



K-12 Social Media Guide:

*Practical Strategies
for Schools*

 **Mission**

K-12 Social Media Guide: Practical Strategies for Schools

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K-12 Social Media Guide: Practical Strategies for Schools



You already know that social media is powerful. You've likely seen it work for other schools: building trust, growing enrollment, and helping communities feel more connected. But if your school hasn't quite tapped into that full potential, you're not alone.

Here's the truth: **running your school's social media is not the same as posting to your personal account.** It requires strategy, consistency, and intentionality.

We'll also be real with you: **doing something well requires resourcing.** Social media doesn't work when it's just "a little here and there." It requires strategy, consistency, and intentionality. A school's social presence should reflect its values, culture, and people - and that takes more than just occasional posts.

But the great thing about social is that you can scale it to the time, tools, and team you already have. That's what it means to be strategic.

Why Social Media Matters for Schools

Parents are actively researching schools online, and social media plays a significant role in their decision-making process. **A survey by Niche found that Facebook (36%), Instagram (20%), and YouTube (9%)** were the most influential platforms for parents evaluating schools through social media.

Additionally, **84% of 18–29-year-olds** and **81% of 30–49-year-olds** use some form of social media ([Pew Research Center, 2021](#)). This means that a school's social media presence can play a **pivotal role in a parent's first impression** when choosing a school for their child.

With people spending an average of **over two hours per day on social media** ([Statista, 2023](#)), it is essential for schools to make their presence known online and actively engage with their community.

Whether you're brand-new to managing your school's social presence or looking to get more out of it going forward, this guide will walk you through how to connect with families, build school pride, and support your enrollment goals - without burning out.

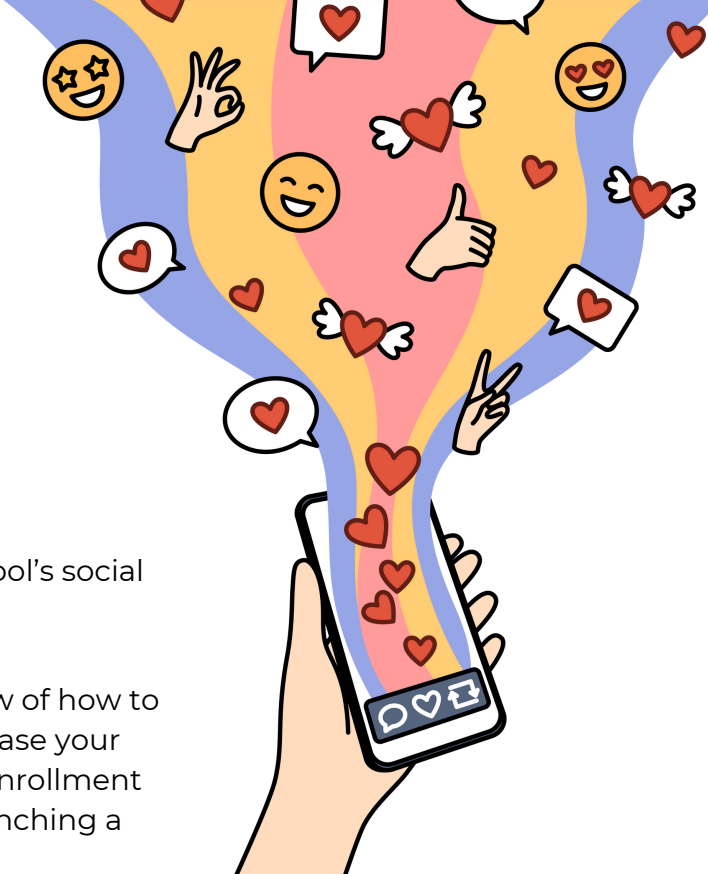
Over the next chapters, you'll find the essential actions to take - and the missteps to avoid - to help your school show up authentically online and make the most of its reach.

Let's get started!



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Quick Start Checklist

Feeling overwhelmed when it comes to your school's social media? You're not alone.

