

# Cincinnati Federation of Teachers

## Cincinnati Federation of Office Professionals



Local 1520 | AFT | OFT | AFL-CIO

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### Important COVID Update for CFT/CFOP Members

#### Monday, August 3, 2020 Board of Education Meeting.

This evening at 6:30 pm, the Cincinnati Board of Education will meet to make a final recommendation on how to reopen our schools to students later this month. Your CFT leaders have been talking with the Board and Administrators over the last month on how and when schools can safely welcome students back. The Ohio Health Department continues to rate Hamilton County as “Red”, described as a “Public Health Emergency”, with a “very high exposure and spread” of COVID-19. In the City of Cincinnati conditions are likely worse. CFT has repeatedly told the Board and Superintendent that **under these conditions, it is unsafe for students, school staff and their families to reopen schools to students, even with the blended learning model currently planned.** We remain optimistic that our Board will make the right decision to protect CFT/CFOP members, students, our families and community.

*We encourage all of our members to tune in remotely to the Board’s meeting. If you can, sign up to be heard on this important subject.* Here is the link: [add Link]

### Demonstration / Protest

Some of you may have heard about a demonstration at the Ed Center being planned during the Board’s meeting. **THIS IS NOT A CFT SPONSORED EVENT.** We do not encourage our members to gather in a large group and engage in activities that could be dangerous to the health of participants and undermine our message to the Board, or our partnerships with parents. We are working *together* with CPS to find the safest options as we start a new school year. *We encourage all of you to stay home and tune into the Board meeting remotely tonight.*

### Tread Carefully on Social Media

You may have seen the Superintendent’s recent correspondence warning about the use of social media by district employees. CPS has recently scheduled a discipline hearing for a teacher based on social media posts. CFT Field Representative and Attorney Don Mooney provides the following guidance on your rights and risks in using social media.

Public employees have the same First Amendment rights that every citizen has to express their views on matters of general public interest. But teachers and other district employees can be disciplined when comments on social media or in the press relate to their jobs. Sometimes it's not easy to tell the difference, so here are some suggested DO's and DON'Ts:

**DO:**

- Limit your public comments on Facebook, Twitter or to the press to issues and topics that are in the news, or that are of general interest to individuals beyond your school community. (Example: "the spread of COVID-19 must be stopped before we can open schools safely", or "We all need to wear masks and socially distance to open schools safely".)
- Make your public comments respectfully and civilly.
- To avoid any confusion, make it clear that these are your own opinions, not those of the school district.

**DON'Ts:**

- Don't use any CPS logos or electronic platforms when you make comments on social media.
- Don't publicly refer to or criticize practices at your school or in the district that you find objectionable. (Example: "I teach at CPS and our cleaning staff is not doing a good enough job sanitizing classrooms.")
- Don't publicly attack district administrators, your supervisors, principal or other school employees.
- Don't imply that you are speaking on behalf of the District or a group of district employees without their specific authorization.
- Avoid public social media attacks or feuds with other district employees.
- If contacted by the press to discuss something that happened at your school, make no comment until and unless you contact the district's media relations office and receive authorization.

Feel free to contact Don Mooney ([dmooney@cft-aft.org](mailto:dmooney@cft-aft.org)) if you need more detailed guidance.