

NSPRA This Week – Tip of the Week

November 27, 2012

Listed below is the snapshot of a 2011-2012 NSPRA Golden Achievement Award-winning entry from West Des Moines Community Schools' School/Community Relations Specialist Lauri Pyatt. She can be reached at pyattl@wdcms.org.

WDMCS Social Media Plan: Expanding Facebook to Our Schools

Research

- Determined our district demographics closely matched the demographics of the average Facebook user.
- Found examples from other schools as well as existing Facebook pages related to our schools and began to monitor content.
- Consulted district attorneys for legal advice on the use of social media in a school/business setting and in creating social media guidelines for the district.
- Attended seminars and programs in the metro area focusing on social media strategies and best practices.
- Tracked clicks on links posted to the district Facebook page (www.facebook.com/wdmcs) to determine usage.
- Prior to launching the new pages, sent a survey to the audiences of our schools to gather insights on who is using Facebook, how often and what they would most like to see.

Analysis/Planning

- To expand the district's social media presence at the building level from two unofficial pages to 10 official pages by the end of the first semester of the 2011-12 school year.
 - The office of school/community relations would like to gain administrative access to two unofficial pages.
 - Contact the administrator of the pages and work with them instead of trying to get it shut down.
 - Used one of our buildings as a pilot school in the spring of 2011 to test our process for expanding to the buildings.
- To decrease by 90 percent from 2009-10 to 2011-12 the average number of Facebook pages claiming to represent the school district or its schools.
 - Develop guidelines and best practices for establishing a new Facebook page, which would require contacting the office of school/community relations, and communicate to all district staff and groups.
 - Continually advertise our Facebook presence in printed and web-based materials.
- As the individual building pages are launched, increase awareness among district staff on the importance of social media responsibility as a public employee.
 - Create and distribute social media guidelines to educate district staff about best practices on their personal Facebook pages and encourage thoughtful use of this tool.

- Encourage staff not to friend students on their personal Facebook accounts.
- Inform staff of the differences between using Facebook as an individual versus on behalf of the district.
- Communicate best practices to administration, staff and parents who will be posting to the pages.

Communication/Implementation

- Using the pilot school, came up with a packet to help explain the expansion process to the schools.
 - Meet with each school principal and any staff or parents they identified as admins of the page to go over the process.
 - Emailed a survey monkey link to each school's audience and shared the results with the page admins. Survey showed them what would work best for their content and posting schedule.
 - The office of school/community relations created each page and then added the identified personnel as administrators to the page, while remaining administrators ourselves.
- Advertise when each school's Facebook page is live.
 - Post a notice on the district's Facebook page of each new school page and ask the district's followers to like them.
 - Email parents and staff to let them know when their school's Facebook page is up and ask them to like the page.
 - Post a notice in the school's newsletter about the new Facebook page and update any other printed materials.
- Maintain a positive message about the schools, while counteracting negative or misleading posts and/or pages.
 - Enhance communication with our target audiences by posting informative content and directing them to our website when appropriate for more information.
 - Determined schools should post a minimum of three times per week and a maximum of one post per day.
 - Participate in the conversations – answer every posted question or comments with a positive voice.
 - If a question or comment is negative or requires more explanation, take the conversation offline by giving a contact name, email and phone number.
 - If a question or comment is defamatory, point to the Acceptable Use Tab, which was created by the district and outlines prohibited content, and then delete the comment.

Evaluation

- After our pilot page was successful, we have since launched pages for each of our school buildings to surpass this objective by four pages (the district has 14 buildings and 16 official Facebook pages). We were able to surpass this objective more than three months ahead of our intended deadline.
- We were able to successfully gain administrative rights to two pages representing themselves as one of our schools. One was created by a student who was deleted as an administrator after he graduated. The other was created by a PTO group and they have added us as administrators and we are currently working with them and the principal.

- We have embraced the idea that as administrators to our page we are the thought leaders. We have found with controversial topics that if we do not post about them, they do not get talked about on our pages. Through this approach, we have been able to keep a positive feel to our pages. It has also allowed us to quickly and easily answer questions and clarify topics from our constituents, when they might not have otherwise sought the information.
- Our district lawyer has drafted a school board policy on social media that is currently up for approval. The guidelines we created will most like become the rules and regulations under that policy.

For more information and to learn more about the
National School Public Relations Association, please visit www.nspra.org.

© 2012 National School Public Relations Association