

April 2021

ONcall

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inside

2021-22 key dates for school calendars

The annual list of key dates for the school year includes interesting and important events to help you plan your school calendar for 2021-22.

Please note that some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

Plan your school recognitions and celebrations

For the second year, schools are planning alternative celebrations around a disrupted school year. It may be too soon to honor graduates in person for many districts, but it is as important as ever to recognize their hard work. Schools have found many creative ways to celebrate their students. Read some tips to help you plan.

Refresher guide to AP style

The Associated Press Stylebook is still the go-to style guide for journalists and PR professionals. Every edition contains small and large style changes. Read some of the new and revised entries in this brief refresher guide to the universally accepted style book.

School board 101: Help new board members become members of your school team

New school board members have a lot to learn about school district operations and board procedures. Help them understand the limits and expectations of this important role to get off to a good start as a member of the team.

School board tips for professional online activity

Many school board members have personal social media accounts. They are widely used by board members for election campaigns, to stay updated on educational issues and district news, and they are useful for keeping in touch with personal and professional contacts. As public officials, their use requires caution and thoughtfulness. Read tips to avoid controversy and unwanted attention.

INSIGHTS FOR PARENTS:

Kids are resilient, but pandemic-related changes are challenging. Now in the second year of these changes, children have been adjusting to a new normal that may have a negative impact on mental health. Parents can help them manage their stress and mental health risks with these tips.

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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2021-22 Key Dates for School Calendars

Here are some special days you may want to note on your 2021-22 school year calendar or take into consideration as you establish programs for next year. They are from Resources for Planning the School Calendar, published and distributed by the National School Public Relations Association, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855. Order online at nspra.org/products or call (301) 519-0496. The price is \$40 per copy plus shipping and handling.

2021

Date Observance/Holiday

Sept. 1-30 Library Card Sign-Up Month

Sept. 6 Labor Day

Sept. 6-8 Rosh Hashanah*

Sept. 8 International Literacy Day

Sept. 11 Patriot Day

Sept. 12 Grandparents' Day

Sept. 12-18 National Arts in Education Week

Sept. 15- Oct. 15 Hispanic Heritage Month

Sept. 15-16 Mexican Independence Days

Sept. 15-16* Yom Kippur

Sept. 16 Mayflower Day

Sept. 17 Citizenship/Constitution Day

Sept. 17-23 Constitution Week

Sept. 21 International Day of Peace

Sept. 22 First Day of Autumn

Sept. 28 National Good Neighbor Day

Oct. 1 Child Health Day

Oct. 1-31 Crime Prevention Month

Oct. 1-31 Czech Heritage Month

Oct. 1-31 Italian Heritage Month

Oct. 1-31 National Bullying Prevention Month

Oct. 1-31 National Principals Month

Oct. 1-31 Polish American Heritage Month

Sept. 15-16* Yom Kippur

Date Observance/Holiday

Oct. 1-31 Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF Month

Oct. 3-9 Fire Prevention Week

Oct. 4 Child Health Day

Oct. 6 German American Day

Oct. 6 International Walk to School Day

Oct. 6-12 National Educational Office Professionals Week

Oct. 10-16 National Metric Week

Oct. 11 Canadian Thanksgiving

Oct. 11 Columbus Day

Oct. 11-15 National School Lunch Week

Oct. 16 World Food Day

Oct. 17-23 National Character Counts Week

Oct. 18-22 National School Bus Safety Week

Oct. 23 Make a Difference Day

Oct. 23-31 Red Ribbon Week (Drug-Free America)

Oct. 24 United Nations Day

Oct. 31 Halloween

Nov. 1-30 Native American Heritage Month

Nov. 2 Election Day

Nov. 4 Diwali

Nov. 7 Standard Time

Nov. 11 Veterans Day

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*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