This guide will give you a comprehensive overview of how to best manage your school's social media to showcase your community, connect with families, and support enrollment efforts - whether you're posting day-to-day or launching a recruitment campaign.

If you want to dive in right away, here's a simple checklist to get you started, which is especially helpful if social media is just one of many roles you play:

- ☐ Choose your top 1–2 platforms (or start with Facebook and Instagram)
- ☐ Create a school social media calendar with all upcoming events
- ☐ Post regularly using authentic photos or videos
- ☐ Use a scheduling tool to plan ahead (Meta Business Suite is free!)
- ☐ Respond to all comments and DMs (direct messages) within 24–48 hours
- ☐ Track reach + engagement weekly to see what's working
- ☐ Repost top-performing content (yes, it's OK!)
- ☐ Ask one staff member per week to share a photo, quote, or update
- ☐ Save your content to a media library for future use

The Basics



Choosing the Right Platforms

Put Your Effort Where Your People Are

Not all social media platforms serve the same purpose, and not all will be effective for all schools. The key is to focus on the platforms where your audience - parents, students, alumni, and prospective families - are already most active. Schools need to remember that they have **two primary audiences** on social media:

- 1. Current families, students, and staff** – These individuals are already engaged with your school and rely on social media for news and updates, community-building, and celebrations of student achievements.
- 2. Prospective families and staff** – These people don't know your school well yet, but they are looking for a place where they feel connected, valued, and confident in their child's education. Social media is a window into your school's culture and offerings.

Social Media Platforms



Facebook – A key platform for engaging parents and school supporters. Facebook is great for sharing school updates, news and event announcements, and community-building posts. Parent groups, event listings, and live videos can help deepen engagement.

Recommendation: Your school needs to have a Facebook page.



Instagram – A highly visual platform that works well for showcasing student life, behind-the-scenes moments, and celebrations. Instagram Stories, Reels, and carousel posts help highlight the vibrancy of your school community.

Recommendation: Instagram generally reaches a younger audience than Facebook - so it's important to have an Instagram account to reach Millennial/Gen-X parents.



LinkedIn – Best for teacher/staff recruitment, professional networking, and sharing thought leadership content related to education.

Recommendation: LinkedIn can be a useful tool, yet many schools opt not to have their own LinkedIn accounts or pages. School Districts almost always have LinkedIn accounts.



YouTube – Ideal for longer-form video content such as virtual tours, student testimonials, and recorded school events.

Recommendation: Your school should have a YouTube account - or access to your District's YouTube account.



X/Twitter – A great platform for quick updates, event coverage, and engaging with media and education-related discussions.

Recommendation: As of 2025, many schools are discontinuing the use of their X accounts. However, it makes sense to keep your school's username (so no one else can claim it), even if you don't actively post.



TikTok – This can be an excellent way to engage students with short, authentic, and entertaining videos.

Recommendation: TikTok requires a different strategy and approach from other social media platforms. Consider whether you have the time or capacity to manage a TikTok account, and if it will help you reach your target audience.

Creating Social Media Content That Connects

Engage Families with Authentic, Consistent Content

The content you create should reflect the vibrancy of your school community. People want to see real, relatable moments. Your content should tell stories, celebrate successes, and provide insight into daily school life. After all, these are the things that set your school apart.

- **Real-life Snapshots & Videos** – Showcase students and teachers in action through candid moments and behind-the-scenes footage.
- **Live Streams** – Host live Q&A sessions (which can be as short as a couple of minutes!), parent-teacher discussions, or event highlights to create real-time engagement.
- **Alumni Spotlights** – Feature past students to inspire current families and demonstrate long-term success.
- **User-Generated Content** – Encourage parents, students, and teachers to share their own experiences and tag the school.

Representation Matters: Make Sure Everyone Sees Themselves

Your audiences should see themselves in your marketing. Be intentional about featuring diverse students, families, and staff in your posts, including your photos and videos. This ensures that current and prospective families can envision (and see) themselves as part of your school community.

