National PTA Social Media Policy

Guidelines and Aids for National PTA Social Media Efforts
Updated August 2012

Introduction

What this guide will cover

1. National PTA Social Media Policy

The National PTA recognizes the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the entire PTA organization along with our current and potential services. We also recognize the importance of our employees and volunteers joining in and helping shape the industry's conversation and direction through interaction in social media. National PTA is committed to supporting honest, transparent, and knowledgeable dialogue on the internet through social media.

The following social media policy guidelines are intended for national, state, regional, district, council, and local PTA or PTSA entities. The social media policy guidelines are to be applied to any internet based, official or unofficial PTA site, and otherwise related online elements of the PTA. Regardless of whether the online content is created using CMS tools, a Facebook page, MySpace or other site/page, the use of any PTA logo, related image or name on the online content, the an unofficial or informal internet based element must comply with the following policy and guidelines.

As with anything, PTA needs to take some precautions when using social media tools that connect our organization. The same resources that make social media attractive are also the same elements that can damage the PTA brand.

The National PTA encourages all PTA entities to use tools that align with our standards and policies to increase membership, communicate with members, potential members, fundraise, and increase positive exposure. To that end, social media sites such as You Tube, Twitter, and Facebook, and blogging sites should be embraced and used with the guidelines set by National PTA. Social media sites allow PTA to connect to members and potential members in a very interactive way. The online presence allows PTA to share videos, post information, display pictures, promote PTA, receive feedback, and best of all, network.

2. Social Media Roles: Who Does What?

Determine who is in charge of each of your social media activities. It is essential to assign responsibility and accountability throughout your organization. When clear social media roles are defined, your organization can more easily execute strategy and understand who can—and who cannot—perform certain social media tasks.

- Choose PTA individuals who are willing and able to provide high quality basic social media posts, produce content, as well as moderate content posted by others.
- Social media can be done by one person, but is recommended to be shared by at least two people; however, it is important to have one person be the final say on content and messaging.
- Questions regarding basic guidelines for assigning social media roles and responsibilities can be directed to the National PTA Communications department.

3. What Should PTA Say Online?

What should PTA be posting and sharing online? What topics should they never post about?

Have something to say.
Having ideas and wondering things is perhaps the most powerful thing you can learn to do on social media. Talking about your ideas in a public forum forces ideas to grow, evolve and get better. Ideas matter.

Stand on the shoulders of giants.
The internet and social media means having access to literally millions of other ideas; read them, use them, be informed by them. However, in the process of gaining ideas and information from others, most critical is to give people credit when influenced by them! Not only is stealing other people's ideas, words, and images a form of academic dishonesty, it is also wrong and could lead to problems later. To avoid any unintended issues, provide a link to the original content and use the author's name and/or organization whenever possible.

Share your opinion.
Remember, what you have to say matters. Read the work of others and let them know what

you think! When sharing your ideas, commenting on others, and posting content, always keep it clean, professional, and respectful. Use common language that would be acceptable in a public forum, such as a school meeting (the same general rule goes for images, audio, and video). Disagreements are central to growing ideas, but do not attack anyone personally.

Be consistent.
Be sure to maintain consistency throughout posts regardless of the social media platform.

Be safe*.*
Do not publicly post anything you would not tell a stranger on the street. Opinions and ideas belong in a public forum; however, passwords, home addresses, and phone number do not.

4. Monitoring Policy

Hopefully, people are talking about your organization and the issues you care about. How much of the chatter you pay attention to is an important strategy decision.

Consistently monitor your sites.
The key to social media success is to stay on top of the online PTA sites and content; any social media site will require daily monitoring. Encourage discussion by posting quality content and posing questions. Quickly address any inappropriate messages or misuse of the PTA brand. Examples of inappropriate content include spam, advertising, offensive statements, inaccurate information, foul language, or unconstructive criticism of the PTA.

Social media can be used in as many productive ways as it can also be misused. As a general guideline, if you have any question as to whether something should be removed, please contact your local unit president, state office or National PTA's Communications department directly.

5. Responding to Negative Comments

It is hard to figure out when and how you should respond to a post about you, or on your own social media sites. Always? Never? What should you say?

- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if a reply is warranted, however, some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed.

- Encourage all comments or questions (negative or not) to be directed to the appropriate person able to respond accurately.
- Factors such as the number of followers and the severity of the conversation should determine if and how your PTA responds.
- Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the appropriate designee for an official response.
- Build trust by being open and transparent. Share information, including what the challenges and opportunities are for PTA in your community.

6. Privacy and Permissions

Social media venues are a great way to share information, but it is important to make sure that the information and content is yours to share. It is especially important for PTA due to sensitive areas dealing with children, families, and education, in which something as simple as a person's name or photo might carry an implication or association with the entire organization.

- Employees should respect the privacy rights of their co-workers and not disclose information about work-related events involving other employees or volunteers of PTA, vendors and partners without obtaining their permission.
- PTA should not post photographs or images of any volunteers, families, children etc… on any social media site without having their express permission to do so. Secure a written consent form at events or at the beginning of the school year releasing the rights to use and post pictures. If parents, teachers or volunteers do not sign the consent form, be sure to honor their wishes.
- Do not collect sensitive information—such as phone numbers, student ID numbers, Social Security numbers, payment information, etc.—via social media, as those are not secure channels.
- If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified.
- As a guideline, don't post anything that would not be appropriate to present at a conference.

7. Copyright and Attribution

There are two sides to copyright and attribution issues. First, what are PTA's policies for allowing other people to use your content? On the flip side, how will you use other people's content respectfully?

Do not assume that anything found online is fair game to use. If there is no indication of licensing on it, assume that it is copyrighted—do not just put it on social media sites without properly citing the source or providing a link to the original content. It is always OK to link to something, but it is considered good courtesy to include an attribution to the original source.

> ***Photography:***
> Photographs posted on social media sites can easily be appropriated by visitors.
> Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing.

8. Personal vs. Professional

Social media forces us to address the different ways our personal lives and professional work can intersect. Navigating between them can be difficult, especially on tools like Facebook that require the user to have a personal account to use an organization's page. It is important to lay out the ground rules ahead of time to ensure that all staff and volunteers—who may have very different idea about what is appropriate—are clear about the expectations.

- When staff and volunteers communicate through social media, unless authorized to speak on behalf of PTA, they are representing themselves and should use a disclaimer.
- If staff or volunteers write anything related to the work at PTA on a blog or some other online space, make it clear that what is being said is representative of their own views and opinions and not as a spokesperson for PTA.
- If an individual is speaking on behalf of PTA, that should also be made clear.