available on the desktop computer located on the podium in the Board room, so do not bring the presentation on a CD, jump drive or access it from the district network. The computer in the Board room must be used for presentations. Notebook computers cannot be connected to the system.

Superior Performance Spotlight

Schools are selected monthly to be featured presenters at regular monthly meetings, immediately following Special Recognition on the agenda. Schools/departments may bring a maximum of four people to present, including the school principal/department director. Presentations must be submitted to Hannah Samples one week prior to the Board meeting.

Please follow the delivery details below. Contact [Hannah Samples](#) for scheduling.

Delivery

Presentations and/or videos should be 5 to a maximum of 10 minutes total in length, unless authorized by the Superintendent or his designee prior to the meeting. Have someone else review your presentation prior to submission to eliminate typos. Also, be familiar with the PowerPoint slide viewing and slide advance tools.

PowerPoint presentations must be no more than 10 slides, unless authorized by the Superintendent or his designee prior to the meeting. Font shall not go below 16 pt. Avoid using dark backgrounds, numerous slide transitions and sound effects. Avoid reading to the Board from either a prepared script or from your PowerPoint. Additionally, do not read from the large screen in the Board room or turn to/face the audience during the presentation. You are presenting to the Board so it is important to maintain eye contact with them.

All meetings are videotaped and broadcast on Comcast, Channel 23 (TV Forsyth), recorded for minutes, and posted on the district website for viewing. Do not speak from a seat in the audience or from the side of the podium. Please speak clearly into the microphone at the center of the podium to ensure proper voice recording.

Avoid educational jargon or acronyms. Keep language simple and direct. Business attire shall be worn at when making a presentation at a Board meeting. Jeans and shorts are prohibited. Avoid leaning on the podium when presenting.

Please use appropriate titles such as Chairperson, Superintendent, Dr., Mrs., Miss or Mr. If you are presenting an item that requires Board action, after questions from the Board please conclude your presentation by requesting the following: I would like to ask the Superintendent to make a recommendation to the Board for (action).” Do not leave the podium until the Board vote has concluded.

Board of Education Special Recognition

Contact: Sandi Abbott

Board recognition is reserved for Forsyth County students and staff members that achieve first place state or national recognition for their accomplishments. This does not include scholarships, certification of staff, the completion of state or national training programs, or donations/presentations by Partners in Education under \$30,000. Because of limited seating, groups or teams of 15 or more that qualify are asked to send five student/staff representatives to be recognized by the Board. Other members will receive congratulatory certificates.

Please complete this form at www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/recognition no later than the last Monday of the month prior to the month that you are requesting recognition. Those received after the deadline will be held until the following month. Requests submitted are not guaranteed until you receive confirmation from the Superintendent's Office. Due to space constraints, we are unable to host more than 30-35 students/staff members and their families a month.

Those invited to the Board meeting should arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. Dress is business to business casual.

Communicating with Campus Messenger

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Through Infinite Campus schools and the district can send phone, text, and email messages to parents that are ParentPortal subscribers. For district offices that would like to use this communications method, information distribution requests can be sent to the Public Information and Communications Department. NOTE: For school closings, delays or early releases, the Public Information and Communications Department will send messages to all subscribers. The department is also available to assist during school crisis situations.

Schools that select this communication method should always remember that parents with children in multiple schools could easily receive three or more ParentPortal messages a week. With this understanding, email should be the preferred distribution method, followed next by text or phone.

All messages should begin with the statement, "A message from (Insert Name of School)" or "Dear (Insert School Name) Parents/Guardians", to avoid communications issues for parents with students in multiple schools, particularly in crisis communications situations. ALWAYS select "one message limit".

ParentPortal should not be used for advertising Partners in Education, which is better communicated by the school's website or newsletter. Examples of appropriate use of ParentPortal include: school picture reminder, report card distribution, school honor event, etc. **The Public Information and Communications Department will send out a ParentPortal email and text during inclement weather and school closings/delays, so please DO NOT use access the system for this purpose.**

Email messages should be typed directly into ParentPortal (cut and paste option does not work) and kept to one paragraph (five sentences) in length. If the message exceeds this length, please post it on your website and add the url at the end of your paragraph. Example: For more information, visit (insert url). Please use www.tinyurl.com for the conversion of long urls.

