

### Social Media for School Communication

It's easy to dismiss social media as a fascination of young people but to do so minimizes one of the fastest growing trends in technology. The Pew Internet and American Life Project recently found that over 71% of teens have a Facebook profile and 75% of adults have one too. Social media tools have become the way for a school or business to quickly and efficiently disseminate information. Because of the almost universal access to social media across all demographic groups it often reaches people that traditional forms of communication miss.

The online presence for many schools has moved beyond the school website. It now includes a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), a Twitter account ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)), blogs by teachers, principals or the superintendent, and YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) for sharing videos and photos about school events.

#### Seven Reasons to Pay Attention to Social Media

1. **It Builds Relationships** – Creating relationships is important for leaders and social media is a new, and very effective, way to build support among your stakeholders.
2. **It's About Customers** – Parents and employees often come from a different generation, one that wants to work differently and to be involved in the educational process. Social media is a way to engage them in the life of your school.
3. **They're Already Talking** – Check out the Internet and other online sites. People are already commenting about your school and about your leadership.
4. **Listen as Well as Share** – The principal is responsible for maintaining the school's image. Use social media to interact with parents and community. Use it to both hear from them and to share information. It can provide a way to detect rumors and allow you to respond quickly.
5. **You'll Be Well Received** – Almost everyone we've talked with reports the positive reception they get from having a blog, a Twitter feed or a school Facebook page.
6. **It Builds Community** – People commit to things they care about. As we described earlier, the public is less trustful of schools. Social media promotes community by inviting people to be part of the conversation.
7. **It's Here to Stay** – While the forms of social media continue to change the evidence is that our use of the tools will only accelerate. Increasingly the expectation is that schools stay connected to their families and their community. Social media is the tool. (Adapted from: Porterfield & Carnes (2010), AASA Online)

#### Getting Started

**Facebook** has become the standard for social media presence. Having a school or district Facebook page establishes your district as one that is up-to-date, comfortable with a more transparent environment and capable of disseminating information quickly. You can create your school or district's Facebook page by going to the sign-up page ([www.facebook.com/FacebookPages](http://www.facebook.com/FacebookPages)). At the bottom is a link to "Create a Page for a Business" that will walk you through the process.



#### Resources

Selected print and online resources about this topic are available on page 2.

**Twitter** is another phenomenon. It is a form of micro-blogging and each entry is limited to no more than 140 characters. It's based on a simple concept--people want to know what is happening and Twitter is a way to deliver brief updates quickly and efficiently to people who follow your account.

**YouTube and Flickr** provide tools for schools to post pictures and videos of school events. Both sites are free and provide a quick and easy way to share information about your school. You can build links between these accounts and Facebook or Twitter.

## Resources

### Print Resources

Williamson, R. & Johnston, J. H. (2012). *School Leader's Guide to Social Media*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. ([www.eyoneducation.com](http://www.eyoneducation.com))

### Online Resources

**Pew Internet and American Life Project** ([www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)) - This research center provides information and tools for understanding the impact of social media on American society.

**Facebook Page** – ([www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php)) This site provides information about creating a Facebook page for your school or district. These pages are different than a personal site and the site will walk you through the process of creating your page.

**Social Media and Young Adults** (2010) – This report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project shares data about the use of social media by young adults.

(<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx>)

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