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# ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

## Keep families engaged with an easy-to-use website

Families are more engaged now than before the pandemic due to the switch to virtual instruction. Digital communications and the wider availability of WiFi and devices made it easier for parent-school communication.

*“More than three-quarters of educators said that parent-school communication increased during the pandemic. And more than a third—37 percent—said it increased “a lot,” according to a survey by the EdWeek Research Center.” [www.edweek.org/leadership/pandemic-parents-are-more-engaged-how-can-schools-keep-it-going/2021/09](http://www.edweek.org/leadership/pandemic-parents-are-more-engaged-how-can-schools-keep-it-going/2021/09)*

Facebook live videos, daily website updates and email blasts were crucial to getting COVID-related information to families quickly. Your school community has come to rely on your digital communications and especially your website to find out COVID-related information and general school updates. Your website might have barely been accessed pre-pandemic, but now it’s a well-used hub of important information.

Now that schools are approaching the mid-year mark of in-person school, take some time to refresh your website and ensure all families can access information. Follow these recommendations to optimize your website:

### Navigation

Your homepage should be simple and guide users to where they want to go fast. Include quick links, rotating images, social media links, news and events. Quick links let users find information faster. List latest events with a link to view the entire calendar and use images to draw attention to important events.

### Internal links

Having internal links connecting your pages so that the content is easy to find and easy to consume is a best practice. If you have a page that is not being linked to from any other page, consider adding some links or removing it. If you publish a blog or newsletter, it should also include hyperlinks to other relevant pages on the school’s website. This will help your SEO and improve the user experience because users will be able to find relevant content faster. <https://marketing.sfgate.com/blog/seo-for-schools>

### Responsive design

Many families access your website solely on smartphones. According to the Pew Research

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Center, reliance on smartphones for online access is especially common among younger adults, lower-income Americans and those with a high school education or less. [www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/](http://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/)

Google offers a mobile-friendly testing tool (<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>) that can be used on a page-by-page basis so you can determine which sections of your website are fully optimized, and which could use some improvements.

### **Website accessibility requirements**

The pandemic revealed the importance of website accessibility. Remote learning and zoom meetings made it easier for some people with disabilities to engage and participate in school activities. People should be able to count on the same easy access to content on your website. Website accessibility standards include requirements for alt text on photos, subtitles and transcripts with videos, and a design with required structural and navigational elements.

A quick way to check your web accessibility is to use the Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE). You can simply enter your web page address (URL) for a report or use a WAVE browser extension to test accessibility directly within your web browser. <https://wave.webaim.org/>

Consider involving your community in the process. Ask students and/or families with disabilities (sight, hearing and cognition) to “test” your website. Use community feedback to make necessary changes and ensure your website and other digital content are easy to use for everyone.

### **School website example**

Dayton Public Schools in Ohio recently won an award of excellence from NSPRA. Their website is visually appealing, easy to navigate and updated regularly. Their website layout design includes these useful features:

- A pop-up window with links to latest news, calendar and bell schedule, COVID-19 metrics and crisis line contact information
- Urgent news in a scrolling banner below navigation
- A “slider” of most frequently requested features
- “Popular” section of linked images to student enrollment, employee log-in, school board meetings, staff directory, COVID-19 metrics, etc.

[www.dps.k12.oh.us](http://www.dps.k12.oh.us)

See NSPRA’s digital media award winners for more ideas: [www.nspira.org/publications-digital-media-award-winners-2021#Internet\\_Intranet\\_Website](http://www.nspira.org/publications-digital-media-award-winners-2021#Internet_Intranet_Website)

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