

A Quick Guide for Schools using Facebook

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Compelling Why

Facebook allows schools to reach stakeholders (students, parents, employees, and the community) in a way that has never been possible before. Between 50-85% of Pasco County parents have Facebook accounts (depending on the school.) Facebook should be used to promote school events and other positive things happening at the school, but it should not be used as the sole place for posting information. If used correctly, it is an extremely effective way to promote your school and engage with stakeholders.

How It Works

A school employee who has a Facebook account can, with permission from school administration, create a school Facebook page. The school can then invite stakeholders to “like” the page. Once liked, schools can post pictures, videos, and other items of interest to their page and some percentage of stakeholders will see those posts on their own Facebook wall (the default page Facebook users see when they sign in.) Facebook calls this process “following.” For a step by step video explaining this process, please refer to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwibHudci7c>

Learning What to Post

Facebook uses algorithms to determine which of your posts will be shared on follower’s walls. By default, this rate can be as low as 10%, meaning 9 out of 10 followers will not see your post. Worse, the post will only appear on a follower’s wall for about 30 minutes on average, before other posts push it below the scroll point, so the window of time is limited.

However, if the content you are posting is interesting to followers, the rate of visibility can go as high as 50% or even higher. This happens when followers click the “like” button for your post and/or share your post with others. Facebook gives you very good statistics on the success of each of your posts, so as time goes by you can learn what your followers are most interested in. This makes Facebook an extremely valuable marketing tool for schools, allowing them to reach more people than any other web technology, including the school website.

Addressing Questions and Comments

Sometimes followers will use the comments feature in Facebook to ask questions. This is a good opportunity to either answer public questions directly, or to invite the questioner to contact the school directly. If a school’s posts are positive in nature and interesting to followers, most comments will be positive. However, from time to time there may be comments that are negative. It is a good idea to address such posts with an invitation to contact the school directly with any concerns. In a worst case scenario, schools do have the ability to remove comments that are inappropriate. Schools should monitor comments to their posts.

Not a Website Replacement

Given the potential reach of Facebook, a school might be tempted to abandon their school website and put their efforts into posting exclusively on Facebook. There are two major problems with this: School Board policy requires schools to keep their websites up to date with information important to stakeholders, and there are people who do not have a Facebook account and do not want one. We cannot require stakeholders to sign up for a Facebook account in order to access school information, and we should not expect stakeholders to scroll through a huge list of school posts to locate school information. Facebook is far more effective when used as a marketing/communication tool.

Top 10 Tips for Schools Using Facebook

1. **Pictures work better than words.** Increase your message by including pictures of students/teachers.
2. **Quality matters.** Your posts represent your school the same way your landscaping does. A blurry picture is like weeds in the landscaping.
3. **Content matters.** Positive posts about students are far more likely to be shared.
4. **Remember your audience.** People use Facebook to keep up with family/friends. Dry posts about data will likely be ignored.
5. **Make it fun.** Parents feel better about a school if they think it's not a stressful environment. Wacky socks day pictures might seem trivial but they can convey a sense of comfortable atmosphere to parents.
6. **Post frequently.** Posting once per week is extremely ineffective. Posting at least once per day is better because it keeps people thinking about your school.
7. **Don't Spam.** Constantly posting multiple reminders of events may backfire and cause followers to unfollow your page.
8. **Timing is everything.** Posting when your target audience is using Facebook can dramatically increase your visibility.
9. **Find a voice.** School Facebook posts should convey a consistent voice or tone. Posts can be casual and friendly, but should never be unprofessional.
10. **Use your data.** Facebook gives you extremely valuable analytics for every post. If you learn what your followers like, you can dramatically increase your visibility and engagement with the public.