



# Standards and Style | **Manual**

A CCSD MANUAL OF STYLE, GRAMMAR,  
USAGE, AND FORMATTING

PUBLISHED BY CCSD COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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The Clark County School District Standards and Style Manual is published  
by the

**Clark County School District  
Community and Government Relations Division**

Joyce Haldeman, Associate Superintendent  
5100 West Sahara Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89146

**CCSD Grammar Standards Committee**

**Kellie Ballard**  
Coordinator, Program Office  
Technology and Information Systems Services Division

**Elizabeth Carrero**  
Secretary to the Superintendent, Office of the Superintendent

**Hilary Engel**  
Director II, HCM-Team 5 Support, Human Resources Division

**Amanda Fulkerson**  
Chief Communications Officer

**Edith Helm**  
Executive Legal Secretary, Office of the General Counsel

**Kirsten Searer**  
Chief of Staff

**Cynthia Sell**  
Director, Strategic Projects, Community and Government Relations Division



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**DISCLAIMER:** The *Clark County School District Standards and Style Manual* standardizes the District’s written publications. As an education institution, employees can demonstrate behaviors we seek to instill in our students each day. By adhering to the written standards, we gain the credibility and respect of students, parents, and the community as a whole. Many CCSD employees have excellent grammar and punctuation skills, as well as thoughtful questions and great ideas. The writers of this booklet invite you, as a CCSD employee, to work with us to make this resource a valuable tool for all employees. Please join us in the *Standards and Style* conference located in InterAct™ under District Link. Together, we can create an environment where students, parents, employees, and the community foster achievement.



## Why Have Standards?

Clark County School District educators know standards are key to achieving credibility in many areas of instruction. The same is true in the use of standards for business communications. Whether an employee is sending a thank-you letter, newsletter, e-mail, or other essential information, the manner in which information is communicated reflects on our District. In the Clark County School District, having the periods and commas in the right place, using proper spelling and word choice, and having a consistent format for letters and memos, demonstrates to parents, students, and the community that Clark County School District employees are committed to excellence.

The *Standards and Style Manual* is a condensed reference tool. It is designed to provide CCSD employees with the essential information necessary to increase the clarity and effectiveness of all District communications. For in-depth information on proper formatting and grammar usage, the *Gregg Reference Manual* is the official guide for CCSD business communication. Where ambiguities exist in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, this manual seeks to clarify the standard adopted by the District.

## The Basics

Regardless of the type of publication, all printed and written materials must include correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Other required elements are:

- Use an easy to read font, such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman
- Clark County School District logo
- Contact information of the area service center, performance zone, division, department, or school creating the item
- Page numbers for business letters and memos that are more than a single page (Be sure to check out pages 11 or 13 in this guide for proper procedures on how to format continuation pages)

Recommended items to consider in your published materials:

- Area service center or division name for schools or departments
- District, area service center, division, or school mission statement or motto
- CCSD Web site or school Web site
- List of Clark County School District Board of Trustees (see page 7)
- Name and title of the principal, academic manager, associate superintendent, division head, or CCSD superintendent

- Staff names
- School community partners
- Document control identification

*In the Clark County School District, nearly all forms of communication are business communications. The exceptions are creative writings and some materials prepared for broadcast or other forms of publications, such as press releases that require adherence to Associated Press style.*

## Referring to the School District

As simple as it sounds, we are the Clark County School District. Knowing how to properly reference our district will avoid ambiguity. The same is true when referring to an area, division, department, or school.

- When referencing the Clark County School District, use the full title, Clark County School District, on the first mention. After the first reference, you may use CCSD or District.
- References to area service centers, performance zones, divisions, and departments must include the full name of the location on the first reference in all formal correspondence. After the first reference, you may use the appropriate term, such as school, division, department, or abbreviated school name.
- When referencing schools, it is necessary to use the complete official name of the school in the first mention. Subsequent references of schools named for individuals can be modified by using the last name of the namesake followed by the identifier of elementary (ES), middle (MS), junior high (JHS), or high school (HS).
- Schools that are easily confused with another CCSD school – one that shares a similar namesake (Hal Smith ES, Helen M. Smith ES, J. D. Smith MS) – must use the full name in all official correspondence and districtwide publications.
- When compiling a list of schools, separate them by grade level and use the identifier first:
  - Elementary: Bendorf, Booker, Lake, Thompson
  - Middle or Junior High: Bailey, Harney, Orr
  - High: Eldorado, Legacy, Sierra Vista



*Many Clark County school names honor individuals; therefore, it is important to utilize the proper identifier or the abbreviation (ES, MS, JHS, HS) in all references to the school.*

*Incorrect: Helen M. Smith will host its annual carnival tomorrow at 4 p.m. (Unless Helen Smith, the namesake, is hosting the event, this statement is incorrect.)*

*Correct: Helen M. Smith Elementary School will host its annual carnival tomorrow at 4 p.m.*

*Capitalize the word “District” when substituting the word for the full reference of the Clark County School District. In all additional uses other than at the beginning of a sentence, “district” is lowercase.*

***In the following examples, “District” substitutes for the proper noun, Clark County School District. The use of CCSD is also an appropriate substitute. NOTE: the use of “our” or “the” would be eliminated if the proper noun or abbreviation were to be used.***

- *Our District lowered its dropout rate by 6 percent this year.*
- *The District announced the names of schools opening this year.*
- *Increasing student achievement requires several steps by the District.*

***In these examples, “district” is used as a common noun. Therefore, it is not capitalized.***

- *Seven new schools will open this year in his district.*
- *Our plan for increasing student achievement districtwide involves several steps.*
- *Several notable boundaries identify the commissioner’s district.*
- *That school district lowered its dropout rate by 6 percent this year.*

***The following examples demonstrate how to replace Clark County School District with CCSD.***

- *The Clark County School District (CCSD) was the only large urban school district to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) two years in a row under the federal No Child Left Behind mandate. CCSD was also the only large urban district in the Council of the Great City Schools to have made Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for four years in a row.*
- *In the Clark County School District (CCSD), over 1,850 CCSD employees have participated in the online survey.*



## Referring to the School Board

The Clark County School District Board of Trustees is an elected group of community members who serve overlapping four-year terms. Each member represents a specific geographic region of Clark County, which is referred to as District A, B, C, D, E, F, or G.

- The first reference of this collective group is to be written as the Clark County School District Board of Trustees.
- Subsequent references **in the same document** can be made as the Board, the Trustees, or the Board of Trustees. It may also be appropriate to reference the group as the Board of School Trustees; however, you will want to use caution not to reference them as the Clark County School District Board of School Trustees or CCSD Board of School Trustees, which uses the word “school” twice. Regardless of the term you choose, be sure to capitalize the subsequent reference when using the substitute as a proper noun.
- When referencing Trustees, without their position titles, list their names in alphabetical order according to their last names. When using the trustee names and titles, list their names in proper hierarchy, such as president, vice president, clerk, or member.
- When referring to a single trustee, include his or her name, position on the Board (president, vice president, clerk, or member) and the geographic district represented.
- Subsequent references to individual trustees in the same document are written with the appropriate title (president, vice president, clerk, or trustee). Be sure to capitalize the subsequent reference when using the substitute, as the word is considered a proper noun.

*The Clark County School District Board of Trustees is a single entity elected to serve the Clark County community. The Board does not “belong” to the Clark County School District. Any reference such as CCSD’s Board of Trustees or Clark County School District’s Board of Trustees is an inaccurate reference.*



*For the purpose of clarity, the following examples may help you as you reference the Clark County School District Board of Trustees in your business letters or memos, invitations, and publications:*

***(Please note the examples shown reflect the names of the 2013 Trustees)***

***Referencing Trustees in alphabetical order:***

*Lorraine Alderman*

*Erin E. Cranor*

*Carolyn Edwards*

*Chris Garvey*

*Patrice Tew*

*Deanna L. Wright*

*Linda E. Young*

***Referencing Trustees in order of their position on the Board:***

*Carolyn Edwards, President, Clark County School District, District F*

*Lorraine Alderman, Vice President, Clark County School District, District D*

*Deanna L. Wright, Clerk, Clark County School District, District A*

*Erin E. Cranor, Member, Clark County School District, District G*

*Chris Garvey, Member, Clark County School District, District B*

*Patrice Tew, Member, Clark County School District, District E*

*Linda E. Young, Member, Clark County School District, District C*

*NOTE: It is appropriate to eliminate “Clark County School District” in the titles used above when the references to trustees are made in internal correspondence or when your correspondence clearly communicates you are referring to Clark County School District trustees.*

***Referencing a single Trustee in a document – first mention:***

*Carolyn Edwards, President, Clark County School District Board of Trustees, District F, will be the keynote speaker at the ceremony.*

***Referencing a single Trustee in a document after the title has been provided:***

*Trustee Edwards asked if the data shown in the presentation included the number of students who received a certificate of attendance.*



**OR**

*President Edwards asked if the data shown in the presentation included the number of students who received a certificate of attendance.*

*Dr. Smith explained to President Edwards that the data shown in the presentation included the number of students who received a certificate of attendance.*

*NOTE: “President” is capitalized in both examples. The words “member” or “trustee” would also be capitalized in this sentence, if used.*

***Referencing the Board of Trustees as a collective group:***

*The Clark County School District Board of Trustees is an elected group of community members who serve overlapping four-year terms.*

*Regular meetings of the Board of School Trustees are held the second and fourth Thursday of each month.*

## Standards for Using E-mails, Memos, or Letters

The use of electronic communications is increasing at a rapid pace. In the past, the standard for using e-mails, memos, and letters was to use e-mail for informal or casual conversations between colleagues or other members of the community. When conducting formal business, the standard was to use memos when addressing internal CCSD audiences and letters for official business conducted with parents, community members, vendors, etc. outside of the District.

