How to Guide for Building a Team of Content Creators

By Jill Johnson, EdD







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EVERYONE HAS A STORY, MAKE YOURS WORTH TELLING.

— Jill Johnson, EdD



Dr. Jill first used this line in her Baccalaureate address to the Class of 2003 at Milford High School.

Introduction

A pencil is a powerful tool if it's used to write a love poem, sketch a route, or draft the opening lines to a great novel; however, that same pencil could be used to poke someone in the eye. A pencil—just like social media—may be used for positive or negative.

While some people maintain that social media is the bane of this generation, I would argue that today's educators and students are The Content Generation®: a generation open to using the power of social media to impact positive change and do good in this world.

Adding one more thing to your already full plate may seem overwhelming, but what if I told you that with a little work up front, you will actually be doing less work and sharing better content with your stakeholders in the very near future?

This How to Guide for Building a Team of Content Creators will help you generate more and better quality content from a wide range of perspectives allowing you to tell a richer and more vibrant story for your school district, all while keeping your staff and student information safe and secure. You can't do it alone.

Keep these three things in mind:

- 1. Empower others.
- 2. Establish a sustainable system.
- 3. Tell the stories from multiple perspectives.







Chapter 1: Why should our school district use social media?

Even if your school is already using social media, you should ask yourself the question "why" in order to define the purpose of your social media content. If you're using social media only because "the person before me was doing it" or "my boss told me to do it" or "everyone else is doing it," then you are using social media for the wrong reasons.

Social media may benefit school districts in a wide variety of ways, and it can fulfill more than one purpose. Review the list of reasons to the right, think about the why behind your district's use of social media, and check the appropriate boxes. If your why is not included, be sure to add specific reasons in the spaces provided.

What are our social media team objectives?

Now that you have a better understanding of why you are using social media, it's time to take a look at what you want to accomplish. These objectives should follow the SMART goal planning process: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and anchored within a Time Frame. If your district uses a similar type of goal setting process, be sure to follow your district methodology. Review the list of objectives on the right and consider the goals your district would like to achieve during the next quarter, semester, or year. Check the objectives you'd like to achieve and be sure to add additional goals, as needed.

☐ Build credibility with stakeholders			
☐ Improve Public Relations			
Drive enrollment in a competitive environment			
☐ Unify our school brand			
☐ Create a sense of community			

 Share all school calendar information on the appropriate Facebook pages.
 Develop a brand guide and ensure all content is unified in color, font, and message.
 Increase our following on the following platforms by 25% in the next year: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
☐ Empower 50% of staff members as content creators.
☐ Empower 10% of students as content creators.
□ <u></u>





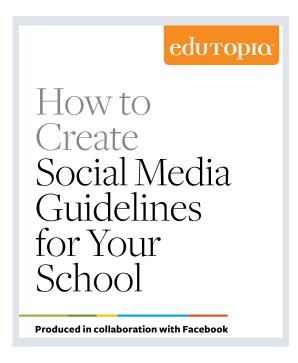
What is our communication strategy?

A school communication planning strategy is the basis for everything you share with your stakeholder groups. A solid communication plan must include a variety of systems utilized for different purposes. Social media is particularly important in that it is essential for almost every form of communication because it is such a powerful medium. If you don't yet have a plan, check out HubSpot's **School Communication** Planning Guide: Your how-to guide for making the most of today's communications channels.



What is our social media policy? Do we have one?

A school district's social media policy must be robust enough to include staff and student expectations while also being maintainable from an enforcement perspective. When drafting this policy be sure to take into consideration the use of school devices from all parties as well as guidelines for personal social media use. Each school district and community is unique in how these guidelines evolve, so be sure to include a variety of stakeholders in the discussion as you develop this policy. We also suggest that you review your state regulations and consult with your school lawyers. A solid reference for beginning this process is Edutopia's **How to Create Social Media Guidelines for Your School.**



