

CISI RESEARCH BRIEFS (2016/17)



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS (PART 1)

The following review of professional development literature is part 1 of a two part series on the characteristics and structures of effective professional development. Part one describes characteristics of effective PD. The brief examined over 100 papers and cites the major sources by type of information for further reference. Part 2 will focus on the structures and supports that contribute to effective professional development systems.

School leaders are faced with many options for professional development (PD) programs, that range in focus from leadership to subject matter and promise results for students, teachers, and schools. However, when attempting to make decisions about which PD programs to implement, school stakeholders rarely share the same conception of how PD works, how it improves teacher learning and how it impacts teacher practice and school environments. Here we attempt to outline the program goals, structures, and elements that have been demonstrated to deliver lasting positive outcomes for students and to highlight those that have not.

This brief will provide answers to the following questions:

1. What do teachers need in order to support student learning? What do teachers need to learn?
2. What types of PD activities engender this learning while meeting teachers' needs?
3. How do PD program structures (timing, management) and context (location) affect teacher learning?
4. How do the above impact teacher in-classroom behavior and student learning including students' non-cognitive outcomes?

Less effective PD models are designed to operate as follows:

1. PD coach helps teachers learn
2. Teachers change their practices
3. Students learn more, better

Effective PD models operate more recursively:

PD coach works with teachers to collaboratively identify areas of challenge and growth

1. Teachers implement their own insights in the classroom
2. Students learn more, better
3. Teachers return to PD coaches and collaborative groups to discuss implementation results
4. Collaborative groups refine practices
5. Teachers implement refined practices
6. Students learn more, better.

PD programs for teachers generally help teachers to develop strengths in the following four pedagogical technique areas; areas that teachers must continually and simultaneously address:

- Portraying curricular content so that naive minds can understand it.
- Containing unwanted student behavior and fostering non-cognitive skills such as perseverance and self-regulation.
- Enlisting student participation.
- Exposing student thinking in order to understand what they have understood or need to understand.

PD programs use one of four approaches to help teachers enact new ideas (Adapted from Kennedy (2016)). The following list of PD approaches includes descriptions:

- **Prescription**

Explicit directions about how to address a specific teaching challenge — the ***least flexible, least independent***.

- **Strategies**

Learning goal defined with strategy choices to get there— ***flexible, independent***.

- **Insight**

Changing the way teachers understand and interpret classroom situations so that they can change how they respond— ***more flexible, more independent***.

- **Presenting knowledge**

Provides a course or book that introduces a body of knowledge without requiring or requesting action— ***most flexible, most independent***.

The best PD programs:

- Use coaches for collaboration and problem solving on the above pedagogical technique areas. Like a good therapist, effective coaches ask questions to guide teachers toward their own insights based in their own practice.
- Use Professional Learning Communities to engage teachers in co-creating learning and action (e.g. reading about effective practice and making their own decisions about classroom implications together).

- Randomly assign tasks to volunteer participants who have expressed interest in participating ([for example? I hope that's clearer without an example]. Mandated assignments lead to near 0 effect as compared to groups with no PD (Kennedy, 2016).
- Use online discussion forums and in-person meetings
- Address at least one of the above 4 pedagogical technique areas listed above.
- Use a combination of the “strategies”, “insights”, and “presenting knowledge” approaches.
- Have PD facilitators who view teachers as colleagues working together to develop new teaching strategies.
- Use PD professionals with extensive experience working with teachers. It is best if they have worked in the community or in a nearby community.
- Foster lasting relationships with PD professionals. The same people work in multiple schools or across adjoining districts. They are familiar faces and are available for follow-up.
- Base programming on a clear, respectful, and nuanced understand of teacher roles, motivations, and learning styles.
- Measure PD program outcomes by monitoring student learning for 1-2 years *after* the end of the PD program.
- Sustain learning through a continuous cycle of follow-up, feedback, and reflection. This is to mitigate “enactment”, whereby teachers learn one new idea or methodology outside of the classroom but continue to enact their previous mode of operating within the classroom.
- Are built around the specific needs of the teachers in collaboration and reflect the culture and climate of the school context.

See Kennedy (2016), Loughran (2014), Hirose et. al (2015), Akiba & Wildonson (2015), Stansbury (2012), Morrison (2015), Avalos (2011).

Less effective professional development programs (See Kennedy (2016), Hirose et. al (2016)):

- Use the “prescriptive” approach: Tell teachers what to do, when, and how to do it.
- Focus only on subject matter knowledge without addressing one or more of the above pedagogical techniques.
- Have facilitators who do not treat teachers as peers.
- Use PD coaches who do not understand the school culture and climate.
- Are designed, organized, or presented as remedial for underperforming teachers
- Are mandatory.
- Focus on a set of design features. There is no best program or type of program. Out of the box programs appear easy but show few positive results.

See Kennedy (2016), Hirose et. al (2015).

RESOURCES ONLINE:

- Seven standards for effective professional development

- The Eight Components Of Great Professional Development
- How Does Professional Development Improve Teaching?
- Adopting an International Innovation for Teacher Professional Development: State and District Approaches to Lesson Study in Florida
- Professionally Developing as a Teacher Educator
- Assessing Practical Thinking of Teachers for Use in Teacher Education

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS (PART 2)

The following review of professional development literature is part 2 of a two part series on the characteristics and structures of effective professional development. Part one describes characteristics of effective PD. The brief examined over 100 papers and cites the major sources by type of information for further reference. Part 2 will focus on the structures and supports that contribute to effective professional development systems.

School leaders are faced with many options for professional development (PD) programs that range in focus from leadership to subject matter and promise results for students, teachers, and schools. However, when attempting to make decisions about which PD programs to implement, school stakeholders rarely share the same conception of how PD works, how it improves teacher learning and how it impacts teacher practice and school environments. Here we attempt to outline the program goals, structures, and elements that have been demonstrated to deliver lasting positive outcomes for students and to highlight those that have not.

This brief will provide answers to the following questions:

1. How do PD program structures (timing, management, interactions) and context (location) affect teacher learning?
2. What traits and qualities make for a successful professional development coach/ trainer?
3. How can these findings impact district-wide professional development policies?

Structuring effective PD systems

- PD is continuous and ongoing. A school district can hire PD coach(es) and have them rotate throughout the schools with both formal, scheduled follow-up for skills consolidation and informal engagement opportunities for teachers' continued development and growth. The actual number of hours face-to-face have not been demonstrated as more effective. Availability for immediate

engagement when a teacher is in a learning situation is more important than total time spent (Kyndt et. al, 2016).