If your school community includes multilingual families, consider posting in more than one language or including captions and translations where possible. Even a few key posts in a family's home language can go a long way in making them feel seen, welcomed, and included.



Involve Your School Community in Content Creation

Although posting to social media may be one person's responsibility, it takes a team effort to create dynamic and engaging content that represents the full spectrum of your school community.

Involve teachers, staff, and students across grades and departments in the content creation process. Encourage:

- A variety of teachers to share classroom highlights and learning moments.
- Students to document and submit photos or videos of their experiences.
- Various staff to contribute behind-the-scenes glimpses of school activities.
- Clubs and teams to provide updates on their events and initiatives.



Not only does this make your content richer and more representative, but it also fosters greater engagement from the school community itself.

Along those lines, it's crucial to include a diverse range of content that represents all aspects of school life. Avoid focusing too much on one area, such as athletics or academics alone.

Instead, highlight:

- Arts, music, and theater programs
- STEM projects and classroom learning
- Community service initiatives
- Sports achievements and team spirit
- Special education and inclusive programs
- Cultural celebrations and student clubs



Plan Ahead for Success

The key to successful social media content is planning. As an educator, you are REALLY busy - you can't be in all places at once.

Create a content calendar in advance to track upcoming events, celebrations, and important school milestones. Ensure there is someone to "cover" each event by taking photos and videos to ensure consistent, high-quality content for social media.

In addition, the key to working smarter, not harder is repurposing content across platforms. A great photo or video for Instagram can also work on Facebook and LinkedIn. Short clips from a YouTube video can become Reels or TikTok posts.

Pro Tip

Just because you posted an update once doesn't mean your audience will see it. Social media algorithms limit the potential organic reach of your posts - even if they're following you. More on that below in the Organic vs Paid Social Media section. **But the long and the short of it is - it's ok to post your best-performing content again (and again and again).** Although YOU may see it multiple times, your audience likely will not!



Organic vs. Paid Social Media

Should You Be Paying for People to See Your Content?

Organic social media efforts help build community engagement, but paid advertising allows schools to expand their “reach” (the people who see your content) beyond existing followers. It’s important to understand that organic reach is limited - even the people who already follow your school’s page may not see every post. Social media platforms prioritize content that receives high engagement, and without paying to promote your posts, your reach will be restricted.

Bottom Line:

If you want to consistently connect with new audiences, you have to pay to play.

Paid ads give you the opportunity to precisely target specific demographics, geographic areas, and interests, helping you highlight your school to prospective families and staff who may not otherwise find your school online.



When to pay:

- Promote important events for prospective families, like open houses and enrollment deadlines.
- Boost fundraising campaigns and donation drives.
- Highlight major school achievements or initiatives to a broader audience.

Additionally, creating a story arc - telling your school’s story over a series of paid social media ads, targeting the same audience of prospective parents, over time - is an excellent way to convince parents that YOUR school is the right fit for their child!

Paid Ads vs. Boosted Posts

It's helpful to understand the difference between **boosting a post** and running a **paid ad campaign**:

- **Boosted Post:** This is a quick way to turn an existing organic post into a paid one. Boosting is great for increasing engagement or visibility on a specific post, especially when you want more likes, shares, or comments. It can help more people see your school's most exciting announcements - and it takes about 5 minutes to get running!
- **Paid Ad Campaign:** This is built using your platform's Ads Manager (like Meta - Facebook and Instagram - Ads Manager). It gives you advanced targeting options, allows you to run multiple photo/video/text variations, gives you the ability to test two different versions of your messages (in marketing lingo, this is called A/B testing), and optimizes for specific goals like website visits, video views, or form submissions.

Pro Tip

Use boosted posts when you want to amplify high-performing organic content. Use paid ad campaigns when you have a clear objective, like driving registrations for an open house or building enrollment leads.

