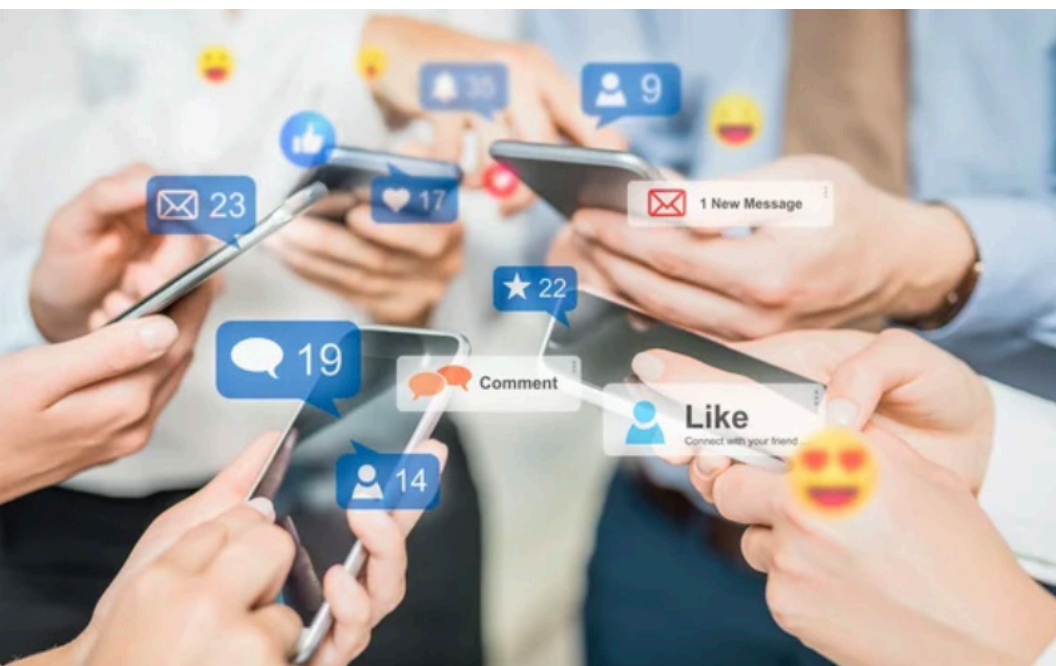


A SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

FOR LOCAL UTAH SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



**UTAH SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION**
Building Better Boards

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INTRODUCTION

Many Utah school board members are active users of social media, including online platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as other media such as blogs and personal websites. Social media can be a positive tool for fostering engagement with school districts and their communities. Board members, however, need to understand how to use social media within appropriate guidelines when they are communicating online.

The following are suggested best practices, dos and don'ts, and general information for school board members when using social media in their role as public officials.



DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

There are many different types of social media platforms and it can be overwhelming to wonder whether each of them is worth your time. To avoid spending too much of your time learning every new platform, only join the networks that supports your goals and gives you access to your audiences.

Facebook is a social networking platform that is used to connect individuals online together. You can share updates photos and videos. It is also used to share news and other resources. You can like, share and create posts. Facebook has over 2.89 billion users. 65% of users are 35 or older.



Twitter is used for sharing ideas and catching up with news and trends around the world. You can use hashtags in your tweets to group ideas or topics. Twitter has a cap of 280 characters or less per tweet. 55% of users are 35 and older. Twitter has 400 million users.



Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media platform. Users can share photo or video posts, temporary stories, reels (which are 15-second-max short-form videos), and IGTV videos. Instagram has over 1 billion users. 30% of users are 18-24 and 32% are 25-34.



Snapchat and TikTok are two social media platforms that specialize in taking photos and videos. Snapchat can be used to take photos and videos. TikTok can only be used to take videos. TikTok has over 1 billion users and snapchat has 500 million. 32.5 % of TikTok users are age 10-19 and 30% of Snapchat users are age 26-35. While it is important to know about Snapchat and TikTok, we recommend using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to connect with appropriate audiences.



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Go where they are

Ensure that you research your intended audience and the tools they use.

Get active

Make an effort to comment or like. Don't let the technology become the focus. It's all about the conversation with your district and your community. Focus your messages and post regularly.

Be original

Think more than just retweeting others or linking to others, put your own thoughts out there. BE INTERESTING Use a diverse range of tools. Not everyone is on one app.

Be strategic

Establish a goal with each platform. Social media strategy starts with your goals for each channel of communication. Perhaps you want to build a community or receive feedback?

Start small

Focus on one or two platforms. No need to use 10. We recommend starting with Facebook and Twitter.

Establish your voice

Communicate in the first person. Focus on information that is of value to that particular reader. Ask your audience what is important to them.

Lead & follow

Broadcast messages about positives and follow up with more in-depth information to get a conversation going. Ease yourself into the social media community of your district and show that you are an active participant.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT.

Identify key partners

Find and interact with those with influence the school community. They can help get your message out. Seek out trusted leaders in your school district to help share the load – superintendents, PTA, student council? **Look to official district social media accounts as a key source for content and a connection to other networks.**

Link & sync

Use social media to connect with people. It's not just an electronic replacement for the newsletter. It's a tool for engagement so remember people will be engaging with and commenting on your posts.

Make it easy

Start with a manageable number of posts. Consistent posting will increase your following.

Measure your success

There are metric tools offered by the social media sites to monitor your followers and reach. Don't sweat a low follower account. Monitor both Outputs and Outcomes. Outputs are the measures, outcomes are the results related to your established goals. Use tools such as Google Alerts to discover when your school district is mentioned in news stories and on social media.