- Paid time is set aside for PD, both for facilitated group activities, peer led group exchange, and one-on-one support.
- Resources are made available to prioritize, organize, structure, and evaluate program effectiveness. This is not another form of teacher evaluation, but, rather, evaluation of the PD program, facilitator, and support structures in order to continually improve them.
- School leaders are involved with (but do not control) the development, goals, and opportunities for PD programs. They define the central program goal as bringing teachers together in learning teams to learn together as lifelong learners. It is crucial for leaders to frame PD programs not as “improvement”, which implies deficiency, but as “development” or “learning”, which implies growth. They support the process through engaging teachers and motivating them to participate (without mandating participation) (Kennedy, 2016).
- School leaders encourage PD coaches to challenge them and the status quo, if this is what is necessary to improve student academic and non-cognitive outcomes. Innovation emerges through tension; if the potential for cordial conflict is presented openly and welcomed from the start, the PD can be an added value for school leaders as they provide an outside perspective that can challenge unseen, and perhaps sub-optimal, orthodox structures, systems, and modes of operation.

School leaders model and encourage the context for successful PD: trust, structure, and independence.

School leaders encourage informal, complimentary daily learning by

1. Creating a collaborative school culture.
2. Placing similar subject classrooms in proximity to each other.
3. Building formal mentorship programs between more and less-experienced teachers. Both mentors and mentees learn from each other. They exchange experience/ knowledge and excitement/ beginners mind.
4. Creating time in teacher schedules for informal interactions.
5. Creating spaces built to encourage informal interactions.

Think from a systems perspective. As they engage with teachers on their particular challenges they are able to perceive the potential effects of their recommendations both on classroom systems and on school-wide systems.

Effective PD coach/ facilitators

- Model non-cognitive strengths and personality traits: (e.g.) growth mindset, active listening, perspective taking, cognitive flexibility, pro-activeness, openness, agreeableness.
- Think from a systems perspective. As they engage with teachers on their particular challenges they are able to perceive the potential effects of their recommendations both on classroom systems and on school-wide systems.
- Take the time to understand the school's culture; its current values and expectations embedded in its structures and practices, and its climate; how stakeholders perceive the psychological environment.
- Have years of experience as teachers.
- Serve as mirrors of honest kindness for teachers, allowing teachers to see themselves as they are, to accept themselves, and to motivate them to work to strengthen their areas of weakness from this place of acceptance.
- Understand how to provide constructive feedback framed as guidance (and not as a threat to autonomy).
- Have the skills and time necessary to participate in ongoing impact assessment and reflection.

What is not as important

- Length of contact with PD leader (more contact does not usually lead to better outcomes) (Kyndt et. al, 2016)
- Specific PD design (Kennedy, 2016).

Policy Implications—a coherent professional development system

Aligning all systems into one coherent, learning focused system. This is not about reinventing the wheel; it's about bringing together disparate systems onto a turning axle so that teachers can grow without being overburdened and learning can move forward (Akiba & Wilkinson,

2015).

1. Create one system-wide PD system focused on professional learning that aligns teacher certification, teacher salary increase opportunities, and teacher evaluation. Bring together PD for licensure renewal and advancement with PD used for salary increases and PD used for evaluation. One clearly communicated program that is part of what teachers do every day and demonstrates measurable impact on classroom practice (Avalos, 2010)
2. Adopt and communicate PD learning standards, expectations, and goals.
3. Ensure that the above are being implemented in practice.
4. Develop information systems to collect data on practices and related impact outcomes.
5. Disseminate and support the expansion of the above successful practices through the establishment of professional leadership networks.
6. Reallocate state and federal funds toward a unified system-wide PD strategy (tailored to and co-created with local districts and schools). (Gulamhussein, 2013)
7. Include in the PD strategy connections with researchers and university professors who can actively participate in PD and provide coherent communication of successful, coherent PD strategies (such as those listed above) (Coggshall, 2012)
8. Provide sample school schedules with built-in time for PD collaboration, guided learning, and informal learning opportunities.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM: A CISI RESEARCH BRIEF

11% of California students are identified as having learning disabilities. In this brief we attempt to demystify learning disabilities, the variety of approaches to handling them in school and district contexts, and the associated administrative impacts and proposed solutions.

Inclusion vs. Exclusion— Push-in vs. Push-out and the "Least Restrictive Environment"

There is a national trend toward including students with learning disabilities inside general classrooms. From 1990 to 2014, the percentage of students spending 80% or more of their time inside a general classroom doubled from 30% to 60%. The goal of inclusion is to both appreciate and value neurodiversity and create an environment where all children feel welcomed and supported. While inclusion and access to the core curriculum has been found to lead to improved student achievement under optimal conditions, the now infamous lack of special education teachers to support classroom teachers and the lack of professional development of general classroom teachers in special education methodology and practice has not kept up with the trend toward inclusion. Pierson and Howell provide an exemplary guide to full inclusion, discussing implementation challenges and success strategies.

They identify several crucial practices:

1. A systems-wide approach to inclusion including all school stakeholders,
2. Providing professional development and tools for educators to 'enact inclusion',
3. Training para-professionals to more effectively work within the classroom context.

Clearly, it is more challenging to ‘pull in’ students with moderate to severe disabilities as they require additional modifications and are less able to access the general curriculum. It is not possible, and may even be discriminatory, to include all children in a classroom at all times (full inclusion). Thus, it is possible to have an inclusive, flexible and fluid model for integrating special education into the classroom (partial inclusion). A clear school or district-wide Inclusion Plan can be created to guide decisions about levels and structures of inclusion for students based on their disability or developmental difference and their associated additional needs. Legal considerations must be taken into account in shaping this plan.

Effects of Inclusion on the General Classroom

The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act made clear that all students should be in general education classes unless they were demonstrated to have a disability that explicitly prevented inclusion. There is an ongoing debate, however, on whether inclusion or separation is best practice, both for the students with disabilities and their classmates. In 2002, Eric Hanushek et. al found that inclusion improves special education students’ math achievement without decreasing other students’ performance. In the decade since there has emerged a growing consensus on the benefits of inclusion for children with learning disabilities, but there has been little follow up research.

In the long term, successful inclusion requires greater special education learning requirements for teachers in training and ongoing support from special education professionals.