DO NOT send attachments; place the item on your website and include the url in your message/create hyperlink. It is recommended that you shorten it using www.tinyurl.com

Text messages should be two sentences max.

If the phone option is selected, calls should NOT be scheduled before 9:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m. Phone recordings should be no more than two sentences and should always be read aloud by the writer prior to scheduling the call. Messages that run over one minute are not encouraged. Remember that if you select the computerized voice it will read your text differently that if you were to speak it.

Communications from the Central Office

To ensure a clear, consistent message reaches the appropriate stakeholders from Forsyth County Schools' Central Office, the following procedures are in place. Please note that district communications tools are not for use for external business and non-profit information.

eNewsletters

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Forsyth County Schools distributes *The Communicator* to all parents at the beginning of each month. Departments can submit information the last week of the prior month to aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us

Friday Notes

Contact: Sandi Abbott

For general information announcements, Central Office staff should use Friday Notes in lieu of emailing school leaders directly. Friday Notes can be submitted in Blackboard (website) by logging, and then going to site manager, department page.

Social Media

Contact: Anita Seay

Departments and offices/divisions may not establish separate social media accounts. The district has official Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts which are for postings from the district or recognition from the Georgia Department of Education. To ensure that messages are appropriately spaced, requests for postings can be submitted to aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us. Information that is related to individual schools and school programs, including staff and student recognition, should be posted on the official school social media accounts.

To determine specific days (such as Fine Arts Fridays) or #, please also contact Jennifer Caracciolo.

Website (Blackboard WCM)

Contact: Lakeisha Mose and Anita Seay

The "district news" section on Forsyth County Schools' website is for postings from the district and for recognition from the Georgia Department of Education. Information that is related to individual schools and school programs, including staff and student recognition, should be posted on the school website.

Blackboard WCM calendar post requests from district departments and offices, can be sent to aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us. Please include event date, location, time and url for more information.

Departments/staff are required to use Blackboard. Each district department has a staff member that coordinates department web pages. These staff members are responsible for the department staff directory and also monthly maintenance/upkeep using SiteImprove.

Customer Service

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Customer Service Standards: www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/service

Who We Service Image: www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/sp

The district's approach to customer service is called Positively Forsyth. We intentionally model our:

- ACTIONS: We listen, affirm, respond, and adapt.
- ATTITUDES: We are approachable, sincere, encouraging, and flexible.
- AFFILIATIONS: We promote team work through personal connections, shared responsibility, genuine feedback, and continuous growth.

Employee Campaigning

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Under Georgia Code Section 21-5-30, it is a violation of the Ethics in Government Act for state agencies to contribute, directly or indirectly, to a campaign committee, political action committee, or political organization. The government may educate voters about an issue, but it may not contribute to a campaign committee that is promoting (or opposing) the issue or a candidate, or attempting to influence the voters.

A state agency includes a school district and its employees. A contribution includes gifts, subscriptions, membership, loans, forgiveness of debts, advances or deposits of money, or anything of value. A campaign committee includes an issue-oriented campaign committee or a candidate for political office. While it clearly understood that school districts are prohibited from making direct financial contributions to a campaign committee, confusion exists regarding "indirect" contributions, which are also prohibited. Anything that is paid for, purchased or maintained with taxpayer dollars may not be used to promote (or oppose) a SPLOST/Bond Referendum, issue or candidate for political office because it may be considered a prohibited contribution. The following guidelines are recommended for school districts and school employees:

1. **Employees may only work to promote (or oppose) a SPLOST/Bond Referendum, issue or candidate for political office as private citizens on their own time.** The First Amendment absolutely guarantees each individual the right to engage in political speech. However, employees may never campaign during school hours or in their capacity as an employee after hours. This prohibits the use of an official title at any time.

2. **Only private resources can be used to promote (or oppose) a SPLOST/Bond Referendum, issue or candidate for political office.** No public fund or resources can be used to promote (or oppose) the SPLOST/Bond referendum, issue or candidate for political office. School resources include facilities, copying machines, paper, stationary, phones, audio visual equipment, computers, vehicles, and employee time.
3. **School Districts may only provide the public with objective, factual information about a SPLOST/Bond referendum or issue.** It is very important that the educational material not be biased and perceived by the public as campaign material.
4. **No campaign posters, literature or signs may be displayed or distributed on school property.** Employees may not wear campaign pins or stickers on school grounds or distribute campaign materials on school premises. This would include the distribution of PTA/O newsletters containing promotional (as opposed to educational) articles that are sent home with students.