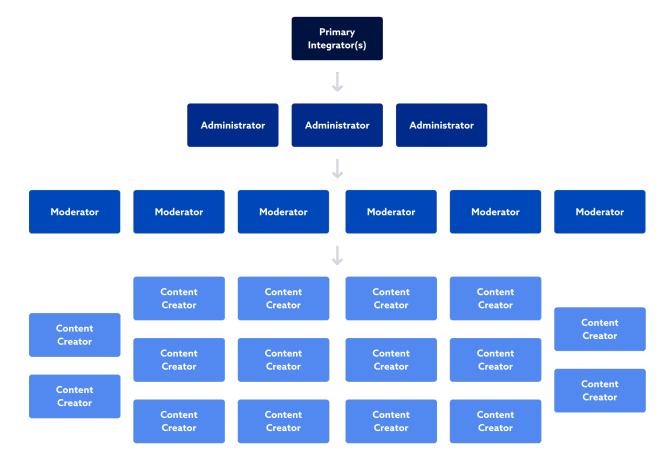




The first step is designating the primary integrator. Although the superintendent or principal may be the person responsible for purchases, an assistant principal, technology integrationist, or teacher leader may be named the primary contact. Having more than one adult in each building fully invested in the implementation of the process will ensure a systematic approach to this implementation rather than being person driven. This approach also ensures that if someone changes roles or leaves the district, the team approach continues in a systematic fashion.

Completing the <u>User Organizational Flowchart</u> below for each brand not only helps to know who is filling what role and how many users will be in each role, but also the timing of bringing additional members on board and training them. Empowering 2-3 people as Class Intercom Administrators as well as having at least one Primary Integrator for each brand will help ensure stability even with staff turnover.

User Organizational Flowchart



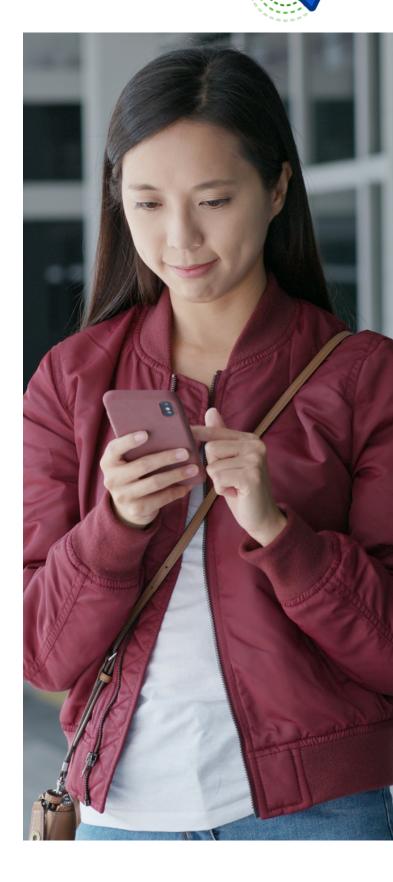


Social Media Team **Administrators** are responsible for maintaining the system, adding users, and ensuring content is being created and shared in a consistent and timely manner. Be sure to have at least three people who have a vested interest in ensuring this project succeeds.

•	Key Integrator #1:
•	Key Integrator #2:
•	Key Integrator #3:

Social Media Team **Moderators** will be responsible for approving content for publishing. Moderators might include administrators, teachers, or school public relations professionals. Moderators can determine if changes need to be made to the content as well as when it will be published. They will also ensure the content stays on brand with appropriate verbiage, hashtags, colors, graphics, etc. Administrators may empower any number of Moderators and grant them approving rights. Internally, you should designate who will take the lead for different types of content. For example, the principal may want to approve all items authored by the front office staff, while the Activity Director approves all content being pushed out about extracurricular activities. The Curriculum Director may take ownership of approving all classroom related posts. Each of these leaders will want to remain up-to-date with the ever-changing landscape of social media, so be sure they are **registered** to receive the monthly newsletter from Class Intercom.

•	Moderator:
•	Moderator:





Social Media Team Content Creators will be able to do just that! The designation of Content Creator means you are allowed to create content and submit it for approval; however, the content will not be published until it is approved by one of the appropriate Moderators. This unlimited number of users will be designated internally to create specific types of content. For example, teachers may be asked to share stories from their classrooms while the director of the school lunch program is asked to highlight happenings in the lunchroom to promote the quality changes being implemented in their building. One student may be asked to create graphics for sports updates while another student is specifically responsible for giving live updates from the speech meets.