Michael Gottfried et al. (2016) have taken the opposite perspective, engaging the question regarding how inclusion may impact classmates without learning disabilities; they have found a negative effect. There is an important caveat here: Gottfried and team focus on emotional and behavioral disabilities, not learning disabilities such as dyslexia or dyscalculia. Additionally, negative effects may be mitigated by teachers with more experience and those with special education training. Gottfried’s study demonstrates that in inclusive classrooms whose teachers have less experience or no special education training, the students without disabilities show greater negative effects such as absences. In the short term, placement may be an important piece of the puzzle. Placing the correct combination of students with disabilities (including taking into account their types of disabilities) in classrooms with experienced teachers may lead to the best outcomes for all. In the long term, successful inclusion requires greater special education learning requirements for teachers in training and ongoing support from special education professionals.

There is no research to date that investigates different types of disabilities and whether individuals with each type benefits from inclusion and whether inclusion of individuals with specific disabilities has a ‘spillover’ effect on their classmates. Such research is desperately needed for administrators and policymakers to effectively shape their districts, schools, and classrooms to adequately improve outcomes for all students.

Outcomes: Achievement Gaps

Performance of students with disabilities lags behind peers. For the class of 2012-13, 62 percent of students with disabilities graduated high school, compared to 80 percent of students without identified disabilities. In 2013-14, approximately one-quarter of third graders with disabilities scored proficient or advanced on the state’s English Language Arts assessments, compared to 45 percent of students without identified disabilities. California’s Performance also lags behind other states. California performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress is below the national average both for students with and without disabilities. California has replaced the California Modified Assessment with the adaptive Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, and is replacing the California Alternate Performance Assessment with a new test for students who have severe cognitive disabilities.

Costs

California state Special Education Funds total about \$4 Billion Annually. State funds are distributed based on the total number of students attending schools within the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), through the Special Education Program “AB 602” formula. State per-pupil funding rates average \$530, but vary across SELPAs from \$480 to \$925 based on “historical factors” which are neither clear nor explicitly justified. Local budgets are covering an increasing share of special education expenditures. In California, public schools spend an average of \$10,700 per student on the autism spectrum. Early intervention has been demonstrated to significantly reduce long-term costs associated with special education support. Unfortunately, there is little aggregated data that shows the cost of interventions from K-12 for any of the learning disabilities in California nor longitudinal comparisons of intervention costs (not even as simple as comparisons of inclusive vs. exclusive interventions). It would be beneficial for all California education leaders and administrators to call for the collection and dissemination of these cost analyses.

Professional Development for Teachers Serving Students with IEPs

Professional development in special education for general classroom teachers is lacking in quality and rigor. The textbooks used to train teachers present an over-medicalized narrative that is likely to limit inclusive pedagogical approaches and the embracing of classroom diversity. Shared professional development and continued collaboration between special education and general education teachers has been demonstrated to significantly

improve student achievement. This benefit is both pedagogical and structural. Special education teachers must be repositioned from ‘classroom threat’ to classroom necessity and team-member. Providing structured and regular time for special education teachers and general classroom teachers to share practices and insights allows each to engage the other on academics and processes and for each to benefit from the other’s experience and expertise. Several beneficial tools for teacher development in special education include: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Explicit Direct Instruction, Response to Intervention(RtI).

Disabilities and population percentages in California (2013-2014)

Disability	Number	Percent of SWDs	Percent of total k-12 population
Specific Learning disability	281,882	40%	4%
Speech or language impairment	159,477	23	2
Autism	84,665	12	1
Intellectual Disability	43,075	6	1
Emotional Disturbance	24,438	3	.4
Hard of hearing	8,918	1	.1

Source: California Department of Education

Disability descriptions and associated needs

Disability	Difficulty Area	Symptoms include challenges with:	Example	Treatments/needs/accommodations
Specific Learning Disabilities				

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Dyslexia	Processing language	Reading, writing, and spelling	Backwards or missing letters, difficulty decoding written words	Handouts and notes, structured reading in special ed., little homework.
Dyscalculia	Math skills	Computation, remembering math facts, concepts of time, and money	Difficulty counting by 2s, 3s, and 4s	Extra time, written instructions, special ed. practice
Dysgraphia	Written expression, memory	Handwriting, spelling, composition,	Illegible handwriting, difficulty organizing ideas	Provide keyboard, Apps for voice recording.
Dyspraxia	Fine motor skills	Coordination and manual dexterity	Trouble with scissors, buttons, and drawing	Hand guiding, student close to teacher and away from distractions, provide outlines and physical supports
Dysphasia/Aphasia	Language	Spoken language, reading comprehension	Trouble understanding what someone means, trouble speaking	Write all content, speech therapy, slow repeated communication, treat as fully intelligent.
Auditory Processing Disorder	Interpreting auditory information	Reading, language, comprehension	Difficulty anticipating how a speaker will end a sentence	Assistive listening devices, visual teaching methods, quiet environment, slow speech, pre-class notes.
Visual Processing Disorder	Interpreting visual	Reading, writing, math,	Difficulty distinguishing	Flexibility for writing format,

	information	charts maps	letters like "h" and "n"	provide class notes, oral directions, time for questions
Developmental Disorders				
ADHD &ADD	Attention and organization	Sitting still, focusing, following instructions, completing tasks	Losing things consistently, fidgeting	Physical activity/ movement, frequent breaks, organizational coaching/ monitoring, coordination with teachers on positive behavioral planning and responding, visual reminders
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	Communication, Stimulation	Connecting with others, needing stimulation, avoiding stimulation	Avoiding eye contact, avoiding light or sound or touch, actively seeking sensory input.	Clear structure, daily routine, managed sensory environment (tuned across all senses to specific student), deliberately controlled transitions between classes/ activities, responding to child's change in behavior (likely to represent anxiety), educating peers about student difference, protection from teasing/ bullying.

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CISI RESEARCH BRIEF — SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR DISTRICTS

Social media is ever-present in the lives of students today and plays an increasingly important role in the lives of parents, teachers, and school district employees. Many districts are restructuring their communications strategies to incorporate social media, leveraging it to strengthen their stakeholder connections and increase the communications bandwidth across their communities.

This brief attempts to provide information for district leaders regarding:

1. The goals of district level social media use,
2. District Social Media Strategy, including planning and structuring,
3. Content creation and dissemination,

4. Responding to content.

According to the Pew Research Center, the 2016 Project Tomorrow, Speak Up Survey and the 2016 TechValidate Survey:

1 out of 4 communications leaders said they fear using social media and identified it as one of their key communication challenges.