Today, e-mail is an acceptable and efficient means of conducting both informal and formal business; however, staff must use proper standards based on the nature of the business – formal or informal.

Employees must also be diligent in using proper procedures for record retention and transmittal of information electronically. CCSD Regulation 3621, Section II, Subsection B, states:

Every public employee who uses e-mail to transmit or receive information in the course of conducting District business must be trained and knowledgeable about his/her responsibilities for managing public records. All information sent via e-mail should be prepared under the assumption that:

1. Information sent via e-mail is not confidential.
2. The targeted recipient may not be the final recipient.
3. The information sent may be determined to be, and maintained as, a public record by another party.

**For additional information on record retention and requirements for classifying e-mail, please review CCSD Regulation 3621.**

**The following are CCSD standards for formal e-mails:**

- The “subject” of the e-mail should summarize the topic of the communication.
- The “To” and “cc” sections should clearly indicate the recipients of the e-mail.  
NOTE: Some e-mails, especially those communications mailed to individuals outside of InterAct™, do not clearly indicate the recipient. Example: heyyou@yahoo.com. You may need to create a “New Contact” in InterAct™ and label it with the person’s name.
- Follow the standards for business letter and memo writing located in this manual, omitting the required headings and copy notations (this occurs as you address the e-mail).
  - Use proper spelling, word usage, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, block style with a line between paragraphs, etc.
  - Choose an easy-to-read, dark colored font (Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman font in black or blue color is recommended).
  - Use a greeting that is appropriate for the relationship you have with the recipient. Example: Trustee Clark, Dr. Hunt, or Mr. Evans.
  - Include a complimentary closing (Thank you, Sincerely, Best regards)
  - End with the sender’s (your) name, title, department or school, and work location address and phone number.
- In many circumstances, it is appropriate to compose a business letter for external audiences or a memo for internal recipients (using the CCSD standards) and then attach the letter or memo to the e-mail. Templates for CCSD letterhead and memos are available online at [ccsd.graphics.net](http://ccsd.graphics.net).

Informal e-mail must also include proper spelling, word usage, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, a readable font and color, etc. However, the rules for using a greeting and complimentary closing, as well as ending with your title, and address are relaxed. While standards continue to evolve, “email” or “e-mail” are both acceptable in CCSD written communications.

When responding to an e-mail, regardless of whether your e-mail is formal or informal, **your response should be at the top of any previous correspondence**. Using the quote feature is recommended to highlight the full body or relevant section of the e-mail(s) sent. This allows the reader to quickly reference the thread of conversation. The order of threads should appear with the most recent correspondence at the top and the original content at the bottom of the e-mail. When it is more effective to provide answers to questions without having to retype questions, it is acceptable to provide a response at the top of the e-mail that says, “Please see my response in blue” (or another easy-to-read color).

Employees are reminded that e-mail is **not** private, regardless of whether classified as informal or formal, and may be a public record subject to the laws governing public records. Using electronic resources, including e-mail, shall be consistent with the purpose, mission, and goals of the Clark County School District and used for educational and professional purposes. All use must be in compliance with the CCSD Acceptable Use Policy found on InterAct™ Help Desk/Internet Use and Safety/AUP.

### Helpful Tips When Composing Electronic Communications

Because e-mail is often used to communicate quickly and efficiently between family and friends, some people tend to forget the proper etiquette for polite communication. Below are some important reminders:

- Never compose a message while you are angry. It is better to delay the response than to use a tone that could hurt you or others. Remember, once you hit the send button, you may not be able to get the e-mail back.
- Do not use all capital letters as this is often interpreted as shouting. Equally important is not to use all lowercase, bold, underlined, or italicized sentences in your writing. Instead, use these techniques to draw your reader’s attention to critical information.
- Instead of indenting the opening line of each paragraph, leave one blank line between paragraphs.
- Resist the temptation to reply to e-mails when a reply is not necessary. Yet, remember to reply when a confirmation of your understanding of the message is important.
- Do not include anything in your e-mail that you do not want someone else to see. In cyberspace, confidentiality can be compromised.

## Formatting Business Letters

- Place the date three lines (4 hard returns) under the letterhead.
- Skip six lines (7 hard returns).
- Type the full name of the recipient and include their title (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss).
- Follow with the recipient's professional title on the next line (if there isn't a title or affiliation, such as when writing to a parent, omit).
- Type the organization/affiliation on the next line.
- Place the street address, without using abbreviations, on the next line (include the suite or apartment number).
- Type the city, state, and zip code on the next line.
- Skip one line (2 hard returns).
- Place the salutation, personal title, last name, and a colon on the next line (always use title case).
- Skip one line (2 hard returns).
- Begin your letter, flush on the left side of the page using 1-inch margins with either 11 point or 12 point Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman font. All letters are single-spaced. Leave one blank line between paragraphs (2 hard returns). Do not indent paragraphs and do not use full justification.
- Skip one line (2 hard returns).
- Use a complimentary closing (Sincerely, Best regards, Thank you [always use sentence case]).
- Skip three lines (4 hard returns) to allow for the writer's signature.
- Type the writer's/signatory's name.
- Place the writer's/signatory's professional title on the line below his or her name.
- Skip one line (2 hard returns) and choose from the following based on the situation that applies:
  - Initials of typist in lowercase (reference initials)
  - Enclosure notation, such as attachments
  - Copy notation, to be a single "c" listed in alpha order based on last name (not by position or by title)
- If a letter is more than a single page, use the proper procedure for continuation pages. See GRM 1366.

DIVISION NAME, *Department Name*

5100 W. SAHARA AVE. • LAS VEGAS, NV 89146 • (702) 799-1080 • FAX (702) 799-1082



BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Terri Janison, President  
 Carolyn Edwards, Vice President  
 Dr. Linda E. Young, Clerk  
 Chris Garvey, Member  
 Larry P. Mason, Member  
 Sheila Moulton, Member  
 Deanna L. Wright, Member

Dr. Walt Rulffes, Superintendent

March 31, 2011 ←----- Date – 3 lines (4 hard returns) under the letterhead

↓  
 6 lines (7 hard returns)

Mrs. Jolene Clark ←----- Name of Letter Recipient – 6 lines under the date

Youth Development Director ←----- Title

Nevada Youth’s Demonstration Project ←----- Affiliation

17100 North Bahamas Drive ←----- Street Address (no abbreviations)

Las Vegas, NV 89146 ←----- City, State (2-letter abbreviation), Zip Code

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

Dear Mrs. Clark: ←----- Salutation, Title, Last Name, Colon (no comma, period, or semicolon)

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

Thank you for the excellent demonstration and discussion you held with our fourth-grade students yesterday. From what I observed, and each of the teachers reported, you grabbed the children’s attention right from the start, and your hands-on reptile exhibition made lasting impressions.

←-----  
 1-inch margin

-----→  
 1-inch margin, not flush, nor justified

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

The time you spent in each classroom uncovered more excitement than a single textbook could ever bring to light. The chapter on reptiles in our science book is always a fascinating one, but most of the students have never seen one up close, nor had a chance to touch or hold a snake or lizard.

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

Your thorough knowledge of the subject and your live specimens were invaluable in helping the students understand how to recognize and stay away from poisonous reptiles.

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

After your visit, the children made a special collage of what they discovered during the demonstration for you. I have enclosed this for you as a reminder of how important programs like yours are for our students.

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

Thank you for igniting the children’s minds with hands-on learning and for an experience they will remember long after they leave fourth grade. I look forward to a return visit to our school next year.

