

June/July 2020

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

inside

Five video ideas for your school social media accounts

Face-to-face communication is difficult right now. Fortunately, there is a popular tool to connect us. Schools have been using social media to reach parents, students, staff and community members for a long time. Video should be a regular part of social media engagement. Video is an effective way to bring people together. Read about recommended video formats and see examples from schools.

Plan now for fall

The back-to-school season is always important in setting the tone for the new school year. That's especially true after such an abrupt end to the current school year. Despite the high-level of uncertainty about what school might look like in September, the ritual of the start of school will be important. Here are some tips to help plan now for fall programs.

Surveys, Part 1

What do they think? Why and how to listen to your community

Two-way communication builds trust, which is essential for building support for new programs and bond elections. There are many tools for reaching people, but there must be an opportunity for input if engagement is your goal. Read about survey options that can help you open the door to two-way communication with your community.

Surveys, Part 2

What to say to your community: Deliver the messages that gain the most support

Understanding why you need to survey your community is step one. Step two is understanding the different survey tools and how to use the results from each one. The key is to know your goals. What do you want to learn and who do you need to include in your survey group?

Here's to You!

Fatigue can affect our health, and lead to burnout. Many people are feeling fatigue related to quarantine, news, work and more. Read tips for minimizing fatigue-related stress.

INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS: Dealing with COVID stress

The stress of the pandemic is impacting families. Worry about illness, lost jobs and stay-in-place orders is resulting in household stress. Combined with the stress that children and teens are feeling due to social distancing from their friends and the loss of school routines and activities, there is a need for stress management tools to create a new normal. Read tips for helping kids cope with the stress of the pandemic.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (800) 562-8927 or (360) 493-9231.

For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

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Five video ideas for your school social media accounts

Communicating with your students, staff, and community has never been more important. We are dealing with unprecedented challenges, and social distancing has made face-to-face communication practically impossible.

But we hold a tool that has become priceless over these past several months...

Social media!

Schools across the country have inspired followers with stories that keep people connected, and one of the best ways to connect with people is through video. Video can bring people together in ways that text and photos alone cannot.

There are many ways to effectively add video to your communications — even if you only have novice-level video production skills. Here are five ways that you can use video in your social media strategy:

1. Informational video

It might be uncomfortable — but hey, we are asking our students to get out of their comfort zones all the time! Talk to the camera as if you are talking directly to your community. It doesn't need to be live, and it doesn't need to be perfect. So many superintendents have done this; the audience engagement is high.

#K12PRtip — Always upload the native video directly onto Facebook. It will reach more people versus posting a link to a YouTube or Vimeo video. It's OK if you want to upload the video there as well, but Facebook's algorithm strongly favors native video over links to other platforms.

Here's a great example: Superintendent Randy Guttenberg, Waunakee Community School District, March 27, 2020

www.facebook.com/WaunakeeCSD/videos/794275037726859/

2. How-to video

Some students and parents are tired of long emails explaining complex information. You could switch it up with a how-to video for things like:

- How to register for classes online
- How to unlock a combination lock (directed at those middle schoolers getting lockers for the first time)

(Over)

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- A virtual tour of the kindergarten classroom for nervous students (but mostly nervous parents) that didn't get to enjoy the traditional spring event.

#K12PRtip — If you want to add some text within your video or do more advanced editing (it's definitely not required) some helpful tools you may want to check out include:

- *iMovie*
- *Clips*
- *Splice*
- *Adobe Premiere Rush (included with Adobe Suite)*
- *WeVideo*
- *Animoto*

3. Educational/enrichment video

Parents and students are looking for ways to continue their education at home. Even throughout the summer, you and your teaching staff can share enrichment activities that are easy to do with materials around the house.

I loved the idea from a teacher in Gilbert, Arizona, who created a sensory path out of sidewalk chalk. After creating it, someone videotaped her following the path, making it easy for people to replicate it at home. It went viral with several million views.

www.facebook.com/jody.b.goudreau/videos/10157490145962875/

4. Live video

This one might make you the most nervous as a school leader, but live video is a great way to provide authentic, two-way communication. Many school leaders utilized Facebook Live sessions to receive and answer questions throughout the COVID-19 school closures.