•	Content Creator:
•	Content Creator:

Content Creator:





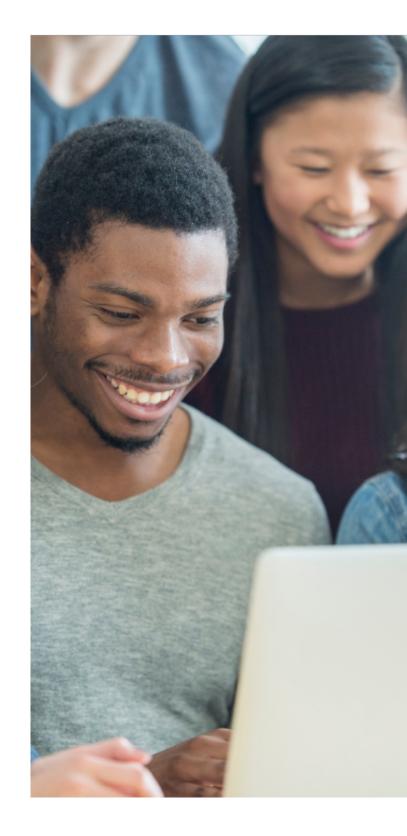
How will we select our team members?

A wide variety of team members will be helpful in telling a robust story. Every school is organized in a unique way, and you want to select team members who are passionate, or at least interested, in helping tell your school's story. By empowering a variety of content creators, you are more likely to tell a more authentic story.

School leaders must be invested in this process for it to survive and thrive. The beauty of a moderation system is that no one needs to or should have their personal social media accounts connected to the school social media accounts. Monitoring, approving, retweeting, sharing, and commenting, may all be done with the moderation application.

Classroom teachers should be encouraged to share the great work being done in their classrooms. Most people tend to believe they are experts in education because they attended school at some point in their lives. However, these are not the people we want telling our stories. If we want our parents and community members to know about the amazing changes in education over the past ten, twenty, thirty years, we need to be showing and telling them what we are doing.

Students are one of the most underutilized resources in our schools. Not only are students the ones living these stories, they are also well equipped to tell these stories as the primary users of social media. By empowering them to generate content for your school social media sites, you are also giving them the unique opportunity to share their creations (e.g., text, pictures, videos, graphics) with an authentic audience. This experience is also a hands-on way to teach digital storytelling and digital citizenship, giving students college and career preparation for a wide variety of industries.

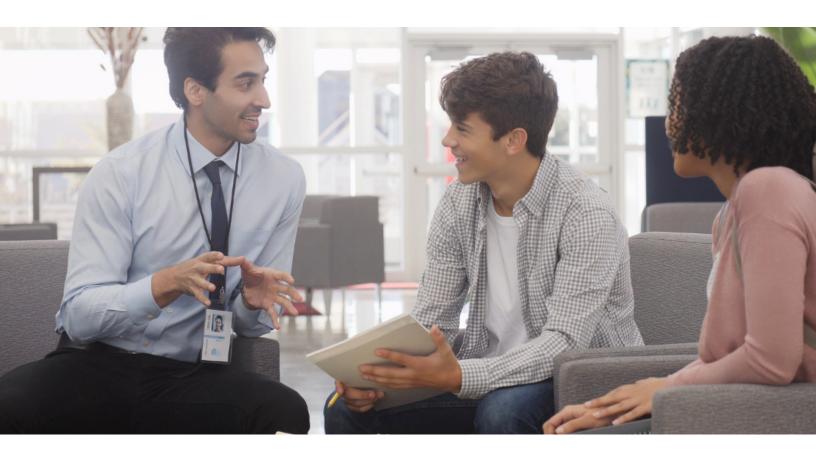




Front office staff members or administrative assistants are great resources for taking care of the informational posts. This might include such items as school picture day, early release days, and parent-teacher conferences. These people are often the heart and soul of a school and know what people are asking; therefore, they know how to anticipate what questions are going to be asked. They are an incredible resource in sharing information in advance.

Parents or community members may seem like an unconventional choice, but remember, you have a moderation system in place, so nothing will be published without the approval of a Moderator. Parents are a great resource for posting information from the PTO or Foundation as well as live updates from activities taking place outside of the district when school personnel are unavailable.

With most initiatives, schools will have early adopters: in this case this probably includes those who are personally engaged in social media use along with those who understand the importance of proactively sharing information in a positive format. Some districts will encourage every staff member to participate, but I would advise leadership not to spend their energy on those not wanting to participate; instead, focus on those who want to be part of a positive movement. The others will follow when they see the impact of sharing positive stories on social media; this may come in the form of increased enrollment in elective courses to the deepening of in-person relationships because of a more informed understanding of what is happening inside and outside the school. For instance, when staff members follow classroom and extracurricular updates on social media, they will have increased opportunities to share in the cultural experiences of students by asking more informed questions.