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

Best regards, ←----- Complementary Closing (sentence case), Comma (no colon, period, or semicolon)

↓  
 3 lines (4 hard returns)

Elizabeth Vickley ←----- Signatory’s Name

Principal ←----- Signatory’s Title

↓  
 1 line (2 hard returns)

hrk ←----- Typist’s Initials (reference initials)

Enclosure ←----- Enclosure Notation (attachments and enclosures)

c: Dale Chapman ←----- Copied to (listed in alpha order according to last name, use single “c” to indicate “copy”)

Corrine Escamilla  
 Natalia Lee

## Formatting Memos

- All memos are to use the guidewords **DATE, TO, FROM, SUBJECT** in order and in bold. Use a blank line (2 hard returns) between each guide word. A colon is required after each guide word.
- Four lines are placed between the logo in the left corner and the first guide word, “date”.
- Type the appropriate information after each guideword. Be sure to tab once between the colon that follows the guide word and the first letter of the information required to ensure the actual date, recipient’s name, sender’s name, and subject are aligned.
- Include each recipient’s title and the department or school after the recipient’s name. For more than three recipients, use the “See Distribution” format available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, on page 425. In CCSD, the standard for listing recipients is by alpha order according to last names (not by position or title).
- Include the sender’s name and title (the department should be listed in the heading of your memo template).
- A black or dark blue line should separate the guideword section from the body of the memo.
- Begin your memo, flush on left side of page using one inch margins with either 11 point or 12 point Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman font. All memos are single-spaced. Leave one line (2 hard returns) between paragraphs. Do not indent paragraphs. Do not justify the paragraph format creating a flush alignment on the right side of the page.
- Skip one line (2 hard returns) and chose from the following based on the situation that applies:
  - Initials of typist in lowercase (reference initials)
  - Enclosure notation, such as attachments and enclosures
  - Copy notation, to be a single “c” listed in alpha order based on last name (not by position or by title)
- Memos are typically limited to one page. If continuation pages are necessary, type each additional page on a blank sheet of paper (the memo headings are not used in a continuation page). In the header, insert the subject (topic) of the memo on the first line, the page number on the second line, and the date on the third line. (An example can be found in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, in Section 1410 c.)

*Official CCSD letterhead and memo templates are available online at [ccsd.graphics.net](http://ccsd.graphics.net).*



More information on formatting letters, memos, and e-mails is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 13.



**Community and Government Relations  
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

↓ 4 lines (5 hard returns)

**DATE:** June 30, 2009 ←----- Guide Word, Colon, Actual Date

**TO:** Aylia Mengione, Director, Office of Professional Standards  
Taylor Pimmel, Principal, Fairless Elementary School ←----- Guide Word, Colon, Recipient(s)  
Name(s), Title, and Department or School

**FROM:** Kate Doecheski, Coordinator ←----- Guide Word, Colon, Sender's Name, Title

**SUBJECT:** CCSD Standards for Grammar and Style ←----- Guide Word, Colon, Subject/Topic of the Memo

---

I am pleased to present to Clark County School District staff the new Reference Guide. The guide is a two-year effort created by a panel of grammar and business communication experts working at various levels in CCSD. The intent of standardization is to increase the clarity and effectiveness of all District communication through the consistent use of grammar, message formats, punctuation, and style.

← Line used to separate the guide word section from the body of the memo

↓ 1 line (2 hard returns)

In an effort to support the ongoing need to maintain the highest level of support for all personnel, the panel has joined forces with the CCSD training department to develop clerical academies for employees interested in certifying their ability and mastery of CCSD communication standards. Additionally, the panel hopes to create a grammar blog that will allow all employees to pose questions and receive answers to questions about proper formats for District correspondence and tricky grammar or punctuation problems.

← 1-inch margin, flush on left side

← 1-inch margin, not flush, nor justified

↓ 1 line (2 hard returns)

The panel has chosen to post the guide in the District Link conference located in InterAct™ and online at ccsd.net under the Employee Resources heading. It is the feeling of the panel that by having the guide online, more employees will have access to the latest information on communicating with style!

↓ 1 line (2 hard returns)

As we roll out the guide and support program to employees, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. You can reach me at 799-1080.

↓ 1 line (2 hard returns)

c: Mary Boss ←----- Copied to listed in alpha order according to last name (use single "c" to indicate "copy")

## Routing Communication

There are many types of communications including e-mails, flyers, letters, and memos that should always be shared with Trustees, the superintendent, area associate superintendents or academic managers, division heads, or the Communications office. To ensure your communication is reaching the right people, incorporate the following rules into your routine:

- The superintendent, deputy superintendent of instruction, area associate superintendents, and academic managers must be copied on all correspondence sent to principals as a group. This is not to exclude any division head or other personnel that has a need to know of your correspondence to principals. (Be sure to include the Education Services Division and Student Support Services Division on all correspondence directed to all principals, too.)
- Responses to inquiries and requests for information made by Trustees to staff are sent to the Office of the Superintendent through the appropriate unit and/or division head, these include:
  - Formal or informal Board requests
  - Board member inquiries
  - Updates on Board requests or inquiries
  - General items of interest
- The Office of the Superintendent receives agenda items and reference materials for board meetings.
- Copy the Office of the Superintendent (hard or electronic) if you are sending a communication to the Board office. Examples include:
  - Miscellaneous information e-mailed to Trustees
  - School information (newsletters, calendars, notices, etc.)
  - Invitations for special events

*The Office of the Superintendent is responsible for the compilation of all agenda items and reference materials that are submitted by staff for each Board meeting. Items for inclusion on an agenda for a regular meeting, a special meeting, or a work session of the Board of Trustees are submitted to the Office of the Superintendent. This includes those items requested of staff by a Trustee. Specific protocols on this process have been given to Executive Cabinet members. Questions pertaining to this process should be directed to the Office of the Superintendent at 799-5310.*



*When copying members of Executive Cabinet on an e-mail or memo, do not include an additional copy for the area associate superintendents, as they are Executive Cabinet members.*

## Using Logos

The official CCSD logo looks like this:



A strong, unified visual image is the most basic component of an organization. While areas and divisions within the school district develop multiple and varied programs designed to support the mission of the District, all individual segments exist in support of a greater whole. Therefore, all areas, divisions, and departments, and the programs functioning through those units, come under the umbrella of the CCSD logo.

CCSD Policy 1100 outlines not only the proper logo usage, but also the exceptions, which include allowing schools to create and use a separate logo, yet still include the CCSD logo in a subordinate fashion in the official document.

Areas, divisions, and departments do not have independent logos. However, they may add a "Unit Signature" to the logo, as in the example below:



Written and electronic materials including, but not limited to, business cards, envelopes, fax (facsimile) cover sheets, letters, memos, newsletters, Web sites, PowerPoint presentations, posters, brochures, flyers, guides, and handbooks must include the District's official logo. For schools, it is appropriate to add the school identifier as well.

Please see the *CCSD Logo Standards* booklet for complete information on the proper use of logos. You can download the booklet and the official CCSD logo at: <http://graphics.ccsd.net/NewFiles/GAC.2006.Site/Downloads.html>



## Acronyms

Educators often communicate specific programs with noneducators using acronyms. However, many parents, businesses and community members, and even students find themselves lost when trying to read District communications that reference DCs, ADA, APEDP, FIE, RPDP, or a host of words that mean something to us but fail to keep the reader in the communication loop. That is why in the Clark County School District the standard is to identify what the acronym means by spelling each word, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

Example:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

### ACRONYMS COMMONLY USED IN CCSD

AB	Assembly Bill	CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
ACT	American College Testing	CSN	College of Southern Nevada
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	CSR	Class Size Reduction
ADA	Average Daily Attendance	CTA	Career and Technical Academy
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	CTE	Career and Technical Education
AP	Accounts Payable	D.A.R.E.*	Drug Abuse Resistance Education
AP	Advanced Placement	DC	Department Chair
ARL	Alternative Routes to Licensure	DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
ATA	Advanced Technologies Academy	DOE	Department of Education (federal, see NDE for state)
AVID	Advancement Via Individualized Determination	DSA	Distributive School Allocation
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress	ECS	Educational Computing Strategists
AZAC	Attendance Zone Advisory Commission	ELL	English Language Learners
BDR	Bill Draft Request	EMR	Employee Management Relations
BOC	Bond Oversight Committee	ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
CAP	Climate, Academics, Participation	ESD	Education Services Division
CCASAPE	Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-technical Employees	ESEA	Education Support Employees Association
CCEA	Clark County Education Association	ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
CCPEF	Clark County Public Education Foundation	ESL	English as a Second Language
CCSD	Clark County School District	FASA	First Aid Safety Assistant
CIS	Communities In Schools	FCCLA	Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America
CIS	Computer Information Systems	FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
		FML	Family Medical Leave

\* Please note the proper use of punctuation.