Social media was named the second most effective aspect of community engagement, right behind district websites.

Social media was the #1 factor that caused an increase in engagement for respondents' districts.

76% of communications leaders identified school or district Facebook account(s) as the most effective method for communicating with parents today.

1 out of 3 community members say that they use school or district Facebook or other social media accounts to learn about what is happening in local schools in their community.

79% of online adults (86% of the US population) use Facebook and between 20-30% use Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Usage of the top 5 social media outlets has increased by 10% since 2012.

Goals of district level social media use

District stakeholders are using social media to communicate about everything, including the district, its board, administration, and teachers. Perhaps the most important goal of administrators' district level social media use is to have control of the story they want to tell about their district. If district administration does not tell the story, someone else certainly will. Social media provides district leaders the opportunity to address rumors, complaints, and crises. Without a social media presence, districts might be leaving it to chance who defines and frames the dialogue. Most students and many parents have a voice on social media. District employees from school support staff to the superintendent need a curated voice, as well.

Social media channels are a direct platform for strategic messaging. Districts can use social media to positively promote all aspects of the district by sharing news and showcasing programs. Social media, when used strategically, can prepare stakeholders for potential future funding needs, for example, a new tax referendum that provides additional district funding. Parents have increasingly preferred to hear

through social networks lead to funding increases for districts and schools (NSPRA, 10/2014).

Thanks to its speed and networked dissemination, a district level social media presence is crucial for crisis communications, both physical crises and public relations issues. The most effective organizations in times of crisis are those that have created strong and supportive communities. By definition social media involves communication and dissemination of information across networks. It can therefore be effective for creating the conditions that are most fruitful in a crisis: a trusting community built on deep relationships and supported by an invitation to frequent dialogue, including seeking input, feedback, and constructive criticism.

School District Communications Strategy

Social Media Planning

Mitigate risks by creating a formal social media roadmap.

1. Create formal policy with a chain of command for crisis management.
2. Develop timeline for post frequency that is integrated into the larger communications plan.
3. Outline procedures and create clear guidelines for social media use.
4. Provide professional development to train employees and community advocates (eg. parents) to use social media based on the developed guidelines.
5. Encourage employees and advocates to create and curate content, especially in schools and classrooms as long as these activities do not detract from employee work or student learning. It may be frightening to let go of the reins but leveraging a trained network will lead to exponential content creation and connectedness.
6. Create an online social media directory of all district-related organizations (eg. classrooms, sports teams, PTA organizations).

Integrate Social media into the district's communication infrastructure

1. The aim is for comprehensive and integrated communications tech systems across CMS (content management system for your website), LMS (learning management), SIS (student information), mobile apps, notifications. Seek comprehensive solutions.
2. Integrate the district brand. All schools, teachers, administrators, and employees follow brand guidelines for all hardcopy or virtual documents. District and all schools have a clearly aligned brand identity. Community

stakeholders are more likely to feel connected to the school district if they are frequently in contact with the district and school brands.

Assign designated staff or hire a social media manager

In addition to a deep and broad understanding of social media platforms, the most important traits and skills for a social media manager are as follows:

- a. Trustworthy,
- b. Confidential,
- c. Connected to district administration,
- d. Quick to act and respond with confidence and clarity,
- e. Deeply aware of the community: demographics, devices used, information access points, desired messaging, desired frequency of communication.

A social media manager also needs to be persistent, organized, an effective time manager, with strong visual and verbal skills. In a sense, someone who is able to know what the community wants before they know it.

Specific Social Media Platforms recommendations

NOTE: be sure that the district receives signed parental consent to use images of students in district communications, including social media. Establish a protocol to ensure students and parents have given consent for use of images from within classrooms; most districts cover this issue through signed media release forms signed in the beginning of each school year during enrollment.

Facebook

1. Restrict Facebook administrators to 2-3 people. While others in the community can post content that administrators can accept on the page, keeping a streamlined social media structure with clear decision-makers provides clarity within the district as to whom to direct queries and content.
2. Facebook ads are inexpensive and push content to the top of followers' Facebook feeds. Keep track of post views to see the relative reach effectiveness of those with ads and to monitor which type of content people are most likely to view, like and share.

Twitter

1. Create a district hashtag and a hashtag for each school. Encourage teachers to celebrate their classroom activities, share resources, document learning by taking pictures in class to give a behind the scenes look and #hashtag the district and the school. (The collected photos can later be added to the district's Pinterest).

[@Leadershipfreak](#), [@TeachersJourney](#), [@ShiftParadigm](#), [@edutopia](#), [@21stprincipal](#), [@NMHS_Principal](#),
[@robertjmarzano](#), [@TOttawa](#), [@hgse](#), [@kevin_corbett](#), [@web20classroom](#), [@Biddy_Martin](#),
[@tomwhitby](#), [@usedgov](#), [@kmagette](#)

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is business and networking focused and serves a different purpose than other platforms. Use LinkedIn for:

1. Recruitment
2. Reaching working members of the community.
3. Following major employers in the community
4. Developing community business networks
5. Fundraising
6. Sponsorships

YouTube

- a. Create an official YouTube channel for the district. Record weekly videos
- b. Post new videos and about new videos through the other social media channels.

Blogs

- a. Replace the newsletter with a blog.
- b. One blog for each of the following: superintendent, important administrators, principals, boards, teachers.

Social Media Content Creation and Dissemination

Content Objectives

- Engaged Community: Parents, teachers, education leaders and community leaders should all be included in a school's online community.
- Reciprocal and positive internal communications: teachers, employees, administration.
- Increased positive media relations
- Effective and efficient crisis communications
- Funding the future: future parents and those who no longer have children in school, tax payers, funders, alumni, local businesses.
- Some education blogs

<https://larrycuban.wordpress.com/>

<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/blogs/linda-darling-hammond>

Content types

1. Promotion of school events and news, arts, sports, cultural events
2. Stories and imagery of the school's impact on students and the community (human interest content, alumni achievements, photos, videos)
3. Time-critical school information, announcements
4. PTO events, community events, important meetings
5. Leadership and education improvement ideas and news
6. Community outreach, including fundraising (eg. fundraising goals and successes)

Content Strategy

At least ½ of posted content should be information that is useful to parents, teachers and education community stakeholders. No more than ¼ of posted content should be shared from other sites or news articles on education or guest blog posts from community members. The remaining posts should be promotional, showcasing what is unique and wonderful about the district and its schools and providing information on upcoming events.