When engaging in any activity regarding a SPLOST /Bond Referendum, issue or candidate for political office, ask yourself the following questions: “Am I in any way using school funds?” “Am I in any way giving the impression that the school district is biased?” These two questions and common sense should prevent most prohibited conduct. When in doubt, contact the Public Information and Communications Department.

Flags (U.S. and Georgia)

Contact: Anita Seay

Please note the following flag reminders for consistency among our schools:

1. Outside flags must come down EVERY night. The lights that surround flag poles are tied into the street light circuits and go out fifteen minutes after the intrusion alarm is set.
2. Flags should be flying outside when schools are open, even on days such as summer break/ when students are not present.

Replacement: We have U.S. and GA flags for your external flag poles if you need to replace yours. Please email aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us. We will also dispose your old flags for you; please send them by interoffice mail to Anita Seay.

Classroom Flags: The VFW generously donates flags for new classrooms in trailers or from new additions/construction. Please email hsamples@forsyth.k12.ga.us.

Federal/State Half-Staff Proclamations: Anita Seay will email principals and head custodians when a proclamation is made.

Reminders: [flag code](#) and [flag display](#).

Guest Speakers

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Guest speakers are valuable resources for Forsyth County students and staff. To ensure that learning goals are achieved for all students, staff members that invite guest speakers should use the [check list, agreement and guidelines](#).

Students may not be excused from class to serve as a guest speaker at another school unless approved by their principal or the principal's designee.

Inclement Weather and School Closings

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Consistent Messaging

After conferring with the Director of School Safety and Discipline and the Director of Transportation, the Superintendent will inform the Director of Public Information and Communications of the inclement weather status. Inclement weather statuses include:

- Early release
- Delayed start
- Closing
- School in session but cancelling afterschool and/or weekend activities/athletics

The superintendent tries to make the decision by 5:30 a.m. so that the broadcast media can be notified. The Director of Public Information and Communications will communicate information concerning inclement weather by:

- All District Staff Email
- FCS website and social networking sites*
- Campus Messenger email/text and eNewsletter alerts
- VM greeting at 770-887-2461
- Local and metro print, television and radio media

Communications Planning

- All messages will be distributed by the Director of Public Information and Communications.
- Communications will not be sent to staff from multiple administrators at the Central Office. Based on the audience, inclement weather messages will include student and staff times, after school programs and activities/athletics, attendance and assessments.
- Schools will not send out Campus Messenger emails and phone alerts concerning inclement weather.
- Staff questions that are not answered in the Inclement Weather/Emergency Status information should be directed to the principal/supervisor and not to Central Office staff. System level staff should direct all questions to their supervisor.

Staff Time

Due to the varying employee work calendars, staff should be familiar with the [Online School Closure Staff Expectations](#).

The recovering of lost work hours due to inclement weather will be handled directly between the staff member and their principal and/or supervisor. All time must be accounted for or made-up. If school opening is delayed, please follow the same routine/schedule as normal, but push back the start time by two hours.

* Please note that stakeholders should verify the information by checking two sources, especially when relying on social media for information. Fake social media accounts with school and/or the district names and logos violate copyright laws but unfortunately are common. FCS' official Twitter and Facebook accounts have been in existence since 2009 and therefore has a long list of tweets, followers, posts and likes, while fake accounts have significantly less posts and followers.

Logos, Branding and Hashtags

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

All district and school logos are property of Forsyth County Schools and cannot be modified or replaced by school staff. Requests for design revisions on school logos must be requested by the school principal to the Public Information and Communications Department. For branding consistency, Central Office departments must use the district logo and department/office combination artwork provided to them from the Public Information and Communications Department.

Requests for the use of school or district logos from non-staff members must be directed to the school principal/their designee or Lakeisha Mose. Downloadable official versions of the FCS logos are available on the FCS Style Sheet, posted at www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/logo

The Public Information and Communications works with a committee of principals to select the colors and mascot for new schools. Due to construction constraints, school colors and/or logos are determined early in the process.

Additionally, the use of the Forsyth County Schools or FCS name or logo, and school name or logo for social media sites/usage must be cleared through the Public Information and Communications Department.