**ACRONYMS COMMONLY USED IN CCSD — continued**

FOSS	Full Option Science System	PDE	Professional Development Education
FRL	Free and Reduced Lunch	PERS	Public Employees' Retirement System
FSR	Facility Service Representative	POA	Police Officers Association
GATE	Gifted and Academically Talented Education	PSAT	Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test
GEARUP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs	PTA	Parent Teacher Association
GED	General Education Development (Test)	PTO	Parent Teacher Organization
GPA	Grade Point Average	PTSO	Parent Teacher Student Organization
HSPE	High School Proficiency Examination	RAVE	Recognizing A Valued Employee
IB	International Baccalaureate	ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps (when the service is specified, use the appropriate reference, for example: Army ROTC, Navy ROTC, Air Force ROTC – not AROTC, NROTC, AFROTC)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	RPDP	Regional Professional Development Program
IDMS	Integrated Data Management System	SAC	Student Advisory Council
IEP	Individualized Education Plan	SAGE	Student Achievement Gap Elimination
ISO	International Standards Organization	SAP	Systems, Applications, and Products
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps	SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test or Scholastic Assessment Test
LEP	Limited English Proficient	SB	Senate Bill
LIT	Learning Improvement Team	SED	Severe Emotionally Disabled
MASE	Mathematics And Science Enhancement	SIP	School Improvement Plan(s)
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team	SLD	Severe Learning Disabled
MPS	Management Process System	SMART	Statewide Management of Automated Records Transfer
NCLB	No Child Left Behind	SNRPDP	Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program
NDE	Nevada Department of Education	SSA	Standard Student Attire
NHS	National Honor Society	SSSD	Student Support Services Division
NJHS	National Junior Honor Society	STDS	Student Technology Deployment Services
NIAA	Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association	STEP	Student-to-Teacher Enlistment Project
NMSQT	National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test	STEP	Success Through English Program
NRS	Nevada Revised Statutes	TBA	To Be Announced
NRT	Norm-Referenced Testing	TBD	To Be Determined
NSC	Nevada State College	WAN	Wide Area Network
NSHE	Nevada System of Higher Education	YRBS	Youth Risk Behavior Survey
NVHSPE	Nevada High School Proficiency Examination		
PAAL	Parents As Academic Leaders		
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee		
PAYBAC	Professionals And Youth Building A Commitment		
PBS	Public Broadcasting System		



More information on acronyms is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 5 (beginning with Subsection 522).



## Hyphens

Hyphens serve an important function in all communication. Hyphens are frequently used to signal compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, fractions, certain compound nouns, and between words when the words function as a compound adjective before a noun.

*Using hyphens with measurements can be tricky. The rule is to use the hyphen when the measurement comes before a noun, such as “a 25-cent per unit cost.” Elsewhere in a sentence you would write, “the cost of each unit is 25 cents.”*



More information on hyphenation is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Sections 8 and 9.

The list below contains words commonly misused in publications:

WORD	CCSD STANDARD FOR USAGE	EXAMPLE
all-day	Hyphenated when used as an adjective	Staff enjoyed the all-day in-service.
all-star	Hyphenate	The all-star club meets after school. The all-stars will attend the assembly.
African-American	Hyphenate when used as an adjective No hyphen (two words) when used as a noun	The African-American mosaic will be on display. The mosaic is a tribute to all African Americans.
after-school	Hyphenate when used as an adjective	The students attend an after-school program.
at-risk	Hyphenate when used as an adjective	This program is for at-risk students.
biweekly	One word – no hyphen	The report is due biweekly.
boardroom	One word – no hyphen	The meeting will convene in the boardroom.
change-of-address	Hyphenate when used as an adjective	Please complete the change-of-address form and mail it.
Cimarron-Memorial High School	Hyphen between Cimarron and Memorial, always	The game was held at Cimarron-Memorial High School last Saturday.
countywide	One word - no hyphen	The countywide basketball tournament starts on Friday.
course work	Two words – no hyphen	The teacher discussed the course work with the students.
cross-cultural	Hyphenate	The students will participate monthly in cross-cultural instruction.
database	One word – no hyphen	Please check the database.
districtwide	One word – no hyphen (ignore MS Word)	The districtwide conference was televised on Channel 96.

*Continued on next page*

dropout	One word - no hyphen	The dropout prevention program has been a success.
eighth-grader	Hyphenate (includes all references to ordinal numbers paired with the word "grader")	John is not an eighth-grader.
e-mail or email	Hyphen optional. The "e" is lowercase except at the beginning of a sentence	Please do not send frivolous e-mails to me.
extracurricular	One word – no hyphen	Most high schools offer several extracurricular activities.
first-come, first-served	Hyphenate with a comma between the word groups	Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
follow-up	Hyphenate	Please provide a follow-up phone call to the parent.
free and reduced price	No hyphens	Parents must apply to receive free and reduced priced meals.
full-day	Hyphenate when used as an adjective	Full-day kindergarten is available to students living in certain areas.
fund-raiser	Hyphenate	Sounds like a great fund-raiser.
honor student	No hyphen. Use lowercase except at the beginning of a sentence (honors program)	This year our school has the highest number ever of honor students enrolled in any District school.
in-service	Hyphenate. Use lowercase except at the beginning of a sentence	The staff in-service will begin shortly.
kickoff	One word - no hyphen when used as a noun	The staff enjoyed the kickoff.
makeup	One word - no hyphen	He arrived too late to take a makeup test.
multicultural	One word – no hyphen	The staff is working to ensure the multicultural celebration is fun.
multipurpose	One word – no hyphen	Please have all winners report to the multipurpose room.
multitrack	One word – no hyphen (ignore MS Word)	The new multitrack calendar is published online.
nationwide	One word – no hyphen	Dropout rates are decreasing nationwide.
nondistrict	One word - no hyphen (ignore MS Word)	Nondistrict funds were used for the project.
nonprofit	One word – no hyphen	The nonprofit organizations are hosting a clothing drive.
online	One word – no hyphen	I can find the information online.
pretest	One word – no hyphen	The students scored very high on the pretest.
schoolwide	One word – no hyphen (ignore MS Word)	The schoolwide assembly will begin at 10 a.m.
self-contained	Hyphenate when used as an adjective	She teaches in a self-contained classroom.
statewide	One word – no hyphen	The test is mandated statewide.
tryout	One word – no hyphen when used as a noun	Cheerleader tryouts are tomorrow.
year-round	Hyphenate	The students attend a year-round school.
work session	Two words – no hyphen	Today's work session was fascinating.



## Web Sites and the Internet

In recent years, communication via the World Wide Web and Internet has exploded. Clark County School District standards require proper capitalization of these words when referenced in communications. Specifically, capitalize the words “Internet” and “the Web,” or the phrase “World Wide Web” when using these terms in your letters, e-mails, memos, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

The *Gregg Reference Manual, Eleventh Edition*, indicates various ways for writing “Web site” and “e-mail.” The various options are acceptable in CCSD written communication: e-mail or email and Web site or website. “Webmaster” is also acceptable as one word and should be capitalized when it is a position title preceding a person’s name.

As mentioned in section *What are the Basics*, all printed and written materials must include the District’s Web site. The Web site is to be written `ccsd.net` – without the underline, unless this is used as a hyperlink on your school or department Web site.

## Grammar and Punctuation

The first step to improving clarity in writing is to understand the basics of grammar. Adjectives, adverbs, agreement, case, conjunctions, interjections, nouns, prepositions, pronouns, and verbs – including mood, number, person, tense, verbals, and voice – are essential grammar terms CCSD employees should know, because the standard is to use each appropriately in every communication. Equally important to understand is the difference between clauses, phrases, and sentences, and proper sentence structure.

Punctuation is the key to making the meaning of a sentence easily understood. Periods and commas are visual clues that allow the writer to take the reader through a logical sequence of thought. Good punctuation guides readers through the sentences, telling them where to pause, when to get excited, and when to stop briefly before moving forward. Therefore, before sending any CCSD document or publication, it is important to check for accurate grammar and punctuation and make corrections when needed.

## Abbreviations

Many abbreviations are used commonly in communication including Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ph.D., a.m., and p.m. In business writing, it is important not to overuse abbreviations or to use an abbreviation that is not necessary.



More information on when to use abbreviations is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 5.

## Apostrophes

Typically, apostrophes are used to form contractions of words and to form possessives. Capital letters and abbreviations ending with capital letters are pluralized by adding only an “s” – no apostrophe is necessary (Department Chairs is DCs, not DC’s – unless you are referring to ownership). An apostrophe is also used when confusion is likely to occur, such as when writing four A’s, three n’s, etc. Letters and abbreviations that are not capitalized are made plural by adding an apostrophe (’) “s”.

Examples:

- I’ve heard several complaints regarding the use of cellphones during passing time. [I’ve = I have] (Note that it is acceptable for “cellphone” to be written as one word.)
- The DCs were impressed that all of the students minded their p’s and q’s.