Strategic use of paid social media - whether through boosting or ad campaigns - can dramatically enhance your visibility and support enrollment and recruitment goals.

Paid social media advertising is one of the best ways to reach prospective families for your school - but you need to have a plan.

If you'd like assistance with setting up paid advertising to help reach your enrollment goals, [reach out to iMission!](#)



Scheduling Posts in Advance

Managing social media for a school is often just one of many responsibilities you may have on your plate. Scheduling posts in advance is one of the best ways to stay consistent, reduce stress, and work more efficiently.

Why Schedule in Advance?

- **Save time:** Batch content creation and schedule a week or month at a time.
- **Stay consistent:** Regular posting keeps your school visible, even during breaks or busy seasons.
- **Improve quality:** Planning ahead allows time to review and edit content before it goes live.
- **Align with school calendar:** Schedule content around events, announcements, and seasonal highlights.

Tools to Use

- Meta Business Suite (Free)
 - Schedule posts and stories to both Facebook and Instagram from one dashboard.
 - Offers performance insights and cross-posting options.
- Third-Party Schedulers (Paid)
 - Examples: [Later](#), [Buffer](#), [Hootsuite](#)
 - Benefits: More platforms in one place (LinkedIn, X, Youtube, etc.), better analytics, calendar views, content libraries, team collaboration features.

Is the Cost Worth It?

- If your school is posting across multiple platforms or managing multiple accounts, a paid scheduler can save hours each week.
- The efficiency gained can justify the cost, especially if it allows for more strategic, consistent storytelling that supports enrollment and community engagement.
- Some schedulers offer nonprofit or education discounts, so it's worth exploring your options.

Pro Tip

Even if you're scheduling, continue to check in daily (or every few days) to respond to comments and messages. Engagement is just as important as publishing.

By using a scheduling tool and planning ahead, your school can maintain a steady, engaging social media presence without scrambling to post each day.

The Importance of Engaging with Your Audience

Posting is only half the equation. Engagement is where the real connection happens. When your school responds to comments, answers questions, and joins conversations, it builds trust and strengthens relationships with your community.

Why Engagement Matters

- Builds trust and connection with current and prospective families.
- Increases reach, as platforms favor posts with more interactions.
- Shows your school is listening and values community input.

Responding to Comments and Messages

- Make sure you are using Facebook as your school when you respond to comments - otherwise it will come from your personal account.
- Respond promptly and positively - especially to questions or praise.
- Thank people who comment or share your posts.
- Invite further conversation when possible ("We're so proud too! What was your favorite part of the concert?").



Handling Negative or Critical Comments

- Stay calm, respectful, and professional.
- Acknowledge concerns and move the conversation offline when appropriate ("We're sorry to hear this. Please reach out to [contact info] so we can help.")
- Never argue publicly - keep responses brief and constructive.

When to Hide or Delete a Comment

- Hide a comment if it's off-topic, rude, or argumentative but not harmful. The person who wrote the comment will not know that you have hidden it, yet it keeps the comment invisible to others without escalating the situation.
- Delete comments that contain hate speech, profanity, threats, or violate your community guidelines.

Thoughtful engagement shows you care - and it encourages others to interact with your school too.



Social Media Best Practices for Schools

Photo and Video Best Practices

Visual content is the heart of any successful school social media strategy. High-quality photos and videos help tell your story, build trust, and encourage engagement from families, students, and prospective community members. **Here's how to make the most of your visual assets:**

Tell a Story

- Every photo or video should have a purpose. Think: What story are we telling?
- Highlight student growth, classroom experiences, school spirit, and community connection.

Prioritize Authenticity Over Perfection

- Use real students, staff, and families - not stock images.
- Capture natural moments: students learning, teachers interacting, parents volunteering.
- Smiles, laughter, and curiosity are more powerful than posed shots.

On this same note: A simple photo can be much more powerful than a highly stylized graphic. Don't worry about creating heavily-designed graphics in most instances!