To establish hashtags, contact Jennifer. For a list of FCS hashtags visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/social

Media Relations

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

The Public Information and Communications Department handles external communications and serves as the official source of information on behalf of FCS. The department is a primary point of contact for members of the news media requesting interviews with staff and students, or seeking information about operational or instructional matters.

Maintaining a safe, orderly educational environment on the campus and in the classroom is the most important consideration when working with the news media at the school level. Annually, parents authorize the permission of their children to be photographed, interviewed or videotaped for materials promoting FCS. This also extends to publicizing exemplary classroom projects. Student information may

appear in external or school system print and electronic publications, including yearbooks, television and the internet (website, facebook, twitter, etc). Additionally, FCS publishes the annual Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) notice to parents.

School Publicity Procedure

The Public Information and Communications Department will contact the school administrator prior to a media visit. News representatives must first check in at the school's office with their driver's license before proceeding to other areas of the school building.

With the approval of the principal, school may contact local media directly (www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/media). It is recommended that schools designate one person on staff to develop positive school-level news stories and share them with local reporters.

If a state or national media outlet contacts a school or staff member directly, or if state or national media coverage is arranged at the school-level, Jennifer Caracciolo should be contacted immediately.

If a state or nationally recognized individual/organization is visiting your school, please also contact Jennifer Caracciolo.

Interviews and Photography (Film and Videotaping)

Interviews, filming, or videotaping on district property may not occur without prior approval from the principal or the Public Information and Communications Department. Filming, videotaping, and photographing children in classrooms, on campus, or in school-sponsored events for non-instructional reality television purposes is not permitted.

Crisis Communications

During crisis/emergency situations, media access to schools and facilities may be limited to ensure student and staff safety or to maintain order. However, the Public Information and Communications Department may designate an area on school property to conduct news briefings on the crisis or emergency situation. In these situations, normal access procedures for media and other visitors may be suspended in the interest of student and staff safety and an orderly emergency response.

During crisis/emergency situations Jennifer Caracciolo and/or the school principal will serve as the spokesperson.

ClipMail

The Public Information and Communications Department publishes *ClipMail* weekly by email to district and school administrators. *ClipMail* is a clipping service that features links to district news items posted at www.forsyth.k12.ga.us, and summaries and links to local, state and national news articles featuring FCS and its schools. Staff can email aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us to be added to the distribution list.

Naming Schools and Portions of School Campus

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

The Board of Education recognizes that the official name selected for a facility is a vital factor in the public image of the community. The Board is responsible for the naming and renaming of facilities, and portions of facilities, including buildings, grounds, stadiums, athletic fields, annexes, media centers,

rooms, etc. The word “Academy” is reserved for high school alternative education or instructional programs that are open to all that reside in the county. Names of living people will not be used. The Board shall make the final decision for the naming of all facilities and portions of all facilities.

Procedure for a Naming Portion of a School Campus

The principal should prepare a written proposal to the Director of Communications summarizing school recommendations for the proposed name. After review, the Superintendent will make a recommendation to the Board of Education.

Name proposals should be based on the following criteria:

- The historic or significant reference to the geography of the area where the school is located;
- To honor a distinguished deceased person who:
 - Has made an extraordinary contribution to the school and/school district;
 - Demonstrated a record of distinction in their respective field; evidenced by a variety of outstanding accomplishments, awards, leadership and service roles in their profession and community;
 - Demonstrated a positive role modeling and commitment to excellence.

Proposals shall include:

- The rationale for the recommendation.
- Biographical and background information regarding the proposed name.
- Attributes/qualities or other relevant information specific to the recommendation.

Newsletters and App

*Contact – District Newsletters: Jennifer Caracciolo
App: Lakeisha Mose*

FCS publishes two electronic newsletters:

- *The District Newsletter (known prior as The Communicator)* was launched in 2007 and provides general system information. It is emailed the first week of each month.
- [**Board Briefs**](#) was also introduced in 2007 and highlights Board of Education work sessions and regular meetings. It is emailed the Friday following each regular Board meeting.

Schools are encouraged to produce electronic newsletters to facilitate communication with parents and other stakeholders. The district has a limited number of Smore accounts available for school creation and distribution. Visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/enewsletters for information.

The district also provides a free app on iTunes and Google Apps. Search for Forsyth County Schools GA.