*Forming possessives can be tricky. Be sure to review Section 6, starting with Subsection 630, for specifics on correctly forming plural nouns, including pronouns.*

*Below are some frequently used words with examples of correct apostrophe usage:*

**It’s** = the contraction of it is. *It’s (It is) important to use the proper form for reimbursements.*

**Its** = the possessive case of the pronoun, it. *The school urged its students to use the Web site for further updates.*

**Who’s** = the contraction of who is. *Who’s (Who is) responsible for reporting absences?*

**Whose** = possessive case of the word who. *Whose department will experience the greatest impact because of the budget cuts?*



More information on using the apostrophe [’] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, beginning with Section 2, Subsection 298 and in Sections 5 and 6, Subsections 505, 631, 632, and 633.



## Capitalization

We all know to capitalize the beginning of a sentence. The same is true for capitalizing proper nouns, which include names of people, titles, geographical locations, organizations, historical events, special events, awards, brand names, school subjects, class names, ethnic groups, cultures, languages, months, days of the week, holidays, religions, acts, laws, bills, treaties, cities and states, and Web references. Some additional rules to remember:

- All spelling, punctuation, and spacing should reflect how a person writes his or her name.
- Official titles of honor and respect are capitalized when they precede personal names (Mr., Mrs., Dr., Governor, President, Superintendent, Reverend, etc.).
- Never capitalize official titles when the personal name that follows is in apposition and is set off by commas. (The vice president, Harry Foreman, will address the club at noon.)
- Do not capitalize occupational titles (lawyer, teacher, student, secretary, doctor, etc.) when they precede personal names.

*To call attention to a CCSD slogan, use Ready by Exit, without quotation marks.*

Some words, most of them nouns, are capitalized when used as a proper noun or title; however, these same words are not capitalized when used as a common noun.

Examples:

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas is where Professor Clark works.

He is a professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Enter the parking lot from the south side of the building.

Enter the parking lot located on South Pearl Street.

Every winter our students host a talent show.

The talent show will be held this year just before Winter Break.

Allison is in Grade 6.

Daniel is a sixth-grade student.

He attends a 5-Star School.

The school earned four stars this year.





## Commas

For many, commas commonly create chaos. Nevertheless, proper comma usage is essential for clear communication.

Commas serve two primary functions: they separate elements within a sentence while demonstrating the relationship between those elements, and they set off nonessential material that interrupts the flow of thought between elements. There are many ways to use commas and equally as many disagreements on how to properly use them.

In the Clark County School District, we follow the guidelines for proper comma usage as provided in the *Gregg Reference Manual, Tenth Edition*. For clarification and convenience, here is a brief list of standard usages CCSD has adopted:

### Comma rules with examples:

- **In a series of three or more items, use a comma after every item except the last item including before the word “and”:**
  - Ta’jee, Marlon, Maria, Amy, and Dora are in the library preparing for the proficiency exam.
  - The custodian has asked all staff to please place trash cans outside the classroom door, erase all nonessential information from the whiteboards, and turn off the lights before leaving for the night.
  - Farhad and David won the science fair with their project demonstrating the proper storage of flammables, combustibles, solvents, paints, corrosives, pesticides, and caustics.
- **After introductory elements. These words, prepositional phrases, infinitive phrases, participial phrases, or adverb clauses begin a sentence and come before the subject and verb of the main clause:**
  - Prepositional phrase:
    - In a courteous fashion, please greet parents as they enter the school office area.
  - Infinitive phrase:
    - To succeed in this field, you must be willing to risk having your work critiqued regularly.
  - Participial phrase:
    - Driving past the school, we saw six children doing cartwheels on the lawn.
  - Adverb clause:
    - Because he had to stay late to finish the job last night, Jake is leaving at 2 p.m. today.
  - Other introductory elements:
    - Yes, I will make certain your request for payment is processed today.
    - In addition, we will include the results of the testing in the school newsletter this April.
- **Following the first of two independent (main) clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so):**
  - Our custodian will start stripping the floor this afternoon at 4 p.m., and the Operations crew will join him around 6 p.m.
  - Mrs. Adams’ class did not score well on the first test, but they exceeded expectations on the second test.



- The principal thinks he will hold the award ceremony at 3 p.m. when his meeting ends, or if the meeting ends sooner, he will announce an earlier time.
  - Andrew did not complete the assessment, nor did he receive credit for the exam.
  - The teacher was unable to install the software yesterday, for the disk was corrupted and the hard drive crashed.
  - Ten percent of the student population requires special education services, yet individual cases continue to rise.
  - Jason will not be eligible to play football this fall, so he will not be included on the roster.
- **Between adjectives of equal rank when the adjectives modify the same noun:**
- The drawing was of a modern, sleek, metal-framed desk.
  - We began the day with a notable, stunning rendition of the “Star Spangled Banner.”
- **To set off direct quotations from words that precede or follow the quote:**
- “Students in the orchestra class earned gold star status for their rendition of ‘America the Beautiful,’” said Mr. Foster.
  - “Angela is our star runner in this year’s Special Olympics,” exclaimed the judge, “and she finished the race in record time!”
- **To set off words that interrupt the flow of thought. These are called parenthetical expressions and are items that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence:**
- The accounting department, working quickly and efficiently, processed the payment three weeks prior to the deadline.
  - Human Resources, which is ISO certified, earned the Gold Standard award for processing applications.
- **After a noun used as a direct address or a nonessential appositive:**
- Mark, you are responsible for getting the newsletters in the mail today.
  - Our school librarian, Mr. Forsyth, will hold the silent auction at 10 a.m. today.
- **When introducing examples with the words such as, especially, and particularly . . . and also with expressions that contrast or confirm:**
- References, such as area service centers, divisions, and departments, must include the full name of the location on the first reference in all formal correspondence.
  - The department chairs have all done their part to promote good Socratic note taking, especially Mr. Manyivong.
- **After the complimentary closing of your correspondence:**
- Sincerely,
  - Best regards,

- **To set off dates and addresses in correspondence:**
  - Sixth-grade award ceremonies begin June 4, 2011, at 9 a.m.
  - The Edward A. Greer Education Center is located at 2832 East Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89121.
  - On July 23, 2011, Mrs. Robinson’s class will hold their second annual parent-volunteer banquet.
  - The band will perform April 10, May 2, and June 6, 2012, in the Brusa Theater.
  
- **After the words first, second, third, etc. when used to begin a clause that attempts to establish chronological order:**
  - First, ask Dr. Melbourn to clear the area.
  - Second, the floor needs to be cleaned.
  - Third, we need to ask for a refund.
  
- **To separate two contrasting thoughts or ideas:**
  - The gymnasium mural was finished on time, but not within the budget.
  - Matilda was responsible for creating the program, Harry destroyed it.
  - Jennifer changed her classes, not her major, last week.

*In recent years, the use of a comma to set off Jr., Sr., or a Roman numeral following a person’s name has changed. The comma is eliminated between the name and the designation. The same is true when using similar terms, such as Inc. and Ltd. in a corporate name. Examples of correct usage:*

*John Davis Jr.      Alfred J. Kinneston III  
Time Inc.      Ace Ltd.      Todd Givens Sr.*

*Please note this is a recent change in usage. There are individuals who have previously used the comma as part of their legal name. If you are aware that this is their preference, please use the commas as provided by the individual or other documentation. In CCSD, the correct reference to Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School and Louis Wiener, Jr. Elementary School includes the comma. Both school names were officially approved using the comma.*



More information on using commas [,] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 122).



## Colons

Colons are used to introduce long quotations, after the greeting in a business letter, after guide words in a memo or similar communication, between two independent clauses when the second clause explains or clarifies the first, or after a complete sentence to introduce a list of items.

Examples:

- The following post to teacherlingo.com is relevant to your question and was written by someone who calls herself Figspeaker: “According to experts, a way to cope with teacher burnout is to continue professional engagement, read inspiring literature, and be proactive in learning new methods and conventional development in your craft.”
- Dear Mr. Vazari:
- Date: To: From: Subject:
- Department chairs serve two primary functions: they represent the administration to the department, and at the same time, they communicate the needs of the department to the administration.
- Students, ages 16 through 19, who are attending one of the following CCSD high schools, will be eligible to participate: Chaparral, Centennial, Del Sol, Liberty, Mojave, Palo Verde, and Sunrise Mountain.

Never place a colon between a verb and its object or a preposition and its object.

**Incorrect:** The three students participating in the program are: Sherry, Donelda, and Barry.

**Correct:** The three students chosen to participate in the program are these: Sherry, Donelda, and Barry.

**Incorrect:** I would like to be transferred to: Food Service, Transportation, or Technology Resources.

**Correct:** I would like to be transferred to the following departments: Food Service, Transportation, or Technology Resources. [Also acceptable] I would like to be transferred to Food Service, Transportation, or Technology Resources.