Guidelines for content dissemination and creation

1. Create templates and content examples for each type of content creator (eg. teacher, parent, student, employee, administrator).
2. Create #hashtags linked to the mission, vision, and tagline. Don't have a tagline? Create one for the district with aligned taglines for every school in the district.

3. Ensure that all administrators and staff understand the key messaging developed by board and administration.
4. Repeat messaging across platforms and catered to platform users.
5. Encourage and allow parents and community members to link their posts, tweets, photos, videos to the district and schools. #hashtags work well for this purpose. Pinterest is a useful repository for district images.
6. Engage the community, get feedback, post photos and run contests instead of using it as a newsletter replacement.

When creating Social Media content...

- a. Tell compelling stories from student perspectives.
- b. Talk straight- being open and forthcoming builds trust and bandwidth, developing a savings account of goodwill from which to draw in times of crisis.
- c. Thank followers for their posts and their support of your district's content.
- d. Create a feeling of approachability and caring. Put a face, a real person, to the district. Engender trust in community members.
- e. Share content (or retweet, etc.) created by others that reflect your district's brand, vision, mission.

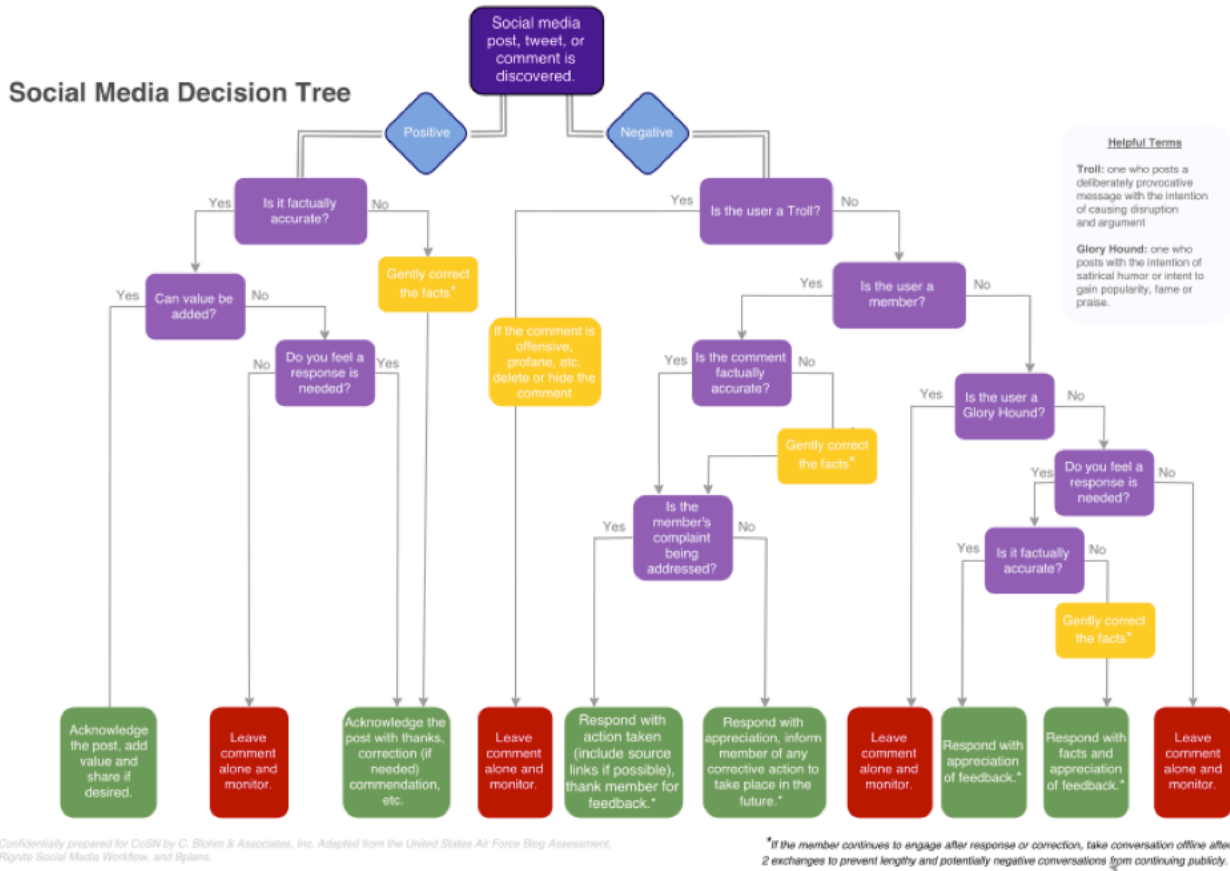
To absolutely avoid when creating content...

- a. Inconsistency. Determine what can be shared in advance and stick to your parameters.
- b. Silence or ignoring posts, unless the user is a. a Troll: social media user who posts inflammatory content to disrupt and provoke discord, or b. a Glory Hound: social media user who posts in order to garner attention and seek popularity. If the user is either of these, delete their post and block them where possible.
- c. Argumentative reactions, both public and on private social media. Anything posted can be copied and shared!
- d. Automated responses. If it is necessary to say the same thing over again, do so with different words. People know when they are getting an automated message.
- e. Speculation. Stick to the facts.
- f. Contronyms - words that are their own opposites. See Mental Floss www.mentalfloss.com. for a useful list.

Guidelines for responding to others' content

Use the following Consortium for School Networking (CSN) decision tree for social media content triage. It is a powerful tool to standardize the process of responding to social media content created by others. [CSN Decision Tree pdf](#)

In general, there are two ways to respond to negative comments: delete inappropriate posts as soon as possible, and use challenging or disagreeing comments as opportunity to educate and inform. If necessary, invite the individual to discuss their issue in a private dialogue.



Platform use for a coherent and diversified social media strategy

Social media is referred to as one entity. In truth, each social media platform has a distinct structure and user profile and therefore requires differentiated strategies and content.

Together, a variety of social media platforms can be used to achieve a district's goals; cross-pollination across multiple platforms can be fruitful when used correctly.