Make Sure Faces Are Visible and Lighting Is Bright

- Natural lighting is best. Try to shoot near windows or outdoors.
- Avoid harsh shadows or overly backlit subjects.
- Make sure you can clearly see students' and teachers' faces - it creates an emotional connection.

Use Horizontal and Vertical Formats for Videos

- **Vertical (9:16):** Best for Stories, Reels, and TikToks.
- **Horizontal (16:9):** Ideal for YouTube, Facebook video posts, and your website.
- Capture both when possible to give yourself flexibility when repurposing.

Keep Videos Short and Captivating

- For social media, aim for **15–60 seconds**.
- Hook the viewer in the first 3 seconds.
- Add captions, as most users watch without sound.
- Use music or narration when appropriate.

Respect Privacy and Get Permission

- Always follow your school's media consent policy.
- Make sure students and families know how their images may be used.

Create a Media Library

- As you gather more photos and videos, create a media library with folders labeled by theme: academics, arts, sports, events, etc.
- This will help you build a library you can share with other team members as well as pull from year-round.



Experiment with Different Media Types

Using a variety of media formats keeps your content fresh and appealing to different types of audiences. While a single photo or video can tell a great story, different formats can help you show more, encourage more interaction, and reach more people.

Try These Formats:

- **Carousels on Instagram** – Share multiple images or graphics in one post. Great for showcasing a sequence (like a class project or field trip) or highlighting multiple student quotes.
- **Photo Albums on Facebook** – Upload a full set of pictures from events like open houses, concerts, or sports games. Tagging parents (with permission) and staff can increase visibility.
- **Stories & Reels** – Capture quick, engaging moments in real-time or repurpose event clips into short-form content.
- **Live Video** – Stream performances, celebrations, or read-alouds to engage families in the moment.
- **Polls and Questions (Stories)** – Easy and fun ways to get your community interacting directly with your posts.

By following these tips, your school can consistently produce visual content that is authentic, inclusive, and engaging - without overwhelming your team.



Caption Best Practices

Your visuals grab attention, but your captions are what build connection, add clarity, and prompt action. Use these best practices to write captions that engage your school community:



Lead with an Attention-Grabber

- Start strong. The first sentence should grab attention and spark curiosity.
- Examples:
"Guess what happened in 5th grade science today? 🧪" or
"You won't believe what our jazz band just accomplished! 🎷"



Keep It Clear and Concise

- Remember your audience. If the person reading your post knew nothing about your school, would they understand what you're trying to convey?
- Be direct. Keep your language simple and accessible.
- Avoid insider jargon, acronyms, or school-specific terms without explanation.
- Example: Instead of using STEAM, use Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM).



Add Context or Tell a Story

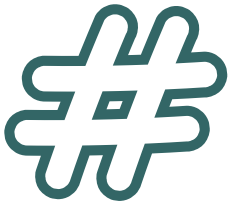
- Use the caption to provide background to whatever video or image you're sharing: What's happening? Why does it matter?
- Tell a mini story to give the moment meaning and emotional resonance.



Include a Call to Action (CTA)

- Invite your audience to do something: comment, share, visit your site, attend an event, etc.
- Examples: "Tag a parent who'd love this!" or "See more at our open house this Thursday."
- Include a link to your website if necessary! Social media posts should be brief - linking back to your website is a great way for people to get more information if they want or need it.

Use Mentions to Create Community



- Tag people, departments, or partner organizations when appropriate.
- Example: If your school works with a local food pantry that has a Facebook or Instagram account, tag them!
- This helps create community and can also increase reach - if the organization you tag reshapes your post, you're reaching a new audience (and new potential families for your school).



Let Your School's Personality Shine

- Write in a friendly, positive tone that matches your school's voice.
- Emojis can add personality, but don't overdo it. ✨😊



Edit and Proofread

- Use proper punctuation and spacing.
- Typos and awkward grammar can distract from your message.
- Read it out loud before posting to catch errors or clunky phrasing.