How will we train our team?

Once you have the different roles on the team defined and the initial team members in place, you'll be ready to train those team members for their designated role. Depending on your moderation system (see Part 3)--which is essential in our world of **FOIA (Freedom of Information Act)** requests, archival, and security. Class Intercom recently released a free training program for all clients that includes short tutorial videos with instructional information for using the platform. Users can watch the videos at their convenience and when ready, take a short guiz to become certified as a Content Creator (level one) and as a Moderator (level two).

My biggest piece of advice: keep it simple. Focus on accuracy in content, spelling, grammar, and visuals. All should be given access to any branding guidelines such as colors, fonts, and logos. Depending on your specific school policy, Moderators will need to be aware of any students who have opted out of having their likeness displayed on any social media sites.

An easy way to share "rules" for social media posts is to create a Must Do | Might Do | Don't Do graphic for all users. This can easily be updated as issues arise.

Must Do

*Include our school hashtag

Might Do

*Tag people or businesses represented in your post

Don't Do

*Use shortcuts such as u for you

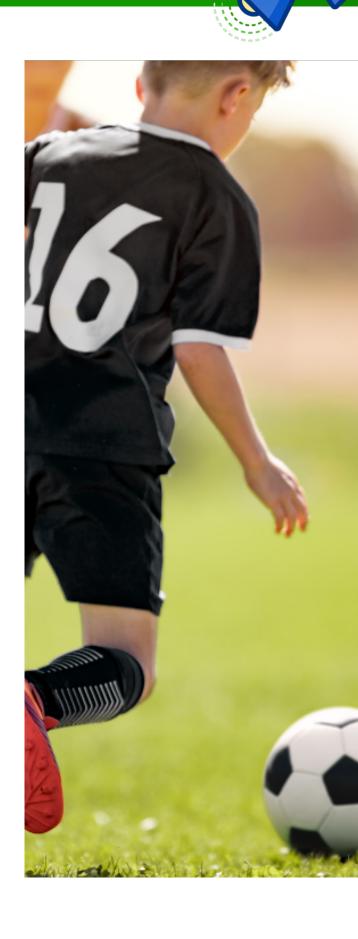


As your content generators begin to evolve, you will want to provide them with additional guidance. Best Practices for Social Media, Story Starter Ideas for Posts, and the Competition Social Media Guide will support these users and help them grow in their craft. After they make a few posts and receive positive responses--which they will--they will soon be making more and better posts from a variety of content areas. In the Class Intercom platform, feedback may be given directly in the "Notes" section.

The biggest challenge in training will be inspiring your staff members to "toot their own horn." Educators by nature are humble to a fault. School leaders will need to model the storytelling. This is also a great way to build school culture. Principals spend a large majority of their time in classrooms, gyms, and hallways. Amazing stories take place here and they need to be told. Unless we want the vast majority of our community members thinking our students are eating Tide PODS® for lunch or participating in TikTok challenges, we need to share the good things happening in our schools!



When Dr. Jill attended the National School PR Conference in New Orleans, she learned about the second line. To learn more, read her blog post, Takeaways from The Big Easy #NSPRA2021.





Chapter 3: Why should we add students to the team?

Does giving students the usernames and passwords to your school's social media accounts sound like a good idea? Probably not. Conversely, giving students the opportunity to create content for your school's social media accounts is a great idea if you have a plan to moderate their content in a secure and systematic way.

We talk about digital citizenship a lot. We reference the **T-H-I-N-K graphic**. We complain about the negative influence of social media-think Tide PODS®, tea rooms, devious licks--on our students a lot. But how often do we offer the opportunity for students to participate in social

media on behalf of their school? How often do we give them an authentic audience and allow them to "get a reaction" rooted in positivity?

By giving students the opportunity to practice digital citizenship skills and receive feedback in order to learn and grow, we empower students to tell their story. Does this sound like a daunting task? It's easier than you might think! Follow these four steps: Recruit, Train, Retain, and Sustain to build your team and inspire your students to take ownership of telling their school's story.