There are several options for live video, including Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube Live, and more. Pick the platform where most of your community is located. You can follow these tips:

- Advertise ahead of time
- Don't wait for people to hop on before you start. Start right at the time you advertised. Many people will be re-watching the video, and you don't want to lose viewers!
- Say who you are and what you plan to talk about.
- If you want to drive engagement - which is the whole point of doing a live video - ask for participation throughout the video. Start by asking people to introduce themselves or answer a simple question.
- You may want help monitoring comments that pop up as you speak.

Find more tips, including a complete guide for Facebook Live, at www.socialschool4edu.com/resources.

www.facebook.com/363973230440305/videos/516555869042106/

5. Watch party

Do you want to simulate the feel of a live video without the pressure? Upload a video and schedule it as a premiere. This can be done on both Facebook and YouTube. The channels advertise it ahead of time, and then your fans will gather together at the scheduled time and watch it together.

Events that could be enjoyed this way include a big announcement, such as a new Superintendent or principal introduction, a “welcome back to school” message, or even weekly updates to stay connected throughout summer. This type of video gives the viewers the “feeling” of a live video but also allows you to interact with comments that may come in during the event. You won’t be able to answer the question via video, but you can type replies in the comments.

Contributed by Andrea Gribble , founder of SocialSchool4Edu

Andrea’s passion is helping schools recognize their daily awesomeness and sharing that story with the world. She’s built a team that celebrates hundreds of schools across the country - but it all started right here in Wisconsin! Visit her website at <https://www.socialschool4edu.com/> to learn about her services. #SocialSchool4EDU provides full social media management, personally coaches social media teams and individuals, and offers a vibrant online community that provides ongoing professional development for school social media champions.

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Plan now for fall

Welcoming back students and staff after summer break is always a special occasion, but this year it feels like a blowout celebration is in order. When students return to school, make it a day to remember. Or better yet, plan rolling festivities that extend over several days.

After school ended so abruptly last spring, students will need to celebrate not only being back in school, but also some of the important milestones that didn't get recognized last year.

End-of-year award assemblies. "Fly up" to the next grade ceremonies. Concerts and plays. Field days. Those did not happen last spring for most students. It's important, as part of the process of moving forward, to honor the achievements of last year and set the stage for a successful coming year.

While it's probably not realistic to recreate each of those activities this fall, you could plan a few special events that highlight some of those achievements. Some possibilities:

- **Welcome back barbecue or ice cream social.** Invite parents and students to an outdoor event the week before classes resume. Ask the parent club to help serve burgers and hot dogs or ice cream. Have a ceremony to hand out any awards that couldn't be given out in the spring, such as students of the month.
- **First day assembly.** Celebrate being back together. Produce a slideshow or video with highlights of last year. Have staff create a fun parody of how they conducted staff meetings and planning over Zoom and other video platforms. Set the stage for the new year by setting high expectations, but acknowledge the learning that was missed and assure students that teachers will be working to bring everyone up to speed.
- **Classroom activities.** Ask each class to create posters and murals for the hallways to show the things students are most looking forward to this school year.
- **Stay in touch with families over the summer.** Students' worlds — and everyone else's — were upended with the coronavirus pandemic, and they feel a lot of uncertainty. Don't wait for the back-to-school letter to communicate with families this summer. Send a letter or email two or three times over the summer to let them know how teachers are preparing for their return. Most importantly, assure them that things will be returning to at least some level of normalcy.

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One of the challenges for staff will be dealing with a push to make up for lost time and bring students up to benchmarks as soon as possible. A study by Northwest Evaluation Association showed that students are likely to start school in the fall equipped with only about 70% of expected gains in reading and writing skills and 50% or less of expected math skills. There will definitely be work to do. Schools will need clear catch-up strategies to help students who have been unable to keep up their studies at home.