A well-written caption turns a nice photo into a meaningful moment - and encourages more people to engage with your school's story.

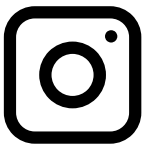
Platform-Specific Best Practices

Each social media platform has its own strengths, audience behaviors, and types of content that perform best. Use this section to tailor your strategy by platform and make the most of your time and content.



Facebook

- Post 3–5 times per week.
- Share photos, event reminders, student spotlights, and live videos.
- Use Facebook Groups for targeted engagement (ex. PTA/PTO, athletics, grade-level communities).
- Pin important posts (e.g., open house announcements) to the top of your page.
- Go live for events, read-alouds, or behind-the-scenes moments.



Instagram

- Focus on high-quality, authentic visuals.
- Use Stories for in-the-moment updates (5+ per week), Reels for fun, short videos (2–3 per week), and Posts for polished content (2–3 per week).
- Remember that links within Instagram posts are not clickable - refer people to your bio for live links.



LinkedIn

- Post 1–2 times per week to engage staff, alumni, and prospective employees.
- Share job postings, staff spotlights, awards, and school culture insights.
- Celebrate achievements and thought leadership within the education field.
- Use industry-relevant hashtags and tag partners and collaborators.



YouTube

- Post as needed with content like school tours, student performances, and testimonials.
- Organize videos into playlists for easy navigation (e.g., Academics, Arts, Athletics).
- Share your videos across other platforms.



X/Twitter

- If actively used: post 1–3 times daily with quick updates, reminders, and real-time event coverage.
- Use 1–2 hashtags per tweet.
- Engage with other schools, media, and education-related accounts.
- Even if inactive, retain your handle to prevent misuse.



TikTok

- Post 1–3 short videos per week if you have the capacity.
- Keep videos light-hearted, creative, and authentic.
- Show student life, classroom moments, or school pride.
- Use trending sounds and challenges to boost reach.
- Get students involved in content ideas and creation.

By aligning your approach with each platform's strengths, you'll reach your audiences more effectively, work more efficiently, and boost engagement with your school's story.



A collage of various financial charts and graphs. At the top, a line graph shows a fluctuating trend. Below it, a bar chart displays data with percentages: -11%, -12%, 79%, -33%, 75%, -50%, 52%, and 41%. To the right, a stacked bar chart shows percentages: 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, 20%, 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%, 44%, 57%, 58%, and 57%. Below the stacked bar chart, a bar chart shows values: 22,847, 31,467, 16,000, 15,000, 109,325, 190,813, 35,700, 52,780, 40,841, and 30,000. At the bottom, a line graph shows a fluctuating trend. A brown pen is resting on the charts.

Figure 1

Figure 1

Follower Growth

- Tracks how your audience is increasing (or decreasing) over time.
- Helpful for evaluating long-term brand awareness.
- If there's ever a large spike, it can be helpful to identify which posts lead to a big leap or decline in followers.

Click-Through Rate (CTR)

- The percentage of users who clicked a link in your post or bio.
- Important for posts that drive traffic to websites, forms, or registration pages.

Video Views and Watch Time

- Indicates how engaging your videos are.
- Short watch time may suggest your video needs a stronger hook or better pacing.

How Often to Review

- Check basic metrics **weekly** to stay on top of performance.
- Conduct a more in-depth review **monthly** to spot trends, compare content types, and refine your strategy.

What to Do With the Data

- Double down on content types that perform well.
- Rework or discontinue posts that consistently underperform.
- Use data to inform future campaigns and content planning.
- Share insights with school leadership to demonstrate impact.

NOTE: While comparing your data to other schools is a useful way to measure, ultimately, you set your own baseline - compare your post performance against your own past data to see growth over time.

Not Enough Time to Dive into the Data?

We get it. Teachers and school staff are wearing many hats. Reviewing social media performance can fall to the bottom of an already long to-do list. That's where iMission can help.