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Key Dates

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Date Observance/Holiday	
Nov. 15-19	American Education Week
Nov. 17	Education Support Professionals Day
Nov. 18	National Parental Involvement Day
Nov. 19	Gettysburg Address Anniversary
Nov. 19	Substitute Educators Day
Nov. 21-27	National Family Week
Nov. 25	Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 1	World AIDS Day
Dec. 7	Pearl Harbor Day
Dec. 10	Human Rights Day
Nov. 28-	Hanukkah*
Dec. 6	
Dec. 15	Bill of Rights Day
Dec. 21	First Day of Winter
Dec. 25	Christmas
Dec. 26-	Kwanzaa
Jan. 1	

2022

Date Observance/Holiday	
Jan. 1	New Year's Day
Jan. 1	Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary
Jan. 1-31	School Board Recognition Month
Jan. 16	World Religion Day
Jan. 17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Feb. 1	National Freedom Day
Feb. 1-28	African American History Month
Feb. 1-28	National Children's Dental Health Month
Feb. 1-28	Career and Technical Education Month
Feb. 2	Groundhog Day
Feb. 7-11	National School Counseling Week
Feb. 12	Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
Feb. 12	Chinese New Year
Feb. 14	Valentine's Day

Date Observance/Holiday	
Feb. 17	National PTA Founders Day
Feb. 19-26	National FFA Week
Feb. 21	Presidents' Day
Feb. 22	George Washington's Birthday
March 1	Mardi Gras
March 1-31	American Red Cross Month
March 1-31	Irish American Heritage Month
March 1-31	Music in Our Schools Month
March 1-31	National Middle Level Education Month
March 1-31	National Nutrition Month®
March 1-31	Social Work Month
March 1-31	Women's History Month
March 1-31	Youth Art Month
March 2	Ash Wednesday
March 2	NEA's Read Across America (Dr. Seuss's Birthday)
March 2-	Lent
April 16	
March 6-12	National Foreign Language Week
March 7-11	National School Breakfast Week
March 8	International Women's Day
March 11	Johnny Appleseed Day
March 13	Daylight Saving Time
March 14-18	Classified School Employees Week
*Dates differ by state. Usually scheduled for a full week in March.	
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 17	Absolutely Incredible Kid Day®
March 20	First Day of Spring
March 21	Bahá'í New Year's Day
March 21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
March 20-26	National Poison Prevention Week

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Key Dates

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Date Observance/Holiday

April 1 April Fools' Day
April 1-30 National Poetry Month
April 1-30 National Autism Awareness Month
April 1-30 National Occupational Therapy Month
April 1-30 School Library Month
April 2 International Children's Book Day
April 3 First Day of Ramadan
April 3-9 National Library Week
April 7 World Health Day
April 15 Good Friday
April 15-16 Passover* (First Days)
April 17 Easter
April 17-23 National Volunteer Week
April 17-23 National Coin Week
April 17-23 National Student Leadership Week
April 18 Patriot's Day
April 18-22 Public School Volunteer Week
April 22 Earth Day
April 22-23 Passover (Concluding Days)
April 24-30 Administrative Professionals Week and Day
April 27-28 Holocaust Remembrance Day*
April 28 Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day™
April 29 National Arbor Day
May 1 Law Day
May 1 School Lunch Hero Day
May 1-7 Be Kind to Animals Week
May 1-7 National Physical Education and Sports Week
May 1-8 National Music Week
May 1-31 Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 1-31 Better Hearing and Speech Month
May 1-31 National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
May 1-31 Preservation Month

Date Observance/Holiday

May 2-6 Teacher Appreciation Week
May 3 National Teacher Day
May 3 World Press Freedom Day
May 4 Horace Mann's Birthday
May 4 National Bike to School Day
May 5 Cinco de Mayo
May 6 School Lunch Hero Day
May 8 World Red Cross Day
May 8 Mother's Day
May 8-14 Food Allergy Action Week
May 11 National School Nurse Day
May 21 Armed Forces Day
May 23 Victoria Day (Canada)
May 30 Memorial Day
May 31 World No Tobacco Day
June – July Fireworks Safety Month
June 1-30 Caribbean-American Heritage Month
June 1-30 Great Outdoors Month
June 1-30 LGBTQ+ Pride Week
June 5 World Environment Day
June 12 Race Unity Day
June 14 Flag Day
June 16 International Day of the African Child
June 19 Juneteenth
June 19 Father's Day
June 21 First Day of Summer