(Over)

It would be nice if we could get schools back in full swing and students up to speed with the ease of turning on a light switch. But after being closed for several months, schools need to allow for some transition time as they help students make up for lost learning. Volunteers will be crucial. Extra adults are needed to conduct small reading groups or tutor individually in math and other subjects. Volunteers can help correct papers and create bulletin boards and help supervise recess. There's an endless list of tasks that volunteers can take on that relieve a teacher to work directly with students.

Even before COVID-19 forced a break from classes, schools felt enormous pressure to focus on academics and cut out activities, like assemblies and guest speakers, that take time away from the basics. But a key to moving forward will be to encourage a sense of "we're all in this together." The transition will be smoothest if students, staff and parents understand that they must work together to make the needed gains. And that will require time for occasional special activities that build teamwork and camaraderie.

There are so many unknowns entering this new school year, but one certainty is that it will be good to have students back in school and learning together. Perhaps one of the takeaways from the past several months is that gathering together to share and celebrate is a needed part of our lives and helps provide the balance needed to move forward successfully.

Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant

National School
Public Relations
Association
15948 Derwood Rd.
Rockville, MD 20855

**June/July
2020**

This communications service is prepared for the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) by the Washington State School Directors' Association (Marcia Latta, communications consultant). Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of this service are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of a local communications program in such districts. For additional information, contact NSPRA at (301) 519-0496.

School-Family-Community Connections

Your ready-to-use communications service from NSPRA

Surveys, Part 1

What do they think? Why and how to listen to your community

Schools must engage their communities to earn support for programs and election initiatives. There are many tools to reach people through two-way communication, which brings an expectation for meaningful, two-way communication and community involvement. But there is so much noise in today's media environment. It is hard to be heard and hard to build trust and credibility. It can also be hard to gather input on issues outside of current public attention.

Stakeholders — parents, business owners, staff, students, community members, taxpayers — want to be “in the know” about their schools. They want to know their opinions are sought and considered, and they have ready access to key decision-makers. They expect fast responses with clear explanations. And they resent any organization that only listens to “influential” opinions or the loudest voices for important decisions.

Fulfilling public expectations requires evolving our engagement approaches. Surveys that take four weeks to design, administer and analyze are very valuable for purposes such as finance election strategy, but they are not the right tool for social media users and texters who want immediate attention.

It is valuable to seek opinions from all corners of the community, but that's a big task when districts are balancing limited resources and the desire to listen to and respond to all community members adequately. Here are some ideas for gathering public opinion in ways that build trust without a high cost.

The self-selected online survey

This non-scientific short online survey allows a wide invitation to anyone and everyone who might want a say on the issue. The survey platform can be any online survey tool (e.g., Survey Monkey, Zoomerang). It costs very little and produces fairly comprehensive reports.

You can email a link or include it in regular printed communications. Mail a postcard invitation to every potential respondent with the URL for the survey and information about how to get a paper version for people who prefer a hard copy.

If used regularly, this survey tool can produce a vast database of opinions about your district that can be formatted for various uses and sorted by demographic groups. Results can be widely published and used for evaluating programs, making budget decisions and planning future programs.

(Over)

The advantage of this kind of survey is that everyone has the opportunity to express an opinion, and the process is fast and cheap. In some cases, the survey questions provide new information and help people know more about the organization.

The disadvantage of this kind of survey is that you don't have the statistically accurate results you would have if you had conducted a formal, random-sample survey. To extend the results to the greater community, you would need 40 percent of all possible respondents to take the survey. Forty percent is the statistical rule of thumb for validity in voluntary written surveys. Reaching that response rate is difficult to achieve. The people who tend to take this kind of survey are the members of your fan club and your detractors, leaving out those who are less interested but may share their opinions after an action has been taken.

The respondent-controlled online or phone survey

This type of survey, which gathers opinions from a pre-determined group of respondents, is increasingly used by firms and organizations. Some of these firms draw a random sample of people whose opinions they will seek on various issues. They then contact these potential respondents and ask them if they will take future surveys for the firm. Some firms offer a small incentive, such as credit toward purchases or free admission to events, in return for every survey they submit. Other organizations find volunteers who fit various profiles and promise to take surveys when asked.