Stay active

Once you start you need to keep at it. To keep people coming back, you need to keep posting and responding.

COMPLY WITH THE LAW

Comply with the law and relevant policies. This will include your local school districts' policies regarding acceptable social media use, student records, harassment and discrimination, and copyright laws; the Internet service provider's terms; the website disclaimers, terms of use, and privacy policies; and federal, state, and local laws. This includes Utah Open and Public Meetings Act (§ 52-4-101 through § 52-4-305) and the public records act.

Also, respect the rights of other users to an open and welcoming online environment, regardless of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, marital status, or ability.



BEST PRACTICES

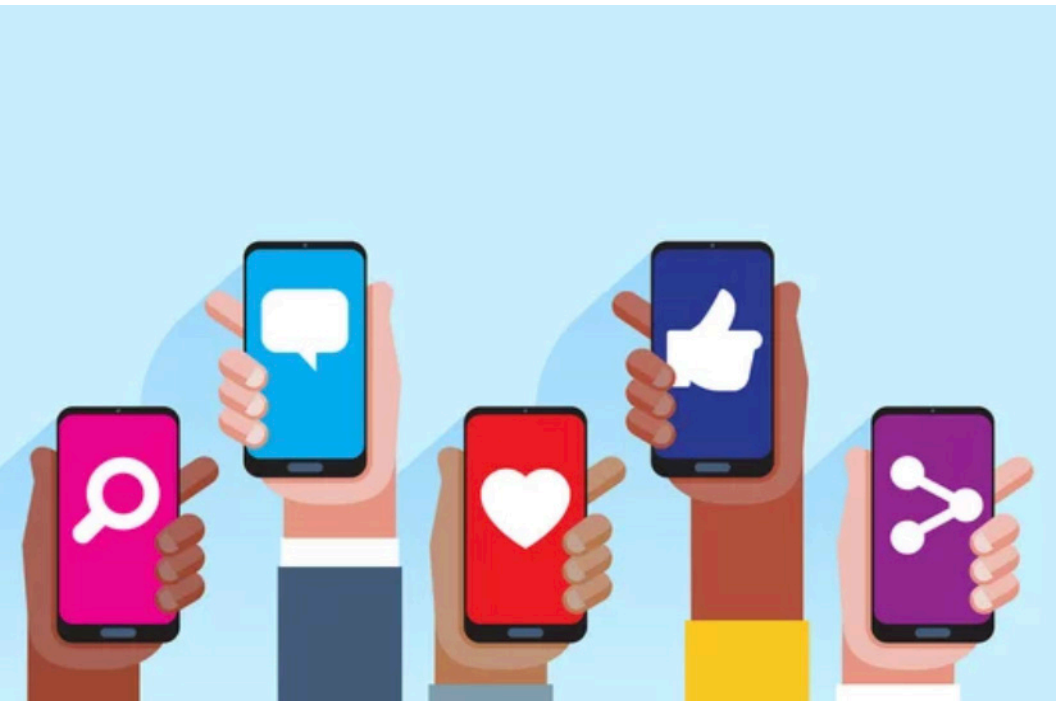
1. The Newspaper Principle - never post anything online you wouldn't be comfortable seeing in the paper.
2. Never share anything that is a topic of discussion in an executive session.
3. Understand that some conversations are best suited for face-to-face.
4. Never post anything when you feel emotionally charged, angry, or frustrated.
5. Never use discriminatory, abusive, bullying, profane, threatening, or otherwise offensive language.
6. Be sure to check your privacy settings.
7. Refrain from advocating a yes or no vote on a bond issue, promoting your own business through your position on the board, and making comments that suggest you're speaking on behalf of the board.
8. If you're using social media to get public opinion on board action, just use it as a listening tool. Don't share your positions or engage other members in discussions.
9. Keep your superintendent informed about any eventful interactions on social media so he or she can address any concerns and/or be prepared for any calls or questions.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do develop a social media strategy. Who is your target audience and what are you doing to reach them?
- Do think about messaging and your focus for content and if it's different for each medium. Are you using Facebook to connect with people and Twitter to share ideas or real-time information?
- Do use social media to post positive stories about your district. These are stories that you control. **If you can't get the media to report on something develop your own story.**
- Do think twice before you post or hit send.
- When re-posting someone else's post – do give them credit. E.g. on Twitter, use RT and the originator's user name.
- **Do establish that you are communicating as an individual member of the board and not as an official district spokesperson.**
- Do be mindful of resources. Social media doesn't have to take all day.
- Do report illegal activities, harassment or defamatory communications to the district or superintendent.

DO'S AND DON'TS CONT.

- Don't fear the unknown. "But I'll lose control of the message!" That's okay – think of it like this "Your audience is already talking about you." Know what they are saying so you can plan your communications strategy accordingly.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Google Alerts** is a free tool from Google that lets you monitor the web for mentions. It will send emails to a user when Google finds new results that match a user's search term. It can monitor web pages, newspaper articles, or blogs that match your selected search term or phrase. You can see instant results for your keywords or track them over time by setting up email alerts. For more information on Google alerts click [here](#).



A great place to start posting and interacting on social media would be to engage with and follow the USBA social media pages.

If you would like assistance setting up a social media account please reach out to mmendez@usba.cc



@USBA.cc



@utschoolboardsassociation



@UtahSchoolBoard

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