*Begins at sunset on the preceding day

Please note: Some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

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Plan your school recognitions and celebrations

Recognition of achievements, promotions and, especially, graduation, is an essential part of any student's school experience. The pandemic has turned the school experience upside down. While the systems and routines are different, some things remain the same. It is as important as ever to recognize and honor the hard work and achievements of students, especially the culmination of 12 years of hard work at graduation.

Celebrate your graduates

The last year has been an experience of insecurity, uncertainty, fear, lack of motivation and connection. Students who are graduating this year are experiencing higher rates of mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. They are graduating into a difficult environment where entry-level employment may be harder to obtain and the normal college experience will be disrupted.

Graduation is a tremendous accomplishment. Let's send them off with the very best wishes and as much support for their future as possible.

Traditionally or virtually celebrating

Schools can create a positive graduation experience for students regardless of their operational status for in-person, hybrid or remote learning. Now in the middle of year two of this pandemic, we can at least look to socially distanced celebrations from last year as a guide for the Class of 2021.

In-person

Traditional ceremonies may be an option for schools that have been open for in-person activities. If your school has been operating in-person, it will be important to continue following COVID-19 safety guidelines for your ceremony.

Be sure to follow district guidelines for school activities and remind parents about the rules. Limiting attendance to immediate families or splitting ceremonies into more than one event may suffice. If disappointed family members express opposition to the limitations, be sure to publicize the official rules for events, including the CDC list of Frequently Asked Questions for Event Planners. This list includes guidance for the number of guests, how to respond in the event of an outbreak, cleaning recommendations and more. <http://bit.ly/30aTAUo>

Virtual or socially distanced

Virtual activities do not replace personal connections, but they can substitute for normal events if done thoughtfully — and people are getting used to them now. Here are some ideas for honoring graduates from a distance:

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Live stream the graduation ceremony, combined with embedded, pre-recorded video messages from the board chair, music performances, valedictorian, etc. The ceremony could still include speeches and recognitions from the principal, superintendent and a few board members, but it can be scripted to include graduate speeches, graduate names with photo screenshots, and even cap tossing. Try to be interactive, inspiring and briefer than in-person events. Personalizing the event is key. Trade off reading names of graduates as their photos flash on screen. Ask students or parents to send them in. Make a photo gallery available on the school website. Offer to send links of the recording.

Deliver diplomas personally. Last year, some principals or superintendents brought diplomas to students at home. Students wore caps and gowns and posed for a photo as they received their diplomas. This works well for schools with smaller enrollments. Larger schools could consider dividing the lists of graduates into smaller groups assigned to all administrators and school board members. Consider posting photos online or mailing a hard copy to each student.

Celebrating the rite of passage

To help your students feel recognized, consider public or community recognition:

- Print posters with class photos if the graduating class is not too large.
- Send a Facebook frame to parents: “Proud to be the parent of a 2021 graduate.” Make frame files in photo editing software or using Facebook’s Frame Studio app (www.facebook.com/help/347754702253981).
- Make lawn signs for your graduating seniors stating, “Home of a South High School Graduate, Class of 2021.”
- Work with local businesses to offer promotions or discounts to graduating seniors.
- Buy an ad or partner with the local paper to print a gallery or list of graduates.

Send ideas to parents for at-home celebration ideas:

- Organize a car parade. Announce a drive-by of seniors. Have them decorate their cars and drive through their neighborhood honking and celebrating. Be sure neighbors know so they can line the street waving.
- Decorate your front door with messages of congratulations and photos of your senior.
- Don’t forget to send graduation announcements. This traditional practice is still an important way to announce this happy occasion and celebrate seniors.
- Plan a virtual graduation party. Send formal invitations, dress up for the video chat, and toast and plan fun activities, including food, dancing, karaoke, etc.