According to the ISTE Standards for Education Leaders, "Educators inspire students to positively contribute to and responsibly participate in the digital world" (2018). As part of being good citizens and good designers, educators should:

- create experiences for learners to make positive, socially responsible contributions and exhibit empathetic behavior online that build relationships and community (3a);
- establish a learning culture that promotes curiosity and critical examination of online resources and fosters digital literacy and media fluency (3b);
- mentor students in safe, legal and ethical practices with digital tools and the protection of intellectual rights and property (3c); and
- design authentic learning activities that align with content area standards and use digital tools and resources to maximize active, deep learning (5b).

Just as you established specific objectives and SMART goals for your district, you will also want to set them for your students. Review the list of objectives to the right and consider the goals you and your students would like to achieve during

the next quarter, semester, or year. Check the objectives that pertain to your district and add additional goals, as needed.

 Create an internship program to provide students with real- world experiences 				
 Empower one student representati to report LIVE from school events 	ve			
A student leader will organize a system for creating graphics				
 A student leader will organize a system for posts announcing all student activities 24 hours in advan 	nce			
 A student leader will send Reminds/Emails for each student representative in charge of posting LIVE from school events 				

Educators inspire students to positively contribute to and responsibly participate in the digital world.

- ISTE Standards for Education Leaders





Dr. Jill's original team of social media interns included Seward High School seniors Jonathan Svoboda (video production), Bekah Klenke (leadership/organization), Carson Core (graphic design), and Bryson Janousek (systems/organization).

Chapter 4: How do we RECRUIT students to serve on our team?

The first step is to decide which and how many students should be on your social media team. This should include a variety of students based on age, interests, and knowledge of various activities. The key is to remember that you can't do this alone. The sooner you let go of the control and begin empowering others, the sooner you will see success.

Start small. My very first student social media intern, Bekah Klenke, was a student who was often on SnapChat during lunch, which

indicated she had a desire to create content and communicate it to others. She was also very outgoing and willing to give the internship a try. Conversely, my second intern, Bryson Janosek, was a quiet student who loved sports. Each had unique leadership qualities I didn't see or expect until I gave them the opportunity to assume these roles. It's important to let go of your preconceived notions about students and give them a chance. I always say, "Students live up to your expectations, so set them high!"



You'll also want to tap into existing groups of interested students already established in your school. Journalism, yearbook club, multimedia, digital marketing, graphic design, and creative writing are all good places to start. Consider students who are outspoken as well as those who seem shy. Oftentimes, the quiet kids have just as much to say, they just need an outlet for flexing

their voice.

Recruiting more students means less work for everyone. This also gives you the opportunity to learn who is reliable and dedicated to improving their craft, and you can easily move students in and out of roles if you don't find a good fit on the first try. The students who rise to the top naturally become your leaders and start to take ownership of the roles once needing to be held by an adult sponsor.

These leaders will also start to notice ways to make things easier. Remember Bryson? He was one of the guiet ones who guickly impressed me not only with his reliability, but also, his creativity and accuracy in making football posts. When I asked him to push his content creation by adding handles and hashtags to his score updates, he took the extra step and made a list of all conference opponent schools' hashtags and handles. He added handles for some senior players for each sport, along with the local news outlets and printed them on cardstock. We added one of these "cheat sheets" to each social media team members' badge holder (see chapter 6) and our engagement numbers soared.

@1011_News, @1011Sports, @PrepExtra

Students: @SHS_111

FB: @josephkrause11 @carson_core

FB: @JaimeOpfer @coachwademiller

VB: @opferCamryn @rklenke8

VB: @teacher vbcoach

XC: @twelch2000 @macie_spotanski

XC: @justrunseward

SB: @laf 33 @alaynagold7

SB: @RichEber38 @BrockAnderson12

@YHS_Dukes #yorkdukes

@AuroraHuskies #aurorahuskies

@BeatriceHigh #GoBigO #GoLadyO

@GINWVikings #ginwvikings

@CreteCards #cretepride

@SchuylerCentral #weareschuyler

@Lakeviewhigh #lakeviewvikes

@HoldregeDusters #holdregedusters

@goacpatriots #acproud

@LexSchools

@WavHighSchool #thevikelife

@GeringBulldogs #gpsbulldogs

@WeRBennington

Dr. Jill's student interns created these inserts for each activity season. They added commonly used hashtags and handles for local news outlets, competing schools, coaches and activity sponsors, and seniors or activity leaders.