CISI Member School Districts & Social Media

Examples of Social Media "in-use" in CISI Member districts

Central Valley

Modesto City Schools

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>): @mcs4kids

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/>): @modestocityschools

Northern California

Twin Rivers USD

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/>): @trvc_

Southern California

San Diego County Office of Education

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>): @sandiegoCOE

CONTENT & STRUCTURE

Email/ Blog post	highlighting events and programs	Daily email from superintendent
Facebook	Photos and words about sports team, cafeteria menu, alumni achievements, events etc...	Daily good news posts.
LinkedIn	Announce corporate fundraising, sponsorships, partnerships, major school events. Share articles related to learning and business, leadership, management.	Weekly post
Twitter	Anything newsworthy, humorous, attention grabbing, celebratory.	1+ tweet per day.
Instagram	1+ photos of something eye-catching happening in the district.	Daily photo.
YouTube	on district- related updates and news	Weekly video.
Pinterest	Photo sharing by stakeholders about the district, schools, students and subjects that interest them (eg. parenting tips).	Continuous.

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CISI RESEARCH BRIEF — SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR DISTRICTS (PART TWO)

This second part of our CAPED Social Media for Districts brief will discuss the challenges of social media, and the policies, tools, and best practices to mitigate its potential detrimental consequences for students. It will look in-depth at the ways in which social media can be useful in managing a variety of crises. This brief is divided into three parts:

1. The Major Challenges of Social Media
2. Crisis Management
3. Board Policies and District Level Directives for Training and Professional development

The Major Challenges

There is one major challenge that schools and districts face regarding social media keeping students safe. This challenge can be divided into three parts:

1. Keeping students safe from other students, through cyberbullying or the posting of embarrassing, inappropriate or traumatic content
2. Keeping students safe in their interactions with teachers and staff (this also involves protecting teachers and staff)

3. Keeping students safe through crisis situations.

Cyberbullying and inappropriate content

Definition

Cyberbullying is the act of a person, or a group attacking others through the use of electronic media such as email, texting, photos, social media, or video sharing sites. Hurtful content is created and shared with the target, with a group, or with the public with the intent to criticize, humiliate, and defame the individual targeted. This denigrating content often includes photos or videos that depict inappropriate and/or sexual behavior. The consequences of cyberbullying can range from hurt feelings to depression, violence, and even suicide.

While the media reports on cyberbullying are frequent, The Cyberbullying Research Center (CRC) has found that cyberbullying occurs less frequently than traditional bullying. The CRC has collected data from middle and high school students since 2002, surveying nearly 15,000 students from middle and high schools across the United States. Their data shows that 35-40% of teens across their lifetime have experienced traditional bullying at least once, whereas only 20% of teens have experienced cyberbullying. All types of bullying create school environments that scare students: 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students (Longhorst, P. (2012). The threat of cyberbullying to students' safety remains important and it is crucial that districts take steps to mitigate this harmful behavior.

Many schools and districts have begun to expand their bullying policies to include cyberbullying and inappropriate content. Few, however, appear to have explicit strategies with which to address and prevent these problems.

Cyberbullying, Inappropriate Content, Law

While there are no national laws against cyberbullying, many states have enacted laws pertaining to cyberbullying and inappropriate content. Although the entire list of laws and policies do not fit within the scope of this brief, a link to a review can be found in the 'tools' section below in addition to laws that relate to usage policies in schools.

Prevention and management

Combatting cyberbullying is challenging because, like traditional bullying, it is seldom reported. According to Deputy Trevor Fowler, President of the Missouri School Resource Officers

Association, "The problem is...only about half of the bullying incidents are ever reported...once we know about them, we successfully resolve 90 percent of the issues." (Longhorst, P., 2012)

Developing a culture of anti-cyberbullying and anti-inappropriate content. (adapted from cyberbullyhotline.com)

1. Consult your district or school attorney, and your state attorney general to get a clear understanding of where your authority starts and stops over the matter of cyber bullying.
2. Develop clear policies that prohibit the use of school technologies to bully or post inappropriate content.
3. Teach students and provide professional development for staff members about the definition of inappropriate content and the types of behavior that constitute cyberbullying and how the school district's policies apply to them. The goal is a) to increase staff and student understanding of online privacy, ethical behavior, digital footprints, and their not-so-anonymous, virtual lives; b) teach them to be astute observers so they can recognize cyberbullying when they see it
4. Train parents about the symptoms of cyberbullying. If parents are able to develop and maintain trusting relationships with their children, they will more easily be able to recognize the signs of stress that may be due to cyberbullying. The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) provides the following list of symptoms relevant to cyberbullying: a) Withdrawal, b) Drop in grades c) Loss of friends, d) Avoidance of school and other activities. (NCPC.org/topics/cyberbullying).
5. Provide supervision and monitoring of student use of technology. Adopt the latest technology available to mitigate cyberbullying behaviors and provide technology to every student, teacher, staff member, and parent to prevent, respond to, and report bullying incidents (see below for more detail on this subject).
6. Establish clear systems for reporting cyber bullying or misuse of technology.
7. Teach students the difference between reporting on cyberbullying vs. snitching or tattling and the potential risks to victim (see above) if the cyberbullying continues.
8. Establish effective responses to reports of cyberbullying and consistent consequences.
9. Use curricula to emphasizing the important balance of freedom of expression and individual rights to safety, privacy, and protection from harm.
10. Repeat anti-cyberbullying messages through all communication channels: classroom meetings and assemblies, hallway signs, posts on school and district web pages and newsletters, etc...
11. Ensure that all administrative and teacher actions are guided by the ethos of creating a community of trust.

Social media strategy: Using social media tools to monitor for inappropriate content and prevent cyberbullying (one in-depth example).

Hootsuite, a social media monitoring and content creation tool and Firestorm, a crisis

management company, provide a method for using social media to monitor, stop, and hopefully prevent cyberbullying in your district. The following is adapted from their strategy (Mulvey, James 2014, Firestorm Team 2017:

1. Automatically monitor for cyberbullying. Install Hootsuite. Set-up a specific search in Hootsuite- this data will be ready to review every day. You can zoom in by location as well to monitor social activity that happens within 5, 10, or 25 miles from the school in question. Set-up time 5-10 minutes.
2. Review this stream for 5-10 minutes every day. Any incidents can be investigated. If you find a person engaging in cyberbullying, explore their tweets. They are likely to mention their school in some form or share other revealing information.
3. Assign and report to experts. Hootsuite can be used to set up teams. Posters of troubling content can be directly routed to a school counselor, to a parent volunteer, or to a cyberbullying team. Set-up time (depends on size of team).
4. Archive the evidence. Once a cyberbullying incident occurs, social media users will usually quickly delete the online evidence. 'Social Relationship Platforms' can automatically archive specific messages. If a teacher sees a troubling social media message, they can make sure that the evidence is stored for later review and analysis.
5. Raise awareness and automate. Enlist the help of parents, students, counselors, anti-bullying organizations, and local police. Encouraging stakeholders to listen and tag social media statuses makes it easier to sort through saved search streams and delegate responsibilities to the right experts. The 'Social Relationship Platform' provides a single, secure dashboard that can allow thousands of volunteers to work together to stop cyberbullying and the posting of inappropriate content.