Resources

Schools often generously share resources and ideas. Be sure to check out the activities from colleagues to ensure that students get sufficient recognition to feel honored and ready to close out this chapter of their lives and prepare for what’s next. Here are some examples:

Five ideas for a pandemic-proof graduation

www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/five-ideas-for-a-pandemic-proof-graduation/2020/05

High School Seniors Are ‘Making Lemonade out of Lemons’ With Graduations Online, at Drive-Ins and on Racetracks

<https://time.com/5836369/high-school-graduation-coronavirus>

The Class of COVID-19

www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/17/us/wellesley-college-graduation-coronavirus.html

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Refresher guide to AP style

When writing a press release for your district Web page, you are likely more concerned about content than whether you have all your commas in the right place. However, following the Associated Press Stylebook is a good idea for everyone who writes for the public.

AP Style, as it is known, is the go-to guide for journalism and news writing. It helps writers stay consistent and present material to the public in a universal style. And since public relations professionals work so closely with journalists and the media, it makes sense to use the same writing format.

One benefit of following AP style is efficiency. The editors who receive your press releases don't have to spend a lot of time editing for proper grammar and punctuation. News outlets are more likely to use press releases that are print-ready.

Another benefit is that it boosts the professionalism of documents your district produces. People expect communications from their district to have a consistent look and level of competence. Improper grammar and errors in syntax and punctuation can make you look amateurish.

Although the AP Stylebook was published as a guide for journalists, it is commonly used in classrooms and corporate offices as well. The printed version is updated every two years. The online version (www.apstylebook.com) is updated throughout the year. Both sell for under \$30.

Because writing styles evolve with the times, the AP Stylebook does too. The latest edition (55th Edition for 2020-22) contains more than 200 new or revised entries. They include:

- A new entry on **gender-neutral language**: The AP Stylebook advises reconsidering any word or term that has the effect of emphasizing one gender over another — for example, *search* instead of *manhunt*, and use terms such as *chair* or *chairperson* unless the -man or -woman terms are specified by an organization.
- **Climate change** is considered more accurate than global warming: The two terms are often used interchangeably, but the AP Stylebook says climate change is the more accurate scientific term. Global warming is just one aspect of climate change.
- **Homeless** is acceptable as an adjective: While it is acceptable to use homeless to describe people without a fixed residence, the AP Stylebook advises avoiding the collective noun *the homeless*. Instead, use phrases like homeless people, people without housing or people without homes.
- **Pled** is now acceptable. The AP Stylebook now says it no longer has strong feelings about the use of the word pled as past tense of the verb plead. “*Our preference is pleaded. Webster’s New World College Dictionary recognizes both ‘pleaded’ and ‘pled.’*”

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The AP Stylebook includes more than 600 pages and includes guides for everything from abbreviations to punctuation to use of numbers and capitalization. Some of the more commonly used (and misused) guides include:

- **Punctuation**

Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in most simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick, Harry or Jeannette.*

Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

Use a comma before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.*

- **Abbreviations**

Use only the most commonly recognized abbreviations: The most common, such as NASA, FBI and CIA, can be used on all references. Less well-known, but still common ones, such as OSHA and NATO, can be used after you spell out the full name on the first mention. In most cases, however, the stylebook suggests using a generic reference, such as “the agency” or “the alliance,” for all references after the first.