Diversity is key in recruiting. Not every student can be a video expert. You need students who can be leaders, organizers, videographers, and content creators. You also need students who are just looking for a place to belong. Use your connections with staff and activity sponsors to hone in on some solid choices, but also open up the option by putting announcements in whatever system your school uses to communicate directly to students. The quarterback of the football team will not be a good representative for the football team because he is busy playing football. However, the student who loves football but is not an athlete will most likely be honored to be the one to tell the football team's story; plus, he/ she knows the game. Also, contact coaches and sponsors to find out if they have extra student managers or an injured player, who may be a good candidate for the social media team. If you'd like a more formalized process, you can request applications. These documents from Class Intercom schools may give you a start as to how you'd like to begin the process.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

- **Sample Application Form from Seward HS**
- **Internship Application Form. Lewis Central HS**
- **Sample Email to Students, Grand Island Northwest HS**

We are just facilitators in their story, they are the ones living it. — Jill Johnson, EdD



Chapter 5: How do we TRAIN students to serve on our team?

Once you have some team members in place, you'll want to define the different roles depending on your needs. Inspiring your students to take chances and be creative is the key to success. Keep the rules to a minimum and focus on basic best practices, just like you did for the adults (see Chapter 2). Remind students that they are telling the story for a much wider audience through the lens of the school. Allow them to tell the story from their point of view and encourage the use of creativity through photos, graphics, videos, and emojis. Remember, we are just facilitators in their story; they are the ones living it.

My very first intern, Bekah, created a simple list of all the activities taking place that fall, and we recruited representatives (Chapter 3) for each of those activities: Cheerleaders had a representative, Quiz Bowl had a representative, etc. Bekah quickly trained each of these representatives on the Class Intercom systems and reviewed a couple do's (always use the school hashtag) and don'ts (never use words like *kill*). She also introduced each of them to the running spreadsheet with all the activities as this is where they could find everything they needed as a representative.

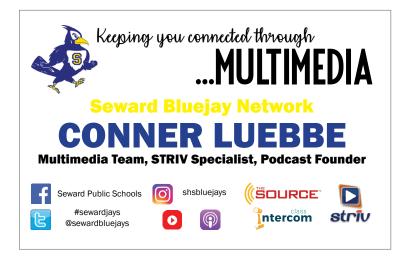
ACTIVITY	SOCIAL MEDIA REP	TRAINED
Social Media Intern	Natalie Keller	\square
Boys Golf	Hannah Benedict	
Girls Soccer	Aly Conde	\square
eSports	Damien Gligorevic	
Bluejay Leadership Team	Alivia Hartmann	\square
Cheerleading	Sarita Richards	
Band/Color Guard/Drumline	Mahri Vega-Nipp	
Key Club	Lauryn Parra	
Student Life	Julius Justice	\square
Writing Club	Jeanna Snyder	
Quiz Bowl	Jakob Gray	\square

DATE	EVENT	PERSON POSTING LIVE AT EVENT	24 HOUR NOTICE
4-17	Bluejay Way Volunteer Day	JJ Metschke	V
4-22	Throwback Thursday	Natalie Keller	
4-24	Booster Club Bluejay Bash	Mr. Fries	
4-30	Baseball vs Grand Island	Tarryn Hartman	
5-5	ESU 6 HS Quiz Bowl	Hannah Roebke	
5-7	Central Conference Golf Meet	Peyton Quakenbush	
5-8	FFA Banquet	Jakob Gray	
5-10	SHS Bank Spring Finale Concert	Hannah Roebke	M
5-11	SHS Honors Night	JJ Metschke	
5-16	Graduation	Jakob Gray	V
5-26	Varsity Track State Tournament	Hannah Benedict	\square



Chapter 6: How do we RETAIN students once we have them on our team?

Once we have students trained and generating content, it's important to retain them. This can be done by making them feel like part of the team. After training, we presented them with a personalized Social Media Team badge on a school lanyard and placed a Social Media Team sign on their school locker. Initially, I was surprised at the pride in which students responded to and wore these badges. By year three, the presentation of the badges became a ritual students anticipated.



To get started making your own personalized locker signs, **use this Locker Sign template**.



To get started making your own personalized badges, <u>use</u> <u>this Press Pass Badge template</u>.