Staff/Teacher - Student Interactions

Should staff and students be friends on social media sites? There is great debate on this subject. Social media and mobile devices are everywhere in our schools and permeate our lives in every moment; they are blurring the boundaries between students and instructors, and between the professional and the private. Social media provides direct contact between students and teachers anytime and anywhere. Teachers create Facebook pages to encourage student interaction. Students and teachers communicate at all hours through text messages and social media.

There have been increasing (though still infrequent) reports of illicit teacher-student relationships over social media. Social media contact in rare cases may lead to illicit physical contact. There are many examples of this boundary crossing (perhaps due to an availability heuristic), including, locally, Millbrae (abc7 august 26th, 2016). Social media and cell phones played a part in 56 percent of the illegal and sexually charged relationships between public school students and their teachers or school staff in Pennsylvania in 2014,

according to a study by educational consultants Drive West Communications of Houston. According to the study, Pennsylvania ranked second in the nation that year in media-reported incidents of inappropriate relationships between school employees and students — 45. Texas, with 116 cases, came in first. Nationwide, there were 782 cases. That is an incredibly low number given the number of students who go through this nation's school each year (about 1 in 100,000). According to Terry Abbott, former U.S. Department of Education Chief of Staff, "The problem is not the social media. The problem is the secrecy" (Jones, 2016).

We can expect that the use of social media as a means to illicit relationships between students and teachers is equally prevalent across the country (Thomas, 2015). After these statistics were released, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association developed a social media policy recently for boards to consider: "When the relationship between student and teacher crosses the boundary into the intimate, then the behavior falls under sexual harassment guidelines". I have outlined a few examples of the current approaches to managing this situation and my proposed 'Guidelines Development Process' (below) includes a suggestion for how to collectively understand and define this boundary.

Approach 1

After an investigation of school and district policies across the United States, I have found that most districts allow for social media connection among teachers and students. The argument is that, as in face-to-face communication, a problem only arises if the adult is manipulating the student in order to establish an inappropriate and/or unprofessional relationship that goes against both school/district policy, and potentially, the law. Districts should, therefore, add an explicit social media policy to their policies regarding appropriate teacher-student relationships if only to remind stakeholders that social media interactions must adhere to the same protocols as in-person interactions.

Approach 2

Full monitoring: Some district boards, such as in Orange County, Florida, have decided to monitor both students' and teachers' social media posts using the Snap trends automated monitoring solution. Such programs allow school districts to automatically search thousands of posts on sites like Twitter and Instagram for selected keywords that might indicate potential harmful social media behaviors. School officials have said the goal is to flag potential dangers, including cyberbullying, suicide and crime.

Challenges related to attempts at control

Limiting staff-student social media interaction may violate first amendment rights. It can also be very difficult to monitor, particularly outside of school hours and off of school networks. Some have prohibited texting on private cell phones, while others have attempted to outlaw student-teacher Facebook friendships or online interactions

altogether. This is a mistake. The educational benefits of social media greatly outweigh the risks. Over-regulation, like any heavy-handed government, is likely to lead resistance and revolt, particularly with adolescent populations. As a middle ground, many schools have created responsible use policies to teach students and teachers about appropriate social media conduct. These are often too vague, requiring each individual to understand and act upon their own definition of good judgment or treating others respectfully. In the below 'Guideline Development Process', I propose a strategic process to address the challenge of training students and teachers to engage in safe and respectful communication while keeping the bandwidth open for the real engaged and collaborative learning that occurs through these channels.

Crisis management through Social Media

“In times of crisis, an organization’s primary stakeholders transform into first information responders (FIRs). As FIRs, these pivotal stakeholders play a crucial role in disseminating news of the crisis to members of their interpersonal networks. Due to their pre-established relationship with the organization in crisis, first information responders’ family members and friends are likely to view these messages as credible. Findings suggest that FIRs communicate accurately, initially prefer to use personal channels (i.e., phone calls and text messages) to communicate news of the crisis, and are willing participants in the information sharing process.” (Hodges & McClain, 2016)

There are many different ways to approach managing a crisis in a school or district. I have attempted, here, to adapt a social media strategy to the U.S. Department of Education mission areas for school emergency operations planning. (This is likely not the first such attempt and I recommend to readers to become acquainted both with these mission areas and with others’ adaptations for social media).

There are 5 mission areas that will be addressed along with their social media implications:

1. Preparatory strategies
2. Protection
3. Mitigation
4. Stabilization
5. Restoration

Prepare and prevent (ongoing)

1. Link as many parents, students, teachers, and administrators to the school and district’s social media platforms.
2. Communicate regularly regarding crisis prevention and recovery and information regarding resources available to students and the community.
3. Post frequently and repost community content in order to reinforce community and culture, encourage positive behavior, responsibility, healthy relationships, and foster a safe and caring school climate.
4. Monitor social channels after-hours or during summer break, and responding to posts and comments in a timely, thoughtful fashion will help to temper concerns before they “go viral.” (Blohm, 2016)

5. Send notices through social media and traditional communications channels to parents/guardians and community members with instructions on how to get information from the school's social media sites.
6. Disseminate the school's social media policy and procedures.
7. Post with some frequency information about the school's safety planning efforts (e.g., trainings, drills).
8. Post the school's family reunification plan and procedures that will be followed in the event of early release and/or a crisis situation.
9. Designate responsibility for reviewing and updating the social media sites during an emergency.
10. Conduct tabletop drills or other preparedness exercises involving social media.
11. Conduct exercises to test social media update effectiveness during an emergency. Use student feedback to gain insight on how social media is being used within the school culture and therefore how it can be leveraged for crisis prevention.

Protect

1. Receive notifications indicating when information is posted online or within social media that suggests a dangerous or threatening situation through Google Alerts or other, similar apps (see below).
2. Monitor social media platforms to see what users are saying (doing so may highlight unknown problems or identify potentially valuable information missing from the social media platform).
3. Consider using systems for anonymous reporting (e.g., K-12 Alerts, Frontline SMS, Bullyproof, School Tipline, TipSoft).