Another way to use this survey method and assure a fairly accurate sample is to build a large pool of potential respondents. In this case, you have information about each respondent, including their age, geographic location, whether they have a school-age child in their home, how long they have lived in the community, or any other factor you might need to know when selecting respondents for a survey. Each of these people has agreed to take your surveys when asked. Surveys can be administered as needed to respondents with characteristics most desired that particular survey.

Any electronic survey, including this or the open online survey can be designed in many ways for many purposes. The survey can ask respondents to give their reactions to materials such as a sample publication, logo, marketing materials, short video clips or other visuals.

A respondent-controlled survey may be placed online or administered as a phone survey. If it is a phone survey, callers are staff members or others who have been trained in interview techniques that do not influence answers. If the survey is online and the desired number of responses has not been reached by the time the survey closes, some firms phone those who promised to take the survey but have not yet done so and urge them to respond.

The advantage of the controlled-sample survey is having more accurate results for a particular group than those obtained in the online survey. The main disadvantages are the necessity of building a database of random-sample respondents, obtaining needed information about those respondents and getting them to take the surveys.

Focus groups

A focus group is more labor-intensive, but it can provide very insightful input. It consists of 10 to 15 carefully selected participants who meet with a skilled facilitator who asks probing questions about a given subject. Focus groups are especially valuable for identifying and discussing potential attitudes and reactions. They may be used to glean a specific piece of information, explore potential questions for a more comprehensive survey or follow up on survey responses to further define the attitudes behind those responses.

Participants should be selected from groups that are likely to have the strongest opinion about the subject and, ideally, they are representative of your audience. Invitations should be extended personally and with an appeal to specific interests in your district or in recent decisions.

Focus groups generally last about an hour. The facilitator should have a neutral attitude about the discussion topic and should be skilled in guiding deep thought and probing for answers. Someone who is very proficient at taking copious notes should record as many comments as possible, and participants should be assured that their comments will be anonymous. Audio recording is often helpful, although videotaping can be distracting and may intimidate some participants.

The benefit of focus group research is the opportunity for face-to-face communications, group conversations and the ability to probe for reactions, deeper answers and rationale.

The disadvantage is that the results have limitations. They are the opinions of the 15 or 20 people who participated rather than a true sampling of community opinion. It is difficult to get the attendance of those who are not already interested in the subject unless participants are paid for attending, something most public agencies are reluctant to do.

Be clear about your goals

No matter what method you use, know what you want and be sure you get it. And be sure that your team and leaders understand the limitations of the results. A focus group, for example, is a useful glimpse of some opinions; it is not a comprehensive look at the views of your community.

The key factors in selecting the right research method are

1. Knowing exactly what you want to learn. Discard the things that would be “nice to know” explore goal topics in depth.
2. Determining whose opinions you need. In some cases, you may need to provide an opportunity for the entire community to participate. In other cases, you may want those who will be most affected by a decision.

To wrap up your survey process, be sure to report results to those who participated or were invited to participate. You may also want to report results to the entire community. This sends the message that you value and are using the information you gained and sets the stage for increasingly successful research. Community members will realize you do value their opinions and it is worth their time to participate in future surveys.

Contributed by Gay Campbell, communications consultant

May 2020

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Surveys, Part 2

What to say to your community: Deliver the messages that gain the most support

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Contributed by Gay Campbell, communications consultant

Here's to You!

Tips for your good health provided by your district

June/July 2020

ELECTION FATIGUE



What is your fatigue level?

fatigue [fə'tēg]

NOUN

1. extreme tiredness resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness.

Synonyms: tiredness · weariness · exhaustion · overtiredness · drowsiness

People are tired. As we live with pandemic restrictions and are less active due to current social isolation, there is a growing sense of exhaustion over inactivity, worry, stress and helplessness. The feeling of being cautious and isolated can take a toll.

Under the circumstances, these are normal feelings, and this passive action we are taking is a positive action. By staying home, we are staying safe and doing our part to keep others safe.