Use an apostrophe and spell out academic degrees: *She holds a bachelor’s degree.* Use abbreviations for degrees only when you need to include a list of credentials after a name and set them off with commas: *Peter White, LL.D., Ph.D., was the keynote speaker.*

Spell out the names of all states when used alone: *He lives in Montana.* Abbreviate state names of seven or more letters when used with a city name, with commas before and after the abbreviation: *Pittsburgh, Pa., is a great weekend getaway spot for people who live in Youngstown, Ohio.*

Spell out the name of a month when it is used without a specific date: *August is too hot for a visit to Florida.* Abbreviate months with six or more letters if they are used with a specific date such as *Sept. 28.* Always spell out those with five or fewer letters: *May 15.*

Spell out all generic parts of street names (avenue, north, road) when no specific address is given: *The festival will be held on South Charles Street.* When a number is used, abbreviate avenue (Ave.), boulevard (Blvd.), street (St.), and directional parts of street names: *The suspect was identified as Michael Shawn of 1512 N. Mission St.*

In writing news stories, never abbreviate:

- o The days of the week
- o Percent as %
- o Cents as ¢
- o The word “and” unless the symbol & is an official part of a name
- o Christmas as Xmas

- **Capitalization**

Capitalize common nouns such as party, river, and street when they are part of a proper name for a place, person or thing: For example, the *Libertarian Party*, the *Ohio River*. But lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone or in subsequent references: *The party*

did not have a candidate for president. She nearly drowned in the river. Lowercase all plural uses of common nouns: *the Libertarian and Green parties, the Monongahela and Ohio rivers.*
Lowercase directional indicators: The exception is when they refer to specific geographic regions or popularized names for those regions — for example, *the Northeast or the Midwest.*

- **Numbers**

In general, spell out numbers one through nine: Use figures for numbers 10 on up. However, there are many exceptions that always take figures. Most, but not all, involve units of measurement. Common exceptions include:

- o **Addresses:** *7 Park Place*
- o **Ages, but not for inanimate objects:** *The 4-year-old cat, the four-year-old car*
- o **Cents:** *8 cents*
- o **Dollars:** *\$3.* Notice that AP style does not include a period and two zeroes when referring to an even dollar figure
- o **Dates:** *March 4.* Notice that dates take cardinal numbers, not ordinal numbers (don't use 4th)
- o **Dimensions:** *5 foot 2, 5-by-9 cell*
- o **Highways:** *Route 7*
- o **Millions, billions:** *6 billion people*
- o **Percentages:** *1 percent.* Notice that percent is one word.
- o **Speed:** *8 mph*
- o **Temperatures:** *2 degrees*
- o **Times:** *4 p.m.* Notice that AP style does not include a colon and two zeroes when referring to an even hour.
- o **Spell out numbers used at the beginning of a sentence:** *Ten thousand people marched on the capital.* Exception: Never spell out years: *1999 was a terrible year for technology companies.*
- o **Use commas to set off each group of three digits in numerals higher than 999.** Exception is for years and addresses: *12,650.*
- o **Use decimals (up to two places) for amounts in the millions and billions:** Do this if no precise figure is required: *\$3.74 billion.*
- o **Add an "s" but no apostrophe to a number to make it plural:** *She kept rolling 7s.* The same rule applies to decades: *the 1980s.* Use an apostrophe on a decade only if cutting off the initial figures: *the '80s.*

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School board 101: Help new board members become members of your school team

Spring school board elections are coming up, and new board members will take on this volunteer leadership role in your district. Some candidates may not understand the scope of this position. What are the limits and expectations of the role? How do they join existing members to be an effective team member? How do they get up to speed quickly to understand the wide range of policy and operational issues that affect decision-making?

Current school board members can take action to ensure a smooth transition and a functional, efficient team when there are openings for new members. Here are tips for creating a productive school board climate and helping new members be successful.

Who are the potential candidates?

Community members run for school boards for many reasons. Some have long ties to schools as parents, volunteers or former staff members. Some candidates have a genuine interest in education and are dedicated to making a difference for the students in schools in the community. Other potential candidates may have issues with the schools or school policies and see serving on the school board as a way to address their concerns or advance their interests. Still, others may consider serving on a school board as a stepping stone to higher office.

Whoever these individuals are and whatever reasons they have for seeking school board service, the other school board members and district personnel must welcome these new members and work with them to make them part of the team.