Mitigate / Minimize event impact

1. During a crisis, all communication should be:
 1. Accurate: accurate information is critical (and trumps speed),
 2. Timely: disseminate information as quickly as possible as soon as it is deemed accurate,
 3. Redundant: spread information through multiple channels to reach all concerned stakeholders (parents, community members) through a saturation of communication outlets.
2. Broadcast crisis facts and updates
3. Communicate support with positive and encouraging comments
4. Quickly dispel rumors
5. Communicate student locations and procedures for parents to reunify with children.
6. Provide guidance to enable the community to minimize exposure to the crisis situation

Stabilize the emergency

1. Disseminate information on the crisis intervention
2. Publicize information on the school/ district's mental health resources
4. Provide school closure information
5. Broadcast crisis event updates
6. Use smartphone crisis applications such as FEMA (more below)

Restore

1. Inform community members of the logistics of informational gatherings
2. Provide school reopening information and resources locations
3. Communicate memorials information
4. Provide frequent updates regarding school recovery process information.
5. Answer the following questions and repeat the answers: 1. What steps did you take to prevent the crisis? 2. How well prepared were you to manage the incident that could not be prevented?
6. Provide links to recommendations and resources for coping strategies and potentially restorative connections

Learn

Soon after the crisis, it is crucial to analyze the effectiveness of the social media crisis communications efforts. Staff and administrators may be wary of re-engaging with a potentially traumatic event so soon after it has occurred, but this process can also include a degree of healing in the improvement of the prevention of future potential crises. In a post-crisis situation, involved individuals are acutely aware of the possibility of such crises and are likely to devote great effort to examining, analyzing, and working to improve the processes that could prevent such a future crisis and/or mitigate its damage. Leverage this energy and drive to engage in systemic improvement.

District policies and practices to address the challenges of - and possibilities - for social media

“Using social media professionally without official, written (and understood!) policies is a disaster waiting to happen. Put the rules in the book and make sure that everyone involved in social media knows what these rules are. Policies should include all social media platforms and their handling, troubleshooting, and processes to follow in case of problematic situations, as well as the extent to which employees might be allowed to use social media to discuss work-related matters.” (Fearn-Banks, 2017, p. 90). In Connecticut,

46% of districts have no social media policies (Jones, 2016). It is likely that this number is mirrored nationwide. Should districts create an entirely new set of social media policies or should they be linked to existing policies? The general consensus is that social media policies should be generated by looking at your district's existing policies and considering how they could be potentially affected by social media.

The Approach

Look at current policies. How can they be applied to/ affected by social media? For example, student and directory information policies could be amended or leveraged to incorporate social media use. Are there aspects of social media engagement in your district that are not covered by your current guidelines?

Develop guidelines through the below process

1. An inclusive process is more logistically challenging and requires greater up-front investment, but will require less enforcement over the long-term. I propose the following process as an example:
2. District administrators create a social media task force, including students, teachers, staff, and parents. This is a representative government, where each member will speak for their part of the web of district stakeholders.
3. School attorneys, administrative staff, or human resource professionals lead primary trainings for this task force to teach them about existing board guidelines, legal requirements.
4. The task force uses social media to gather information from their respective parts of the community on their views regarding how to train teachers and students and ensure that social media use remains respectful, including potential ramifications. For example, a task force could ask the community for a list of topics, words, phrases, or images that would indicate that the individual has crossed the boundary of their defined school related relationship, and the implications for crossing this boundary. The task force should attempt to gather information from the community regarding community social media use and potential barriers thereto.
5. The task force presents the gathered information to the Board of Directors.
6. The Board creates a set of policies based on existing policies and task force recommendations. These should include clear directives for actions and enforcement.
7. Have guidelines undergo legal review. Social media is complex. Your board may want your school attorney to review policies pertaining to social media prior to adoption for legal and other implications.
8. A professional development program is implemented based on these policies to train teachers, administrators and staff. Task force teachers engage in discussions with groups of teachers across the district to socratically build awareness and understanding of the potential risks of- and required boundaries for- effective social media engagement.
9. A professional development training program is created and implemented for students that emphasizes students taking responsibility for their active and

independent social media- related health and protection (preferably led by the student members of the task force).

10. Parents, caregivers, and community members are informed of policies and provided with opportunities to learn more from the task force to further familiarize themselves with these policies.
11. Parents can be trained to engage with their children and monitor their social media use by clearly reinforcing the guidelines around appropriate social media use and behavior and reminding them that they can be monitored at any time (make sure parents have access to student accounts).
12. Keep the task force (reduced if more efficient) going throughout the year with regular meetings to evaluate policy effectiveness and to learn (likely from students) the new social media outlets and trends.

Resources

Cyberbullying Prevention Resources

[Anonymousalerts.com](http://anonymousalerts.com) — Bullying reporting plus information push to multiple platforms.

<http://cyberbullying.org/resources/educators> — Cyberbullying Research Center Resources for Educators.

[Isafe.org](http://isafe.org) — Digital citizenship training.

[Pbis.org](http://pbis.org) — School climate improvement tools.

[Safekids.com](http://safekids.com) — Online safety guidelines for educators and parents.

[Schooltipline.com](http://schooltipline.com) — Anonymous school reporting system.

[Stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov) — The federal government’s website on bullying.

[ConnectSafely.org](http://connectsafely.org) — policy development for educators.

[Facebook.com/safety/bullying/](https://www.facebook.com/safety/bullying/) — Facebook Bullying Prevention Hub.

Crisis management resources

[Google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts) — Inform chosen individuals via e-mail whenever problematic information is posted anywhere online based on keywords.

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](http://www.nctsn.org) — Psychological First Aid App

[National Incident Management Systems \(NIMS\) App](http://www.fema.gov)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) App](http://www.fema.gov)

Social media general guides, options, tools, and resources

Book—The School Leader’s Guide to Social Media. Ronald Williamson and Howard

Johnston.

Book— Embracing Social Media: A Practical Guide to Manage Risk and Leverage Opportunity. Kristin Magette.

[Chicago Public Schools Social Media Toolkit](#)

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) — A sample social media comment policy is available

[School Communications Planning Guide](#)

[Social Media guidelines generator](#)

[Social media guidelines](#)

[Social Media Guidelines roadmap](#)

[Suite of connectivity options](#)

[Website design](#)

Legal

[Review of state laws and policies](#)

[The National Council of State Legislatures summary of laws relating to filtering, blocking, and usage policies in schools](#)

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