

Head Start Social Media Case Studies

Using Facebook to Connect with Families and Communities



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How many classrooms and how many kids does your agency serve?

In a typical year, 12 classrooms (two with double sessions) and 221 kids (125 HS and 96 EHS).

In 2019, our agency served about 2,500 children in Early Head Start, Preschool Head Start and First Teacher programs. We have about 30 Early Head Start classrooms and 100 Preschool Head Start classrooms in 16 counties across north Alabama.

How do you view social media fitting into your agency's goals?

One program goal is to create and enhance partnerships with parent and community stakeholders to strengthen outcomes for families and children. An objective within this goal is to enhance options to increase opportunities for agency wide parent engagement and community partnerships. Social media helps drive information out to the parents as well as community partners. It can engage parents through their comments, shares, and "likes". They have the opportunity to see pictures of what is happening in a classroom with their students, as well as engage them to participate in agency and community events.

Our agency's mission is to reduce or eliminate the causes and consequences of poverty for individuals, families, and communities in need. Our goals are to meet families where they are and provide exceptional customer service. We know that without a robust social media strategy as part of our overall communications plan we are not fulfilling our obligation to our families to provide them with the best customer service we can offer.

<p>How do you find it relates to Head Start’s Program Performance Standards?</p>	<p>Social media helps to promote collaboration with families. We can gauge interests by the engagement with the posts. It also helps us to prompt community events like job fairs, mobile food pantries, and other resources that may help families reach goals and have positive family outcomes.</p>	<p><i>See breakout box for specific connections cited by Holly.</i></p>
<p>What support or direction do you get from your agency for your social media efforts?</p>	<p>I am allowed to run the Facebook page with little to no direction. There are times when I am given information to pass on or I ask for guidance on posting certain things that I may find questionable. Teachers send me pictures to share and usually write their own little blurbs.</p>	<p>The Communications Team receives regular requests from all programs in our agency to provide various communications tools for messaging. Program leaders are part of the decision-making process for content, messaging, design, and distribution.</p>
<p>How much time would you estimate you spend per week on social media?</p>	<p>I spend an average of 5 - 6 hours per week.</p>	<p>With dedicated staff, our team of two spends approximately 10 hours each week on social media, which includes creation of graphics, videos, slideshows, etc. and post scheduling with an external platform. There is additional time involved in online engagement and monitoring notifications from our channels.</p>
<p>What are a couple of types of posts and/or audiences you focus on and why?</p>	<p>I like to focus on classroom activity posts for our families. Parents love seeing their children on social media and it helps promote our program. People are able to see all the fun and educational things we do on a daily basis.</p> <p>I also like to share community pages that provide resources or information for our families such as mobile food pantries and job fairs. This is a great way to get needed information to our families.</p>	<p>Program calendars often dictate the content posts. For example, each spring we have a heavy focus on Head Start recruitment. We push out event notices and site-specific recruitment dates. Graphics are simple for easy recognition and have a consistent design with a simple change in color for the specific month of eligibility.</p>

<p>What is the impact you have been most proud to see on social media?</p>	<p>When the pandemic first hit, I enjoyed posting Throwback Pictures of our staff when they were younger and having people guess who it was. I posted pics that families sent to their teachers of their children doing different activities while under quarantine and staff made collages with letters letting families know that they were missed. We had a couple of staff members and volunteers read books that I'd post weekly.</p>	<p>Locally: Engagement by our staff with families on our individual site pages.</p> <p>Nationally: Head Start's Birthday in 2019. Several of our sites recorded teachers and students singing Happy Birthday to Head Start. We created multiple montages of the individual site videos and were ultimately recognized as a Program Hero.</p>
<p>What is next for your agency?</p>	<p>We will be implementing the Class Intercom system for all staff to develop a post. We will continue to increase engagements on Facebook and may consider Twitter or other platforms.</p>	<p>The Communications Team Resource Specialist is investigating new social media tools, especially for Instagram, to build the audience and reach younger audiences, which include our parents. We want to take our messages to where the audiences are most comfortable.</p>
<p>What advice do you have to agencies about how to make the most of their capacity to engage on social media?</p>	<p>Share pictures of children and families in activities. They really do love to see their pictures on social media.</p>	<p>First and foremost, <i>know your capacity</i>. If you only have the capacity to engage on social media one hour per week, then choose only one channel for engagement. No matter your capacity, utilize an editorial calendar that serves as a guide to when and what to post.</p>
<p>What tools would you recommend they use to expand their capacity and why?</p>	<p>I have only used Facebook for our agency and find that using the publishing tools to make albums and slideshows has been beneficial to engage people with our posts.</p>	<p>Canva Pro for nonprofits offers templates, photos, videos, graphic elements and music in a drag and drop format that is virtually fool-proof. It has stock videos that can be trimmed. Because videos generate higher rates of engagement, a simple 30-second clip can bring in a wider audience. For scheduling, Hootsuite is the platform we use.</p>

How Social Media Fits with Head Start's Program Performance Standards

1302.50 – Family Engagement

(b) Family engagement approach. A program must:

(2) Develop relationships with parents and structure services to encourage trust and respectful, **ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents** to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and community;

(3) **Collaborate with families in a family partnership process** that identifies needs, interests, strengths, goals, and services and resources that support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability;

(4) **Provide parents with opportunities to participate in the program** as employees or volunteers;

(6) **Implement procedures for teachers, home visitors, and family support staff to share information with each other**, as appropriate and consistent with the requirements in part 1303 subpart C, of this chapter; FERPA; or IDEA, to ensure coordinated family engagement strategies with children and families in the classroom, home, and community.