Notification for Student or Staff Passing and/or Severe Accident Outside of School

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo or Debbie Smith

- Step 1:** The school administrator or Central Office administrator contacts the Director of Public Information and Communications OR Director of Student Support Services with the name(s) of all staff or student(s) involved
- Jennifer Caracciolo: 770-757-3357 or jcaracciolo@forsyth.k12.ga.us
 - Debbie Smith: 770-757-4035 or dsmith@forsyth.k12.ga.us
- Step 2:** Regardless of who received the notice first, Jennifer and Debbie notify each other
- Step 3:** Jennifer notifies Superintendent, Board of Education, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Associate Superintendents, and Principal/Department Head
Debbie notifies Director of School Safety, Health Services Facilitator (notifies School Nurse), School Counselor, and Social Workers
- Step 4:** Jennifer assists Principal/Department Head with communication to staff members, parents and students
Debbie and the Crisis Support Team assist Principal/Department Head with emotional and mental support

Notes:

- For staff or student accidents that occur during the school day contact the Director of School Safety first.
- Jennifer will gather the enrollment history of the student and the information on the siblings of the students and/or the children of the staff member if enrolled in a FC school, and contact the principal of these impacted schools and/or all district principals.
- Media inquiries should be contacted to Jennifer.

Open Records Requests

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

The Public Information and Communications Department is designated by the Superintendent to handle all Open Records requests. Due to the legal time constraints involved in Open Records Law, all such requests shall be immediately forwarded to, Jennifer Caracciolo, 1120 Dahlonega Highway, Cumming, GA 30040. When a staff member receives an Open Records Request it should be immediately scanned and emailed to Jennifer Caracciolo or faxed to her attention at (678) 965-5028. Requests must be responded to within three business days of receipt, so time is essential to legally comply.

Process

In cases where a member of the public has a right to inspect, have access to extracts, or ask for copies from public records or documents, such person shall have the right of access to the records only while in the presence and under the control of the custodian of such records. All examination of records and documents shall be done under the supervision of the custodian of the records, who shall have the right to enforce reasonable rules governing the work.

The work shall be done in the location specified by the custodian. Charges for making photographs or reproductions of the records or documents will be calculated at \$.10 per copy and a per hour charge for

the employee supervising the review of records. In addition, a reasonable charge may be collected for search, retrieval, and other direct administrative costs for complying with a request and provided to the requestor prior to the start of said work, along with an estimated timeframe for the completion of the work. The hourly charge shall not exceed the salary of the lowest paid full-time employee who, in the discretion of the custodian of the records, has the necessary skill and training to perform the request. There shall be no charge for the first quarter hour.

Staff Information

Additionally, as a result of the 2000 Georgia General Assembly, in order to protect confidentiality rights of all employees, no record or document shall be released with information which would not be construed to be an open record pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-18-70. The following personal information shall not be disclosed unless otherwise excepted by law or written consent of the subject employee: home mailing and email address, home telephone number, social security number, insurance information, medical information, mother's birth name, day and month of birth, credit card or debit card numbers, bank account information, financial data or information, confidential job performance evaluations and reference checks of employees. When responding to request for information, the above items shall be redacted from the materials provided.

Student Information

Ga. Code § 50-18-72(a)(1) specifically excludes from public disclosure those records that are required by the federal government to be kept confidential, such as provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). Parent and student addresses may not be released under FERPA, which includes the release of such information to PTA/O or school vendors. The PPRA requires a school district not to release personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing unless the district has directly notified parents of students with an opportunity for their child to opt out. FCS has not provided parents with this notice and chooses not to do so. For more information on FERPA and PPRA, visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/ferpa

Partners in Education and Education Foundation

Contact: Hannah Samples

The Public Information and Communications Department facilitates the Partners in Education (PIE) program, which is a joint partnership with the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce. Schools and departments should designate one staff member annually to serve as PIE contact, who will work with Hannah Samples to recruit, maintain and enhance the school's PIE program.