In the past, two spaces were required after using a colon; however, with the emergence of desktop publishing and word processing, only one space is now required.



More information on using the colon [:] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 187).

## Dashes

Dashes are used sparingly in business writing. When a dash is required it should be used as a means to emphasize a statement, show a sudden break in thought, or to set off an idea that breaks the flow of a sentence, such as an afterthought, or after a series to provide a summary statement.



Examples:

- Students who choose to violate the policy will receive a five-day – not three-day – suspension.
- The meeting will begin at exactly 6:25 a.m. – I will bring the coffee.
- Too many dashes in formal writing – one of my pet peeves – are distracting.
- The project requires cotton balls, Q-tips, sandwich bags, and tongue depressors – all items found in your FOSS kit.

*Dashes come in different lengths—one em, two ems, three ems, and one en. When using the dash as an alternative to commas, semicolons, or colons, be sure to use the em dash – just one em.*

## Exclamation Points

We frequently see exclamation points used in advertising or creative writing to generate excitement. In business correspondence, including Clark County School District business correspondence, using exclamation points is limited and rare. Writers and proofreaders should carefully weigh the use of any exclamation point used to end a statement.

## Italics

Universally, and in CCSD, the standard is to use italics to identify titles of literary and artistic works. Italics may also be used to add special emphasis to words or phrases, or identify foreign expressions that are not considered a part of the English language.

Examples:

- The *Curriculum Essentials Framework* is the source for identifying what skills will be taught in fourth grade math.
- Mrs. Arthur’s class will begin studying Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* next week.
- In *A Look Ahead Phase II: Progress Made and the Next Mile*, accomplishments from the prior year are documented. (Note that it is acceptable to omit the subtitle, but include the phase number for clarification, such as *A Look Ahead Phase I*.)
- What I wanted was the *royal* blue background, not the navy blue background.
- Chaos seems to be the *raison d’être* for the committee.



For more information visit the following section in the *Gregg Reference Manual*:  
 Dash [–], Section 2 (beginning with Subsection 201)  
 Exclamation point [!], Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 119)  
 Italics, Section 2 (beginning with Subsection 285).



## Numbers

In the Clark County School District, the standard for most business letters, memos, and e-mails is to use the “figure style.” The guidelines for this style are to spell out numbers from zero through nine and use numerals for all numbers 10 and above.

There will be times when this format is not practical. Here are some quick exceptions and examples:

- Use numerals in tables to relay information
- Use all figures for communicating statistical material, date (June 14, 2010), money (\$6.50), proportions and ratios (8:12), time (3:12 p.m.), scores of sporting events (21 to 3), decisions made by vote (a 3-4 decision), academic grades (82 percent), percentages (98 percent), temperature (101 degrees), measurement (18 cm, 3 pounds, 10 ounces), and page numbers (page 1).
- Use rounded amounts, as necessary, when describing large amounts of money. This technique combines numerals and words, such as \$20 million or \$5.6 billion.
- Use the full spelling of every numeral when it begins a sentence.
- Time is written as 8 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 12 noon, 3:10 p.m., 6:23 p.m., 12 midnight. NOTE: The standard is lowercase “a” or “p” followed by a period, followed by the lowercase “m” and a final period as punctuation (not AM or PM). List an event’s time using a hyphen and no extra spaces (April 1, 2012, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.), unless the sequence is introduced with “from” or “between” (We are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Ordinal numbers (first, second, third) are always spelled out unless the numeral is indicated in a title or street name, such as the 50th Anniversary Celebration or 1005 S.W. 10th Street.

Examples:

- When all is said and done, Zarah’s options for next term are zero.
- The check was written for \$2,852.00, but the school was billed for \$2,857.50.
- Jeanice wants to drop her fourth-period class.
- Twenty-four students will participate in Dr. Pullman’s history contest this year.
- The grant awarded to the District is just over \$400K.
- The Department of Taxation Summary for Fiscal Year ending June 2010 is available online at [ccsd.net/directory/budget-finance/publications/](http://ccsd.net/directory/budget-finance/publications/).

*In the Clark County School District, we do not abbreviate years: we write the numerals. For example, 1956, 1999, 2001, 2012, etc.*



More information for using numbers is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 4.

## Parentheses

Use parentheses to set off information related to the sentence, that is, incidental information or a comment. Just like dashes and quotation marks, parentheses are seldom used in business writing. When they are used, the purpose is to minimize the interruption in thought or indicate a parenthetical reference.

## Examples:

- If you will provide me with your input Monday (sooner if possible), I will have the letter for your review by Tuesday.
- As a volunteer in the Professionals And Youth Building A Commitment (PAYBAC) program, you will share with middle school students the message to continue their education, set goals, and plan for the future.

*Parentheses minimize the disruption in thought – dashes emphasize. Quotation marks add special emphasis of single words, short phrases, or exact words used in another communication or conversation.*



More information on using parentheses [ ( ) ] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 2 (beginning with Subsection 218).

## Periods

Use a period at the end of a sentence when the sentence makes a statement or expresses a command. Periods are also frequently used to:

- Mark the end of an elliptical expression. These are expressions used to answer a question, such as Yes. No. No problem. Been there. Done that.
- End a rhetorical or indirect question, such as “Katlin, would you please answer the phone.”
- Indicate an abbreviation, such as Mrs., Mr., Dr., Assn.
- Separate a whole number from a decimal fraction, such as \$7.05, 9.25%, 0.001.
- Specify numerals and letters in outlines, these are: I., II., III., IV., V., A., B., C., i., ii., iii.

Periods are not used:

- In headings (the exception is after a *run-in heading*, which is a heading that begins a paragraph, not a freestanding heading displayed on a line by itself).
- After Roman numerals used in a sentence.

*No space is used when using the period to indicate a decimal. In all other circumstances, one space is used after the punctuation. Some documents, such as legal briefs, may use two spaces after a period to visually enhance legibility.*



More information on using the period [ . ] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 101).



## Pronouns

Pronouns are parts of speech that function as substitutes for nouns. When a pronoun serves as a substitute for a noun, we sometimes refer to the pronoun as the antecedent.

Examples:

- He is the star athlete for the school's team.
- The school staff is prepared to share their report next Tuesday.
- The department was awarded \$10,000 based on its work to create an efficient and innovative strategic plan.

*“Who” and “that” are pronouns used to reference people. “That” and “which” reference places, objects, or animals. Be sure to use the word “who” only when referencing a person. Use the pronoun “it” or “that” when referencing an animal, object, or place.*

- *She knows who signed the absence excuse.*
- *He is the kind of child that always tells the truth.*
- *Bill's report on legislative expenses, which included all reporting requirements, should assist you in making a final decision.*
- *The movie that Mrs. Clandenning showed to her students is rated G.*
- *The dog ran through the school stopping only to bark at its reflection in the window. (Note: his or her would be inappropriate.)*



More information on using pronouns is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1049).

## Question Marks

Question marks perform a vital, but often simple function; they let the reader know the question asked requires a response or indicates an expression of doubt in the thought, such as No? Maybe? Perhaps?

Examples:

- Does the meeting really begin at 2 a.m?
- The donuts in the lounge were provided by the PTA, no?

*A series of brief questions can be separated by commas or, when emphasis is needed, by question marks. When using the former, do not capitalize the beginning of the next question. Example: Who will take responsibility for crafting the flyer? proofreading it before it goes to graphics? getting it distributed by Friday?*



More information on using the question mark [?] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 110).



## Quotation Marks

Quotation marks indicate the use of someone else's exact words; to set off words and phrases for special emphasis; and when referencing literary and artistic works that represent only part of a complete published work, such as chapters, lectures, lessons, topics, sections, titles, and parts within a book, plus segments or programs that are part of a television or radio series, and songs.

Examples:

- Manny's statement was, "When you look at our kids, you see tomorrow's leaders."
- Carol's "can-do" attitude is impressive.
- Dr. Muhammad's lecture, "Motivating Students in Homeroom," will be published next month.

*There are specific rules to punctuation when using quotation marks, be sure to use your Gregg Reference Manual for precise explanations when using quotation marks.*



More information on using quotation marks [" "] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 2 (beginning with Subsection 227).

## Semicolons

Semicolons link independent clauses or other sentence elements of equal weight, but provide a greater pause than a comma. Examples below demonstrate typical uses of semicolons in business documents.