Tips to help recruit, inform and orient potential and new board members about your schools and school issues

Recruit

For potential school board candidates:

- Be open any time and anywhere to respond to questions about school board service and what's required to be a board member. Consider developing talking points for board members and administrators to use in responding to these inquiries.
- Encourage volunteers who serve on district committees or who are active at the school level to consider board service when openings become available.
- Add anyone who expresses an interest in your schools or in school board service to your list of key community members who receive regular updates from the district.

Inform

For school board candidates who have filed for election:

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- As soon as a community member applies for an open position on your board or files for election to a board position, invite them to attend board meetings, prepare board packets for them and deliver the packets to them at the same time and in the same way you deliver packets to current board members.
- Arrange for them to meet with key district staff to learn about the budget, school programs and school policies.
- Once an appointment is made or the election is over, make sure unsuccessful candidates are invited to continue their interests in the schools through membership on other district committees or in other school activities and keep them on your list of “key communicators.”

Orient

For newly appointed or elected board members:

- Assign the new board member a seat next to the superintendent or a senior board member who can answer questions and help explain board protocols as well as the issues on the board agenda.
- Help new board members to understand your district’s mission and keep it in mind in every board decision.
- Make sure new board members have detailed meetings with key district staff and that they have the opportunity to observe school operations that they need to understand.
- In small districts, encourage each school principal to invite new board members for a school tour. In large districts, make sure new board members see representative schools at each level and any special school programs.
- Encourage new board members to take an active part in training programs offered by your state school boards association. State and national school boards association programs and materials are invaluable resources for educating board members about the essential role they play in assuring the best educational opportunities for all of the students in your district.
- Remember to have fun working together to make a difference for the kids in your community.

Contributed by Jeanne Magmer, C&M Communications, Portland Oregon

April 2021

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School board tips for professional online activity

Many school board members have personal social media accounts. Facebook and Twitter make it easy to broadly communicate to your community and have numerous benefits. They are widely used by board members for election campaigns, to stay updated on educational issues and district news, and they are useful for keeping in touch with personal and professional contacts.

Board members are free to use their personal social media accounts for personal opinion, expression and engagement; however, as public officials, their use requires caution and thoughtfulness. While not district employees, school board members represent the district, and a controversial post can take away from the educational focus of a school or district.

Recent news headlines involving school board members highlight the fact that board members need to be aware of the responsibility of their office. While board members are allowed to have personal and political opinions, the public finds it challenging to differentiate between a post made by an elected official and one made by a private citizen. A board member's "hat" never comes off. Board members' actions and words reflect on the school district, whether positive or negative.

Read examples in the following news stories:

"Peninsula school board member faces criticism for social media posts on race, Capitol riot"
www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article248957894.html

"School board member's social media under fire"
<https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/499490-400450-lethal-force-school-board-members-social-media-under-fire>

"Newark residents condemn school board president's disparaging remark during public meeting"
<https://newark.chalkbeat.org/2021/1/29/22256487/newark-school-board-josephine-garcia>

Social media policy

It is a good idea for every school district to have a social media policy. If you do not have a policy or if your policy needs a refresher, Edutopia's "How to Create Social Media Guidelines for Your School" is a step-by-step guide full of resources, policy examples and case studies to set your school board up for social media success. The guide takes you from organizing a policy team to sharing policy drafts with the community and an attorney.
www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/edutopia-anderson-social-media-guidelines.pdf

For sample board policies, see Highline School District's social media guidelines for staff, students and school board members: www.highlineschools.org/about/board-policies/series-4000.

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Social media guidelines

Everyone needs a reminder to keep social media posts considerate and respectful. However, school board members are under additional scrutiny and should follow these tips:

- Set privacy settings on personal social media accounts. On Facebook, turn off facial recognition, hide your full profile from search engines and limit who sees your photos and posts.
- Know copyright laws. Just because you found a quote or picture on Google search, doesn't mean you have permission to use it. Stanford University provides a basic summary of copyright law here: <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/faqs/copyright-basics>.
- Post thoughtfully and keep it positive. Don't vent on the internet. Reserve your frustrations for in-person conversations. If you don't want the post on the front page of the local paper, don't post it.
- Fact-check your posts. Before you reshare or retweet a post, check the post for accuracy with FactCheck.org (www.factcheck.org) or Snopes (www.snopes.com).
- Avoid liking controversial posts and/or pages. If your privacy settings aren't set, anyone can see your entire Facebook activity, including "liking" a post.