Details concerning PIE, including recruiting information for schools and annual award nominations, are located at www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/pie

The Forsyth County Education Foundation is a component of the PIE program. Created to support innovative teaching and increased student achievement, it is led by Governing Committee members. For more information visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/foundation

Staff Expectations for Communicating Electronically

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Acceptable Communications Methods

District Email and Phone - Use of District email and phone is always 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 system (your@forsyth.k12.ga.us address) and district-provided phone numbers and extensions should be used. Please refer to the Responsible Use Procedure for best practice guidelines in its use. It is recommended that phone and email messages be returned within two business days. Additionally, when emailing a large group, especially parents, please place addresses in the bcc line.

itslearning – Within itslearning, staff can communicate directly with students and parents regarding information related to grades, attendance, comments, assignments, and much more. In itslearning staff can provide some of the same types of communication that public social media networks provide while also offering access to curriculum and learning resources beyond the classroom walls. itslearning allows for effective online learning by supporting online discussions, secure chat rooms, online delivery of assessments, and the sharing of documents, images and other media, all in a secure, password protected environment.

Blackboard WCM Websites and YouTube– Within Schoolwires, teachers are provided subject or curriculum team, and school-sponsored activities pages available to share information with students and parents. The website also has the ability to post blogs, surveys, calendar items, and news. The Public Information and Communications Department has established YouTube accounts for all schools. These are to be used for video posting.

Social Media for Instructional/Professional Purposes – Any content staff members publish, pictures they post, or dialogue they maintain, whether in a professional Facebook, professional Twitter, a blog, a discussion thread or other website should never compromise the professionalism, integrity and ethics in their role as a FCS 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. Separating personal and professional accounts is strongly encouraged.

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 can easily be misinterpreted by a parent. 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, Instant Messaging and Phone Numbers – FCS employees should never use personal email accounts to communicate with students about school matters.

Important Reminders: Social Media Sites for Personal Purposes

NOTE: FCS staff should not post student photos, work or videos on their personal social media accounts/websites. Parents/guardians may decline the inclusion of student photographs under FERPA and student publicity consent is only for school/district use.

Staff members presently using social media sites, such as Facebook, 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. Additionally, FCS staff should not post photographs of students on their personal accounts. The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated. Personal activity on social media sites should occur during non-work hours.

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram)

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

The Public Information and Communications Department has selected four social media vehicles for district and school staff to communicate with stakeholders: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

No Separate Accounts

To keep a unified district/central office brand, not separate departments, offices or divisions with individual programs or initiatives, we house everything under the district social media accounts but [differentiate with hashtags](#). This helps to keep the “big but small feel” that we are known for and allows maximum exposure since the district accounts are established with more followers than any start-up account. Contact Jennifer for establishing hashtags.

FCS staff should use professional, not personal accounts.

The Public Information and Communications Department has created Facebook and Twitter pages for all Forsyth County schools, which are managed with the district accounts through Hootsuite to allow for consistent messaging to all schools. **Schools may not link/claim their Facebook page to Hootsuite.**

Instagram pages may be created by schools; please send login information to Anita Seay.

For branding consistency, Public Information and Communications has created the pages with:

- An established name and shortened url*
- The school logo as the profile picture*
- Basic school information
- Comments policy*
- Established settings*

**School-level page administrators may not modify these items.*

School principals may manage the Facebook and Twitter pages and/or they can designate other staff members to lead and/or share this responsibility. Schools may not remove pre-established administrative rights of Public Information and Communications staff members from their pages nor may schools claim accounts through Hootsuite.

A list of school staff members that have administrative rights to school media sites must be submitted to aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us at the start of each school year. Jennifer Caracciolo can assist with training and also adding new users to the accounts.

When posting information on Facebook or Twitter, schools staff are encouraged to post notes, photos, links, videos, etc. that highlight or showcase your students, staff and schools. A good rule of thumb is if the information is posted on the school website, and included in school newsletters or announcements, then it can be replicated on social media sites. Please use www.tinyurl.com to shorten urls prior to posting. And note, that all school facebook pages are set up to feed to school twitter pages so be mindful of the 140-word count for twitter.

When responding to comments on social media, please share information but do not engage in debate, especially with parents at your school. Transitioning the concern to a phone call is recommended. Posts that are harmful to an individual or untruthful may be deleted by the site administrator.

If a school imposter social media site is discovered, please contact aseay@forsyth.k12.ga.us for removal.