- Joining the parts of a compound sentence when replacing a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so)
  - We appreciate good employees who challenge each other to work hard every day; we thank them.
  - Mrs. Rogers will facilitate the in-service tomorrow at 7 a.m.; Mr. Rogers will serve refreshments.
  - The consequences for failing to follow the computer usage guidelines include losing privileges for five days; you may also choose to write an apology.
  - Students could not complete the test within the established timeline; they could earn no credit.
  - No one accepted the position; it was too difficult.
  - The teacher reprimanded the students; the students continued to laugh aloud.
  - Ellie Jo is an exceptional employee who is known for her customer service skills; she is being honored next Friday.
- Between independent clauses joined by a conjunctive adverb (note: a conjunctive adverb is treated as a transitional expression in the *Gregg Reference Manual* [the most common conjunctive adverbs are therefore, however, nevertheless, thus, moreover, also, besides, consequently, meanwhile, otherwise, then, furthermore, likewise, in fact, still])

- Many Clark County school names honor individuals; therefore, it is important to utilize the proper identifier or the abbreviation (ES, MS, JHS, HS) in all references to the school.
- Principals may choose an official letterhead that reflects the professional spirit of their school; however, this letterhead is also to display a subordinate CCSD logo.



More information on using the semicolon [;] is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 1 (beginning with Subsection 176).

## Sentence Structure

It is common when having a face-to-face conversation to use gestures and facial expressions to convey the meaning of our thoughts. When you write, the reader cannot ask for more details, so every sentence must express a complete thought. Structuring your thoughts and ideas in a logical order helps the reader to understand the purpose and tone of the writing. Here are some basics to recall when composing sentences:

- Every sentence must be complete in thought using a subject and a verb, and the two must agree.
- Use active voice, parallel construction, and proper punctuation.

As you create your work and proofread your colleague's work, be sure to avoid the following:

- Run-on sentences
- Sentence fragments
- Multiple negatives
- Unclear pronoun references
- Use of unidentified abbreviations and acronyms
- Jargon or clichés
- Inaccurate word choice
- Not proofreading communication prior to sending it

## MORE ON SENTENCE STRUCTURE

### ■ Use active voice whenever possible.

(Active voice emphasizes who or what is doing the action. Passive voice emphasizes the receiver of the action or the action itself.)

**Active:** A dozen students invaded the principal's office this afternoon.

**Passive:** The principal's office was invaded by a dozen students this afternoon.

### ■ Use parallel construction when combining ideas or thoughts.

(Parallel construction is used when combining sentences, making certain the combined parts are equal, or parallel, in structure.)

**Not parallel:** Amir wanted to join the soccer team, to be a goalie, and running in games. [To join and to be are infinitives – meaning they are equal. However, running is a participle – meaning the three parts used to construct the sentence are not equal, nor parallel.]

**Parallel:** Amir wanted to join the soccer team, to be a goalie, and to run in games. [To join, to be, to run are all infinitives.]

### ■ Proper punctuation must be used.

**Inaccurate punctuation:** Before you write as you draft and, especially, while you revise your writing keep, asking yourself do I need to be more specific?

**Correct:** Before you write, as you draft, and especially while you revise your writing, keep asking yourself, "Do I need to be more specific?"

### ■ Choose the words you use carefully and accurately.

**Not so careful and accurate:** The senator wants a principle and library to appear in his comical.

**Careful and accurate:** The senator wants a principal and librarian to appear in his commercial.

### ■ Avoid run-on sentences.

**Wrong:** Family Literacy Nights were held monthly for parents and students so parents could learn ways to reinforce skills taught at school while they were at home with their children and students had lots of opportunities to win prizes, and everyone enjoyed refreshments, and everyone had a lot of fun.

**Better:** Our school held Family Literacy Nights monthly. Parents discovered ways to reinforce skills taught at school, while students enjoyed math games and won prizes. At each event, refreshments were served and everyone had fun.

### ■ Do not use sentence fragments.

(When the word processing program flags a fragment, it is because the subject or verb is missing.)

**No subject:** Disappeared at recess

**Correction:** Mrs. Sanchez disappeared at recess.

**No verb:** Something strange at recess

**Correction:** Something strange happened at recess.

**No subject or verb:** Somewhere outside

**Correction:** I will probably find Mrs. Sanchez somewhere outside.

### ■ Never use multiple negatives.

**Incorrect:** Never did he not know how to unlock the storage area.

**Correction:** He knew how to unlock the storage area.

### ■ Use clear pronoun references.

**Unclear:** Justin and Don crashed his dad's car, and he was crying at the sight.

**Clear:** Justin and Don crashed their dad's car, and their dad was crying at the sight.



### MORE ON SENTENCE STRUCTURE — *continued from previous page*

#### ■ Abbreviations and acronyms

**Too much:** The NV Legislature released its study on the STEP and SNRPDP programs, but the rpt. from FCCLA on SMART and WAN is TBD. Enough said.

#### ■ Using jargon or clichés to convey your message is difficult for the

reader to understand, especially for non-educators.

**Jargon:** Duh! An examination of McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y would help you to understand that students want to learn.

**Cliché:** Mr. Roberts, your son Adam is skating on thin ice and the sun is shining.



More information on sentence structure is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1081).

## Spelling

Some may find it odd to establish a standard for spelling. After all, it goes without saying the District requires employees to use proper spelling in all communication, District or otherwise. The challenge comes when individuals, who mean well, use creative spelling to draw attention to their ideas. Words, such as classroom, computer, or creative, spelled with a “k” instead of a “c” (klassroom, komputer, kreative, korner), value without the “e” (valu), or thanks using an “x” to replace the “ks” (thanx), should never be used in your letters, e-mails, memos, newsletters, Web sites, or other business communication. The exception is referencing a previously established program title, or when creating or using an acronym.



More information on proper spelling is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 7; the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, which is available online at [www.merriam-webster.com/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/) or in print; or an updated standard dictionary of your choice.

## Word Usage

Many words in the English language look or sound similar. That is why it is important to check for errors in word usage when proofreading your documents and your colleague’s documents. The *Gregg Reference Manual* devotes an entire section to proper word usage and provides a comprehensive list of commonly misused words.



More information on proper word usage is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 11.

## Parts of Speech

The following is a quick look at the parts of speech every CCSD employee should know.

- **ADJECTIVES** are parts of speech known as descriptive words used to modify nouns.
  - Parents receive valuable information from monthly newsletters.
  - Our wonderful staff at Elaine Wynn ES is looking forward to working with your children.
- **ADVERBS** are descriptive words used to modify verbs.
  - Students will be dismissed early on test day.
  - Only the board can nominate the three new officers. (“Only” is one of those problem words often used in the wrong place in sentences.)
- **AGREEMENT** is requirement of a subject and verb to agree in form between different elements of a sentence and must designate number, person, gender, and case. Some subjects, such as staff, personnel and data, vary in use as a unit or collection of individuals, and the verb should reflect the intent.
  - Your order for six laptop computers was shipped last week.
  - This study, along with many earlier reports, shows that smaller classrooms have a positive effect on student learning.
  - The data is accurate.
  - The data have been carefully reviewed.
- **CASE** indicates the function of the relationship of a noun or pronoun to the other words in a sentence. The “case” of a noun is always determined by its function in a phrase, clause, or sentence. In other words, if the noun or pronoun is the subject of the sentence doing the action, it is said the noun/pronoun is in the subjective case; if the noun/pronoun is used as an object acted upon or the topic of the description, this is the objective case; if the noun/pronoun used indicates the person or thing has ownership, the noun is in the possessive case.

Follow the noun “Kelvin” and the pronoun for Kelvin in the following examples:

Subjective usage

Noun: Kelvin wrote

Pronoun: He wrote

Objective usage

Noun example: I wrote to Kelvin

Pronoun example: I wrote to him



For more information visit the following sections in the *Gregg Reference Manual*:  
 Adjectives, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1065)  
 Adverbs, Section 10, (beginning with Subsection 1065)  
 Agreement, Section 10, (beginning with Subsection 1001)  
 Case, Section 10, (beginning with Subsection 1054)



#### Possessive usage

Noun: Kelvin's writing

Pronoun: His writing

Nouns change form only in the possessive case, whereas, pronouns may show subjective, objective, or possessive case.

- Most parents want their children to go to college.  
[In the example above, “parents” is a plural noun used in the subjective case; “their” is the plural form of the pronoun used in the possessive case.]