Virtual board meetings

Board members should also be aware of the effect of their behavior at board meetings. An extreme example is the recent resignation of an entire board in California after board members were heard making disparaging remarks while broadcasting live (<http://abcn.ws/3qlignA>). There have also been other headlines this past year of board members making offensive comments during a board meeting or not complying with mask requirements or social distancing.

Because of the pandemic, most school board meetings are still online and accessible to anyone with internet access. A board member's words, attire, body language and facial expressions are visible to all viewers and are recorded as public record.

Follow these best practices for board meetings:

- Make regular eye contact with the camera. The community wants to know you are listening.
- Dress professionally as you would for an in-person meeting. This tells the community that you respect their time and attention.
- Comply with COVID-19 requirements for your county. If your board is meeting in-person, follow the mask and social distancing guidelines.

Above all, remain calm and think before you speak, post or tweet. The community is looking to school boards to guide our community through this pandemic.

Additional resources:

Connect Safely - The Educator's Guide to Social Media

www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/eduguide.pdf

How to Use Facebook Privacy Settings

www.consumerreports.org/privacy/facebook-privacy-settings/

"Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Board Members"

<http://bit.ly/3ec1vZI>



COVID and Kids' Mental Health



**April
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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.

Pandemic-related changes have been challenging for everyone over the last year. Parents are trying to work while helping their children learn, and children are experiencing school in periodic or ongoing isolation.

Kids are resilient, but we are now heading into the second year of pandemic living. The “new normal” of these changes has been difficult for kids, who are experiencing higher rates of mental health issues.

“Children thrive when they are safe and protected, when family and community connections are stable and nurturing, and when their basic needs are met.

The coronavirus pandemic and the unprecedented measures to contain its spread are disrupting nearly every aspect of children's lives: their health, development, learning, behavior, their families' economic security and their protection from violence and abuse.

And their mental health.”

World Economic Forum: <http://bit.ly/309PawO>

What can parents do?

We can't change the circumstances of the pandemic, but parents can make it easier for their children to cope with the disruptions that include changes to routines, school and socializing, and insecurity about safety and missed life events.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a list of parental resources for children's wellbeing during COVID-19, including links to resources to help support children's social, emotional and mental well-being during COVID-19 and beyond: <http://bit.ly/3ropNDL>

Parent tips to help maintain stability and support to children:

- Talk, listen, and encourage expression.
- Give honest and accurate information.
- Teach simple steps to stay healthy.
- Be alert for any change in behavior.
- Reassure children about their safety and well-being.

Parent tips to help with stress:

Recognize and address fear, stress and behavior changes.

Children might worry about getting sick with COVID-19, and about their loved ones getting sick, too. Excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration are signs of stress in children. Adult support is essential to help children cope.

Teach and reinforce everyday preventive actions.

Empower children to protect themselves. There are actions we can take to help prevent getting sick. Be a good role model — if adults wash their hands often, stay at least 6 feet apart from others, and wear their masks in public spaces to help protect themselves and others, then children are more likely to do the same.

Help keep children healthy.

Schedule well-child and immunizations visits for children. Seek continuity in mental and occupational health care. Help children to eat healthy food and drink water — instead of sugar-sweetened beverages — for strong teeth. Encourage children to play outdoors — it's great for physical and mental health, and can help children stay healthy and focused.

Help children stay socially connected.

Reach out to friends and family via phone or video chats. Write cards or letters to family members they may not be able to visit.

Tips for talking to children

Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Reassure children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.

Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.

Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.

Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online.

Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Provide information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing, sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, and then throw the tissue into the trash.

<http://bit.ly/3rct0pP>