Short team meetings, even once per quarter, are a great way to touch base and celebrate successes, offer feedback, and set goals for the future. Because scheduling is tough, I picked a specific day and asked students to stop by my office after lunch. One of the interns handed out thank you notes with a drink and snack just to say thanks. We briefly touched base on what they were doing well (e.g., posting on time, including photos/graphics) as well as challenging them to try something new in their content creation (e.g., adding more video, inserting tags or hashtags). One of my favorites used by a Class Intercom school to celebrate the success of their students was "Content Crushers" with an orange Crush soda. To find more ideas for celebrating content generator success, use this **Celebration Tags template**.

Again, providing sample posts and post starters (Chapter 3) is very helpful for adult and student content creators. I'd also encourage you to create a system for giving credit for creative work being done by your students. For instance, if Jonie took the photo(s) or Mary wrote the copy, they should tag the content creators as shown here.

Another nice touch is to introduce the student at the beginning of the event from which they are posting live. For example, "Tweeting for Seward High tonight is junior Jax Jones. Jax will be giving quarter-by-quarter score updates on Twitter. Thanks, Jax!"

You should also treat the Social Media Team like any other extracurricular activity in your school. This may include a team photo (posted on social media, of course), a team poster, and even team shirts!



Technology Integrationist, Heath Callihan, celebrated her students' achievements with these special "Content Crusher" tags.











Chapter 7: How do we SUSTAIN our team from year to year?



By empowering a variety of students to help create content, you are building a more sustainable system. Near the middle of my first year of allowing students to create content for our school's social media profiles, I realized that my four senior leaders would be leaving at the end of the school year. This meant that although I had a good thing started, it would quickly fizzle if I didn't have a plan in place. The senior interns and I discussed this and talked about leaving a legacy by taking pride in what they had started and enabling others to continue to build on and improve the program. Jonathan Svoboda, the intern in charge of video production, made a tutorial on how to edit using the school's software program; the intern in charge of graphics, Carson

Core, organized a folder system of graphic templates, and that original intern, Becca, recruited and trained her own replacement.

Remember, empowering a number of adults and students in a systematic process ensures that even if you leave, the program will continue.

After my third year of having a student social media team, I had over 50 students and 20 staff members creating content with 5-7 of the adults consistently approving content for publication. This not only gave students an incredible opportunity, but it also alleviated the workload placed on the principal, activity director, and front office staff and helped us tell a more robust story about our school.



Chapter 8: Which tool do I use to make sure this is safe and secure?

The team outlined in this eBook used Class Intercom to design, implement, and sustain their system for a social media team of content creators. They chose Class Intercom because it:

- 1. allows for an unlimited number of users:
- 2. requires an approval system by assigned moderators before content can be posted;
- 3. allows for an unlimited number of scheduled posts, which is great for producing all the calendar information like PT Conferences and winter break; and
- 4. archives all content from posts to photos to replies.





Educators



PR Professionals



Tech Professionals



Students

Empower. Unify. Secure. Make your school's social media remarkable.

Schedule a Demo





Empowering others to help tell your school district's story is beneficial to all involved. Although this takes some work on the front end to establish objectives for your social media team, the benefits of having a team of storytellers has tremendous potential for all those participating in the creation of content.

Class Intercom is founded on the principle of educating and empowering students and educators to collaborate and securely share their school's story through social media. From its inception, Class Intercom's focus has been to provide the tools and resources to help all schools and educators--not just our customers--build stronger community connections and educational opportunities through social media.

As Class Intercom has continued to grow and expand to schools and students internationally, the same vision has been maintained while expanding and enhancing the user experience both on the platform and through the high value educational resources we provide. As a social media management solution created exclusively for schools and educators, Class Intercom is led by seasoned educator Dr. Jill Johnson and edtech driver Ben Pankonin. Each is dedicated to researchbased ingenuity in education and empowering students to gain real world experience in the classroom.

If you'd like to learn more about Class Intercom, please visit **classintercom.com** and check out the wide variety of resources available including blogs, webinars, podcasts, CGTV, and other high-value downloadables to enhance curricular materials.



About the Author

Jill M. Johnson, EdD

Over her 30 year career in education, Dr. Jill has served in various roles including secondary ELA teacher, professional development consultant, and high school administrator. After completing her doctoral study, **Technology Leadership Qualities in Secondary Principals in** Nebraska who Support Student-led Social Media Teams, Jill began her tenure as Class Intercom President.

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To learn more about Dr. Johnson and Class Intercom helping to advance social media communications and curriculum, visit www.classintercom.com.