For a list of active FCS Facebook and Twitter sites visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/social

Teacher of the Year

Contact: Hannah Samples

Candidates for Forsyth County's Teacher of the Year program should be an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher who:

- plans to continue in active teaching status
- inspires students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn
- possesses the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues
- plays an active and useful role in the community as well as in the school; and
- is poised and articulate

Classroom teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible for FCS' TOTY. This includes special education, physical education, ITS, art and music teachers, and media specialists. Counselors are not eligible, but are recognized as part of the Counselor of the Year program. Candidates for the FCS TOTY should have two or more years of experience, have a full time teaching position and spend the majority of their time teaching students in a classroom setting. Supervisory and administrative responsibilities should be of secondary consideration.

Prior school and county-level TOTYs must wait two years before being eligible for participation in the program. For more information and the TOTY timeline visit www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/toty

Video (YouTube)

Contact: Lakeisha Mose

Staff can upload video using the YouTube Channel created for each school for communication and instruction. Each school has one designated YouTube Manager who has rights to upload video. If music is used on a video posted on YouTube, schools must use royalty free recordings or have received permission from the copyright holder to comply with copyright laws. Please refer to the Responsible Use Procedure for best practice guidelines for video use.

To schedule a training session contact Lakeisha Mose.

Visitor Photos and Videos

Contact: Jennifer Caracciolo

Parents/guardians may decline the inclusion of student photographs under the FERPA Directory Information Notice (www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/ferpa). Therefore, visitors are prohibited to take photos and videos, which includes posting on personal social media/websites, of students they are not the parent/guardian of while on school property/at school events.

Website (Blackboard Web Community Manager (WCM))

Contact: Lakeisha Mose

The Public Information and Communications Department manages the district and school websites through Blackboard Web Community Manager (WCM), prior known as Schoolwires. All schools and district departments **MUST** use Blackboard WCM for website hosting and content management. Designs and layouts are preset by the Public Information and Communications Department for district consistency and branding.

District departments may not remove the left-hand navigation from their department web pages and department staff directories are updated by the Public Information and Communications department.

Writers/posters to websites **MUST** be employees of FCS. All schools and departments must designate one staff member annually as the web manager of the school or department site. Principals can designate additional staff, including themselves, to have news posting privileges on the school home page. Technical service requests should be submitted to the school web manager, who is authorized to contact Blackboard WCM, while district departments should contact Lakeisha Mose. The Public Information and Communications Department provides Blackboard WCM training for staff members that serve as web managers, as well as monthly reports for needed updates, such as broken links, misspelled words and ADA accessibility.

Logos, Graphics and Font

Each school website must prominently display the school logo. All school logos are property of Forsyth County Schools and cannot be modified or replaced by school staff. Requests for design revisions must be requested by the school principal to the Public Information and Communications Department.

To ensure that school and district websites are in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA as well as the U.S. Section 508 standards, all images must have alternate text; no images of text or blinking images and animations are allowed; video and audio files must have meaningful descriptions, color choices must have the proper contrast (black font on a white background), and links must be descriptive (no “click here”, use “view (give title) for more...”).

Employee Expectations

Within Blackboard WCM teachers are provided subject or curriculum team, and school-sponsored activities pages available to share information with students and parents. The website also has the ability to post blogs, surveys, calendar items, and news.

Information must be current. Writers/posters should review pages on a weekly basis and remove outdated information or broken links. At a minimum, websites should be updated at the start of each new school year and at the conclusion of each of the 9 week grading periods (including prior to summer break).

Editors must follow the Responsible Guidelines and information on the web must relate to academics or administration of other district-authorized activities. Commercial, for-profit or political content and links are prohibited unless the business is a school or system approved Partner in Education.

Links to external web pages that are educational in nature or connected to FCS, such as athletic booster clubs and PTA/Os, are permitted on school and district websites. Links or buttons to athletic booster club and PTA/O fundraisers are not permitted. External sites must be reviewed by the school, the staff member that adds the link to the page, or the Public Information and Communications Department. FCS is not liable for links to any sites externally hosted or managed.

Personal information about staff and students, including personal businesses, and links to staff or student’s “personal” web pages/blogs/wikis/social media sites are not permitted on the school or district website.

Student Information, Work, and Pictures:

Web pages hosted by FCS may contain a reference to a student if publicity consent has been given by parents (see Infinite Campus to verify). This includes references to students in photographs, videos or in text. If elementary schools decide to not use a student’s full name, then it is recommended that the schools use the student’s first name and last initial on web pages.

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.