- **CONJUNCTIONS** connect words, phrases, or clauses. They can also indicate the relationship between the elements connected.
  - Education takes time, effort, and a lot of money.
  - Either you can prepare the report now, or I can do it when I return.
- **GENDER** is the grammatical marker that reflects masculine, feminine, or neuter on a pronoun to match the sex of its antecedent.
  - It is we, the parents, who are ultimately responsible for our children’s education.
  - John wants to discuss his district’s obligation to provide its employees a variety of options.
- **INTERJECTIONS** are parts of speech that have no connection to the sentence. These can be strong (Hey! Ouch! Wow!) or weak (oh, indeed, well). Weak interjections are always followed by a comma; strong interjections are followed by an exclamation mark.
  - Hey! Stop that bus.
  - Oh, so that’s how it’s done.
- **MOOD** refers to the verb functions indicating whether the verb is intended to make a statement or ask a question, give a command, or express a possibility.
  - When does the new law take effect?
  - Call me as soon as you get the information.
  - We suggest that immediate action be taken.
- **NOUN** is a term indicating the part of speech that names a person, place, thing, or idea that helps us articulate our thoughts.
  - Shakespeare wrote plays and poetry.
  - The Clark County School District’s financial and administrative operations compare favorably to other states’ best practices and peer districts.

- **NUMBER** signifies if the element is singular or plural whether using a noun, pronoun, or verb. Nouns or pronouns must always agree with correct singular or plural verb.
  - Michael and Dave say they will always attend baseball practice.
  - One of the teachers is grading student essays.
  
- **PERSON** refers to the form of a personal pronoun and indicates whether the pronoun represents the speaker, the person spoken to, or the person or thing spoken about.
  - The District has decided not to change its policy on standard student attire.
  - All staff members at the district office extend their best wishes to this year's graduating class.
  
- **PREPOSITIONS** are words that link nouns or pronouns to another sentence element and usually indicate the temporal, spatial, or logical relationship of the object to the rest of the sentence.
  - Jo will graduate from UNLV next spring.
  - Flight 338 is expected to arrive at McCarran at 6:45 p.m.
  
- **PRONOUNS** are parts of speech that function as substitutes for nouns. When a pronoun serves as a substitute for a noun, we sometimes refer to the pronoun as the antecedent.
  - I cheer for my school's team, just as you cheer for yours.
  - Are you and I prepared to give our report on Monday?
  
- **TENSE** is the grammatical term for verb forms that distinguish time. There are six tenses in English: past, present, future, past perfect, present perfect, future perfect.
  - They think it is hot in the valley. (present)
  - They thought the temperature was hot at home. (past)
  - They will think twice before complaining about the heat again. (future)



For more information visit the following sections in the *Gregg Reference Manual*:  
 Conjunctions, Section 1 (several Subsections)  
 Gender, Section 10, (beginning with Subsection 1050)  
 Interjections, page 639  
 Mood, page 639  
 Nouns, Section 3 (Subsections 303, 307, 310) and Section 10 (Subsections 1014 – 1022, and 1054)  
 Number, page 640 and Section 10 (Subsection 1049)  
 Person, page 641, and Section 10, (Subsection 1049)  
 Prepositions, Section 10 (Subsection 1077)  
 Pronouns, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1049)  
 Tense, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1031)



- They have thought about moving. (present perfect)
  - They had thought to check out the possibilities during their visit. (past perfect)
  - They will have thought better of it by the time they get home. (future perfect)
- VERBS indicate the action of the sentence. Verb types are either transitive, meaning the verb requires a direct object to complete its meaning, or intransitive, meaning it makes a full assertion about the subject without assistance from any other word(s). There are two forms of verbs: A finite verb is the main verb of the sentence and makes an assertion about its subject. A nonfinite verb, which is known as a verbal, is derived from a verb but functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb. Verbs must always agree in tense and number with their subject and be used in the appropriate voice.
- The awards recognize school leaders who have made exemplary contributions to their profession.
  - The 2009-2010 edition of “How to Enroll Your Child in School” is now available online.
- VOICE specifies the relationship of the subject to the action of the verb. When the verb is used in the active voice, the subject provides the action; when the verb is in the passive voice, the subject is acted upon.

Active Voice

- About a dozen people reviewed the report in draft form.

Passive Voice

- The report was reviewed in draft form by about a dozen people.  
[People is the subject; reviewed the report is the action.]



For more information visit the following sections in the *Gregg Reference Manual*:  
Verbs, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1030).  
Voice, Section 10 (beginning with Subsection 1036).



## APPENDIX:

# Guidelines for Editing and Proofreading a Document

Now that you know the standards, you are ready to begin the final and important process of editing and proofreading your document. These two processes are often thought of as the same. However, they are two different processes and you should be familiar with both.

Editing focuses on clarity and proper technique used to communicate effectively. In the proofreading stage, you are evaluating whether those changes have been made correctly. Both processes require concentration and time. It is important to keep this in mind. Whether you are an administrator or part of the clerical team, establishing a system that allows for careful review of the communication you prepare must allow adequate time for review and any necessary changes. Remember, the final product is a reflection on you, your department or school, and the Clark County School District.

### CCSD standard guidelines for editing and proofreading a document:

- Establish a system in your office or location of who will be responsible for a final review of materials – you will likely need more than one expert.
- Become familiar with the Proofreaders' Marks, this will allow you to communicate changes or corrections efficiently and quickly.
- Skim the entire draft quickly to gain a sense of the layout and content:
  - Look for alignment errors and note formatting problems.
  - If you need clarification, politely ask the author of the document what he or she means before you make suggestions.
- Review the document a second time noting missed commas, periods, semicolons, incorrect and misspelled words, improper capitalization, wordiness, and awkward sentences. If it is your role, make changes. If this is not your role, be sure to return it to the person responsible for changes right away.
- Once all changes have been made, read it again (and again, and again until it is perfect!).
- A final review by the author and a second, well-trained person in your office is recommended.
- After the proper review, process the document using the standards for routing communications.

**Tips to make the job easier:**

- Read the material aloud. Often hearing the words helps to catch words that are misused and sentences that are awkward.
- Use your finger or a ruler to cover words or lines. This will force your eyes to slowly read one word at a time.
- Use a straightedge down the left and right margins to check for proper alignment and correct margins.
- Turn the document upside down; it gives you a different perspective.
- If you composed the draft, make sure you allow for a break between the writing and correcting stage. You may want to sit in a different chair or review the document in a different form (printed rather than on the computer screen). Separating yourself helps your brain to refocus and spot errors more quickly.
- Use a colored pen or pencil to note changes. A guide to proofreaders' marks is provided in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 12, Subsection 1206 and on the back cover of the guide.
- Keep a copy of your notes and the original so you can verify changes have been made on the final proof.
- Remember, accuracy is the number one priority when proofreading or editing a document. Speed is secondary, support for accuracy from your team (administrative and clerical) is essential.
- Communicate tactfully. Being helpful and focusing on the mistake (not the person) will be welcomed input.

*It is not always possible to have someone else review every e-mail or memo prior to sending. It is possible to make it a practice to read and check your own e-mails and memos prior to sending. For all other communication, including postings on the District Web site or school Web sites, agendas, newsletters, presentations, business letters, brochures, and other publications, it is the expectation that these materials will be edited and proofed by someone who is not the author prior to publication.*



More information on Proofreading is available in the *Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 12. Proofreaders marks are available on the back cover of the manual and Subsection 1206.

## Helpful Reminders

During the development of this manual, the committee noted several common mistakes made by CCSD employees – most are specific to the misuse of pronouns. While we have addressed the rules in the manual, for the purpose of clarity, we have also listed them on this page.

	Singular	Plural
Nominative Case First Person Second Person Third Person	I you he, she, it	we you they
Possessive Case First Person Second Person Third Person	my, mine your, yours his, her, hers, its	our, ours your, yours their, theirs
Objective Case First Person Second Person Third Person	me you him, her, it	us you them

Writers confuse nominative (subjective) case, possessive case, and objective case when using personal pronouns.

Incorrect: John and me attended the inservice last week.  
Correct: John and I attended the inservice last week.

Incorrect: The student invited Joan and I to the play.  
Correct: The student invited Joan and me to the play.

Incorrect: Us employees need to have time for proofreading.  
Correct: We employees need to have time for proofreading.

Incorrect: No problem is too great for we.  
Correct: No problem is too great for us.

Writers use “myself” when “I” is the correct choice

Incorrect: Joan, Kelly, Frances, and myself attended the meeting.  
Correct: Joan, Kelly, Frances, and I attended the meeting.

Incorrect: Myself and the teacher will meet with the parent.  
Correct: The teacher and I will meet with the parent.



Writers use “they” as an antecedent for a singular subject.

Incorrect: If the student needs help, they should talk with the teacher.

Correct: If the student needs help, he or she should talk with the teacher.

Writers forget that the gender of a pronoun must be the same as the gender of its antecedent.

Incorrect: The school is making progress after implementing their new reading program.

Correct: The school is making progress after implementing its new reading program.

Writers are using the contraction “it’s” as a possessive pronoun. “It’s” is only a contraction for “it is.”

Incorrect: The District presented its’ case to the legislative body. The District presented it’s case to the legislative body.

Correct: The District presented its case to the legislative body.



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(702) 799-1080

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