Contact iMission to take the guesswork out of social media data. We specialize in helping schools use data to make smart decisions during recruitment season and beyond, so you can spend more time doing what matters most: connecting with students and families.

Final Takeaways

Managing social media for your school doesn't have to feel overwhelming. Whether you're trying to engage current families, reach prospective ones, or both - small, consistent steps can make a big difference.

Here's what to remember:

- Focus on being real and relatable. Authentic content builds trust.
- Choose the right platforms and use them intentionally.
- Plan ahead to reduce stress and stay consistent.
- Engage with your community - it's not just about posting.
- Use paid social media strategically to expand your reach.
- Track your results to get better over time.
- Don't try to do it all alone - social media is a team effort!

Need help with your school's social media strategy or data?

Reach out to iMission. We specialize in helping schools create strong social media strategies, run successful recruitment campaigns, and make data-driven decisions.



Appendix A: Permissions + Content Policy Guidelines

Before You Post, Make Sure:

- You have media releases for all students featured in photos/videos
- You've double-checked names, titles, and spellings
- Photos don't reveal sensitive information (test scores, last names, etc.)

Content Posting Do's & Don'ts



Do:

- Use real school community members
- Keep content inclusive and diverse
- Share the positives of school life



Don't:

- Post student images without consent
- Use full student names in captions
- Share internal school issues publicly

Who Can Post?

- Ideally, **one person or a small team should manage posting** for consistency.
- **Empower staff to submit content** - don't ask them to post directly from their own accounts.

Appendix B: Crisis & Communications Guidance

A crisis is any situation that has the potential to harm your school's reputation, cause confusion or fear, or escalate quickly if not managed properly. Examples include:

- An emergency or safety issue on campus (e.g., lockdowns, accidents, severe weather)
- A widely circulated false rumor or misinformation
- A controversial issue or sensitive topic involving your school
- Public complaints or viral criticism from parents or community members
- Inappropriate or harmful comments or content appearing on your page

Being prepared for these moments can help your team respond with clarity and confidence. **While responding to the situation in the moment in your school is the priority**, you should also have a planned social media response as well.

What to Do When a Crisis Hits Your Social Media Page

- **Stay calm and responsive:** Acknowledge the situation, but don't rush to post without facts.
- **Pause scheduled posts:** Temporarily stop non-essential content until the situation is under control.
- **Post only with verified information:** Work with your school or district's communication team.
- **Monitor comments:** Hide or remove comments that are inflammatory, false, or violate your policy.
- **Know when to move offline:** Invite users to call or email for support instead of arguing publicly.

Prepare in Advance

- Identify who handles social media in a crisis
- Draft response templates in advance (e.g., "We are aware of the situation and working on a response.")
- Align with district policies and leadership

Note: Sometimes the best response is no response at all. Always consult your district if you have questions related to your school's Crisis & Communications plan.

Appendix C: Content Ideas Bank

Need inspiration? Here's a list of content ideas to keep your feed fresh and engaging:

Weekly Features

- **Monday Motivation** – Quote from a student or teacher
- **Teacher Tuesday** – Classroom spotlight or staff interview
- **Throwback Thursday** – Past event or alumni memory
- **Fun Friday** – Student shoutout or spirit day snapshot



Event-Based Content

- Back-to-school welcome
- Open house invitations
- Holiday concerts, parades, and art shows
- Graduation celebrations

Storytelling Highlights

- "A Day in the Life" student or teacher profiles
- Behind-the-scenes with the school nurse, custodian, or front office
- Why families chose your school (parent quotes)



Student Voice

- Book or club recommendations
- Showcase artwork or projects

Community Connection

- Partner shoutouts (local businesses or nonprofits)
- PTA messages
- Volunteer opportunities

iMission

What We Do

iMission Institute is a social sector marketing agency and a nonprofit technology consulting firm that offers nonprofits and K-12 magnet, charter, and public schools the power of integrated marketing and technology systems. We help our clients raise awareness, build their brands and attain the goals that matter.



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