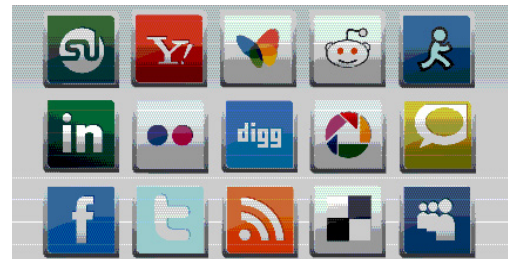




## FIVE FAST FACTS

# Social media and schools

Social networking is now very well established with more than 3.4 billion global internet users and 2.3 billion active social media users. Individuals, businesses and organizations are using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and more to engage in multi-directional conversations and communicate in a way that was never possible before. Schools also need to be taking advantage of these very important tools.



### **1. Social media is widely used by people around the world, including those in your community.**

Facebook has more than 1.5 billion active users, making it the most popular social networking website in the world. WhatsApp, a messaging tool, is second with 1 billion active users followed by Facebook Messenger at 900 million, according to 2016 statistics. Other popular tools include Instagram (400 million), Twitter (320 million) and LinkedIn (100 million). Studies show social media is widely used by people of all ages, incomes and communities.

### **2. Many school districts have embraced social media as a way to communicate with their community.**

More and more schools in Ohio and the nation use social media. A survey released by the Center for Digital Education in April 2013 found 74% of U.S. school districts have at least one social network. While Facebook is the most common social networking website used by schools, Twitter and Instagram also are popular. Many districts display their social media feeds on the home page of their websites or provide prominent links to their social media pages.

### **3. Social media presents rewards and risks for school districts.**

Social media allows schools to highlight positive news and student achievement; increase awareness of school events and activities; spread breaking news and important reminders; engage community members in dialog and answer questions; and drive traffic to district websites, blogs or other electronic content. Perhaps best of all, it's free. Social media, however, also presents risks for districts. Each district must determine how it will use

# FAST FIVE FACTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCHOOLS

## RESOURCES

Creating a Facebook page for your school: step-by-step guide  
<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/81443>

Twitter guide for schools and districts  
<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/19228>

“Why public school leaders must embrace social media now”  
<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/31487>

“Social media helps schools build bridges”  
<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/33038>



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social media, if comments will be allowed, what comments are acceptable, and how comments will be monitored and addressed. Even more important is the adoption of a social media policy and compliance with all relevant policies, laws and regulations, including privacy laws like the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). OSBA's legal division can provide guidance to school districts.

### **4. School districts can start or expand social media efforts by engaging staff and community members.**

School districts should assess how their community is using social media as well as what type of content residents would like the district to share. Use this process to get buy-in from your community and create a content hierarchy to determine the most important content to share and who is responsible for generating that content. A single individual should manage and monitor social media, but other staff members can assist. Be sure to promote social media efforts whenever possible, including board meetings, school events and newsletters. Use social media analytic tools (like [twitter.com/analytics](https://twitter.com/analytics)) to monitor progress, such as new followers or “likes,” and set goals for growth.

### **5. It's important to follow best practices when using social media.**

Be sure to maintain a positive and professional tone on your social media pages. You want followers to develop an expectation that they will routinely see new, valuable content, but you don't want to overwhelm followers with content either. Use a free, web-based social media management system (such as [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)) to schedule content to appear hours, days or weeks in advance — this saves you time and effort; you can use these tools to post to several social networking websites at once. Try to be engaging when you write social media content, and always avoid jargon or acronyms. Remember, it's nearly impossible to erase a digital footprint, so think carefully before you post anything and always proofread carefully. OSBA's communications division can provide guidance to school districts.