But people are reaching the limits of their patience

with the lockdowns. With close-contact activities like parties, protests and beach trips, people are testing social distancing rules around the country.

Caution fatigue describes this feeling of flagging motivation. The term was coined by Northwestern University Associate Professor of Psychiatry Jacqueline Gollan.

“When lockdowns were first announced, many people were charged with energy and desire to flatten the curve. Now, many weeks in, the prolonged cocktail of stress, anxiety, isolation and disrupted routines has left many people feeling drained. As motivation dips, people are growing more lax about social-distancing guidelines — and potentially putting themselves and others in harm’s way,” Gollan said.

(Fatigue, over)

Fatigue (cont.)

Social distancing guidelines are easing, but they may come back as needed until a vaccine is developed. It is important to remember why they are in place.

“If people can address the reasons for the caution fatigue, the caution fatigue itself will improve,” Gollan said.

To manage these restrictions, Professor Gollan has the following tips:

Take care of your physical and mental health. Get enough sleep, watch your diet, exercise, don't drink too much and manage stress.

These are standard health tips. Your mental health is important in managing your fatigue.

Understand the risks and benefits. Know why you are doing this: to protect yourself and those around you. Remember that you are contributing to the common good. Focus on selfless acts

Adjust your routine. Create a new normal and think about your immediate needs.

Switch up your media diet. Listening to the same warnings from the same news sources may desensitize us to important information about the virus and safety guidelines. A suggestion is to seek news from a variety credible news sites.

Take a break from Netflix. Too much streaming can be tiring. Get off the couch or, better yet, find an exercise program on YouTube and get your blood flowing.

<https://bit.ly/3d2kou8>

Boost your mood by looking at pictures of baby animals

Sharpen your focus, improve your attention and get a quick mood boost by looking at pictures of baby animals — puppies, kittens, goats, pigs — these cute pictures are emotional healers.

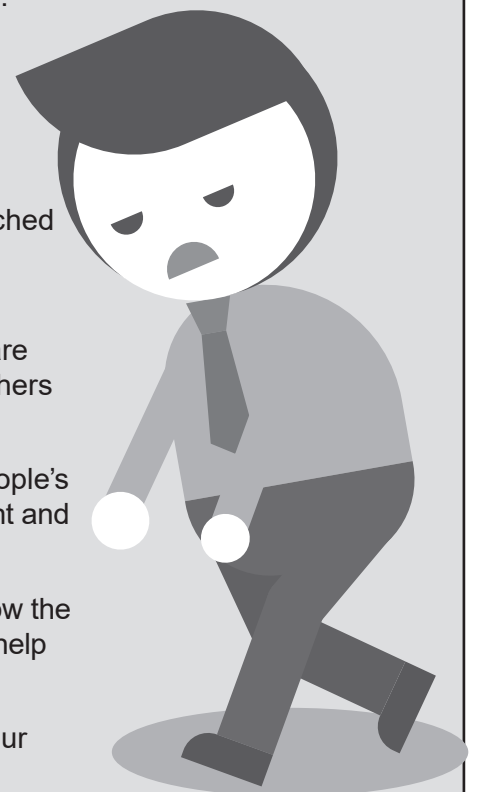
A study by the Association for Psychological Science discovered powerful effects of the images on mood and work performance. For better productivity, watch a kitten video. <https://bit.ly/3c0hjdZ>

Work burnout — fatigue that is now a recognized occupational syndrome

Returning to work and a normal routine may add fatigue initially. Be kind to yourself as you readjust to your schedule and possible work environment changes due to layoffs and remote schedules.

Added to the ongoing stress of COVID-19, you may still be exhausted. Watch for burnout, a state of near exhaustion from work or work conditions. Although not a medical diagnosis, burnout is a recognized syndrome by the World Health Organization.

- Symptoms can be self-diagnosed and signal a need for help:
- You are chronically tired with a lack of energy.
- You feel as though you are on automatic pilot. You sleep more.
- Your performance deteriorates with missed deadlines, forgotten details and ignored commitments.
- Your attitude has become detached or uncaring.
- You see the “downside” of everything or are cynical. You are losing faith in coworkers and others around you.
- You no longer tolerate other people's small mistakes and feel impatient and irritable.



If you suffer from work burnout, follow the tips for easing fatigue (left) or seek help from a mental health professional.

You may need to ease back into your standard work commitments.



COVID Stress



**June/July
2020**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

This is a stressful time for all of us, including our children. In general, kids are more stressed than they have been in the past. Recent reports show they are even more stressed out than adults (<https://bit.ly/3fbweUX>). For them, the added pandemic stress compounds their already high anxiety due to the new worry about illness and the changes to routine from this pandemic.

COVID-19 stress is real, and kids are feeling it. They are affected by what they hear about the pandemic and what they observe in parents who are adjusting to work changes or financial worries. They are also adapting to school changes and the loss of contact with their peers.

Tips for COVID stress

Household stress

An increase in financial, relational and health-related stress increases the risk for child abuse, and this is a stressful time.

When people are worried, they are more likely to lash out at those around them. Financial strain and confinement at home are causing spikes in domestic violence. This is a global problem.

According to a new report published by the United Nations Population Fund, there could be an estimated 31 million new cases of domestic violence globally if the coronavirus lockdowns continue for six more months. <https://bit.ly/2YlYzlc>

If you know a family is under excessive stress, you could provide a virtual ear to listen. Moral support can make a big difference. Or offer household help, such as food pickup, to ease the strain for people feeling stressed out and stretched too thin.

If you suspect child abuse, call the police or Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4AChild), www.childhelp.org/hotline. Don't hesitate. Children need to be protected.

If you are worried about your stress, get tips from Parenting in a Pandemic: Tips to Keep the Calm at Home: <https://bit.ly/2SrGhv7>

Resources for individuals and families

If you need financial support or know someone who does, there are resources and programs to help people through this tough time.

An estimated 135-140 million people in the U.S. were poor or low-income, according to a study by the Institute for Policy Studies in 2018. Of that number, nearly 40 million are children.

The rising unemployment rate from COVID-19 shutdowns has

increased that number, causing greater food insecurity and worry about household bills and rent. <https://on.mktw.net/2YkCrI9>

There are community and government programs that can help. Local food pantries are still operating, and schools are providing take-home meals. These government-funded meal programs are available for free to any child under 18. Check your school website for more information about meal schedules and locations.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides money to low-income families based on income limits and household sizes. It is a federal program operated through each state. Find more information on the SNAP website: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility.

Federal stimulus checks have been deposited or are being mailed to individuals and households that have filed tax returns in 2018 or 2019. The amount varies based on eligibility and household size. Check the status of your payment on the IRS website: www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment.

Helping kids cope with the stress of the pandemic

Kids of all ages are impacted by the stress of the pandemic. For younger kids, it's important to keep parental stress from them, if possible. Listen to their concerns and reassure them when you can. Set a schedule for remote school work and help them maintain a healthy sleep schedule. Plan for physical activity through video workouts, dance parties, walks or playing in the yard.

For teens, the stress can be much greater as they understand more about the situation and have lost opportunities for high school milestones like prom and graduation. In addition, they are cut off from friends and peers and other essential social support at that age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has published resources for parents who are concerned about their teens. Here is a partial list of tips for teens.

Create a new normal with a productive routine. Stick to a schedule. Transition from online schoolwork to evening with a transition time at dinner. Set aside time for privacy and time to talk to friends.

Communicate. Talk about what is happening and feelings about the changes. Discuss the importance of following the social distancing and stay home guidelines. Discuss future plans.

Stay connected safely. Allow teens to connect with friends via phone, social media and video chat. Assist them with technology issues to ensure that they can stay in touch with friends.

Keep active mentally and physically. Help your teen find resources to stay healthy: online books from the library, video workouts, and virtual museum tours. This is a great time to explore interests that we haven't had time for. Encourage them to take a walk or a run outside. Watch movies and TV shows as a family.

Read more at <https://bit.ly/2yl3GaG>.