

REPORT

Leveraging Social Media for Family Connections, Story-Telling

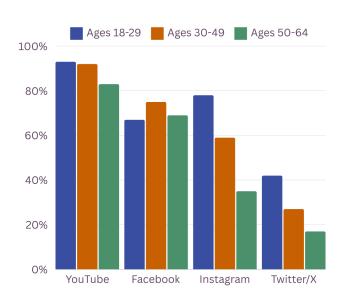
As a district or school leader, you understand the importance of effectively communicating with your families. However, it can be challenging to find the time to share the day-to-day experiences that truly make up your school's culture. It's hard enough to find time to communicate the practical items you know your families need to know, right? And with many of you juggling these tasks without the benefit of a communications professional or team, you have to prioritize because it's impossible to "do it all."

It's also impractical to ignore the prevalence of social media and it can be a valuable tool in connecting with families. This article will walk through some simple, practical ways you can leverage social media for meaningful connections with your families and broader community.

Select Social Media Platforms

While it is important for you to understand your own school community, the following social media platforms are most popular according to a <u>January 2024 Pew Research Center publication</u>.

Percentage of Social Media Use By Age



In general, if you are trying to reach the broadest audience with the least amount of work, **Facebook** is probably the best place to start. Why?

- You can post text, photos, videos on Facebook (most versatile)
- You are not required to post video (YouTube) or photos/video (Instagram)
- Facebook is an easy way to create engagement and share "the day in the life" in your district or school.

If you have more resources to build out your presence on other platforms, **Instagram** is a good next choice because it is popular with both parents/guardians and students. **Threads**, a "competitor" to Twitter/X, is slowly growing in momentum. To learn more about this relatively new platform (launched in July 2023), watch <u>Class Intercom's video</u> on exploring the implications for schools.

Content Topic Ideas

In a January 2023 article, Class Intercom listed <u>10 ideas</u> for authentic storytelling. While all 10 are great ideas, we suggest you incorporate these three to start.

- 1. **Student Achievements.** This is a great way to celebrate your students...and it shouldn't be reserved for perfect scores on tests. Achievements should include the day-to-day ways students are learning and feeling seen and heard. How are students showing leadership in your school?
- 2. **School Spirit.** Snapping photos of students showing off their school spirit elevates the positive culture within your community. It can be a picture of a first grader wearing a mascot t-shirt to school or a high school senior cheering on a game. When you connect all grade-levels to encourage school spirit, you are building community.
- 3. **Spotlight Posts.** This is a great way to create "shout out" moments for staff, students, and alumni. These posts are often shared and reshared because it personalizes your school.

Methods of Capturing Content

- **Photos:** A picture is worth 1,000 words, so an engaging photo that lets parents/guardians feel like they are part of their student's educational experience helps build connections.
- **Short Video (Reel):** You don't need to have video editing skills to capture a short clip of something fun in the classroom and then post to social media. 10-30 seconds is a great length to quickly grab attention.
- **Events:** When you want your parents/guardians to remember an important school event, adding a social media event will automatically remind them in addition to any other ways you're sending out reminders.

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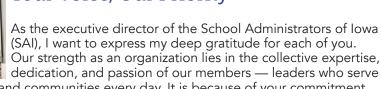
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Executive Director's Message from Lisa Remy Gathering Feedback: Your Voice, Our Priority



students, staff, and communities every day. It is because of your commitment that SAI continues to grow and adapt, making an impact on education across the state.

Just as schools must build a strong foundation of communication by actively engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members, you must also collaborate to gather feedback. This helps shape decisions that impact the lives of those you lead. Feedback also ensures that schools continue to reflect the values and priorities of the communities they serve. Similarly, for SAI to meet the needs of our members, it's just as important for us to seek input from the leaders we serve.

We believe that your voice is essential in shaping our organization. As we look ahead, gathering your feedback is a top priority. We want to ensure that the resources, support, and professional learning opportunities we provide align with your needs and the realities you face in your roles. Your insights help guide our decisions and ensure that SAI remains responsive to the ever-evolving challenges of educational leadership.

Every idea, concern, or suggestion you share is valuable, and we want to make sure our work reflects the needs and aspirations of our members. Whether it's refining our programs, developing new programs, or addressing key issues, your feedback allows us to better serve you.

Throughout this year, you will have opportunities to share your thoughts with us through quick polls, surveys, focus groups, SAI District meetings, and/or direct conversations. We encourage you to take part in these efforts, knowing that your perspective is critical to our ongoing mission. Our goal is to be a partner you can rely on, offering meaningful support that helps you thrive as leaders in your schools/districts. Let's get started with a short poll linked below in the graphic.

Thank you for your trust in SAI and for the work you do each day. We are honored to be in service to such an outstanding group of administrators, and we look forward to hearing from you as we continue to grow together.



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Creating a Social Media Plan

With limited time and resources, a social media plan can help you stay on track.

- 1. Identify the platforms you wish to use.
- 2. Provide access to key employees, and potentially high school students, to collect and create content. This will help you post with greater frequency. At a minimum, you should be posting a few times a week to build engagement.
- 3. Determine the time of day to post. A <u>2023 EdWeekly article</u> provides more in-depth information. In general, post:
 - early in the morning on weekdays (before parents/guardians leave for work or to drop off kids at school).
 - over lunch hours.
 - right around the time school lets out.
 - on Sunday evenings.
- 4. Select a social media posting tool that helps you schedule and post across multiple platforms.
 - <u>SocialPilot</u> allows individuals to post to platforms without needing a personal social media account. This is great for employees who are hesitant to post content because they do not want to tie their personal social media accounts to a district or school account.
 - Several other tools are a great resource and can be cost-effective for schools. <u>Sprout Social</u>, <u>Buffer</u>, <u>Canva</u>, and <u>MavSocial</u> are just a few to consider. SAI uses MavSocial.

What are YOUR Questions and Needs?

This is a lot of information to digest, but with a little planning social media can be a powerful tool for engagement. We'd like to know what additional questions you may have on this topic as well as your biggest challenges in getting things started. Please take this quick survey to help us know how we can help support planning and launching a successful social media plan for your district or school. We'd also love to hear about what's going well for you so we can share your own advice with others.

Take this short social media survey now

Connect with SAI on Socials!

We just launched a <u>Facebook</u> page, and we'd love to have you follow us. We often celebrate the great things going on in lowa school districts and tag a school district's Facebook page.

We also currently post on <u>YouTube</u>, <u>X</u> and <u>LinkedIn</u>.



Renaissance

See Every Student.

Upcoming Events

November

- 5: The Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX)
- 7: CATCHLIFE30 November Challenge Begins
- 7: Facilitating Awareness and Assistance Plans within a Supportive, Civil, and Professional Culture
- 8: SAI Women in Leadership Masterminds Group
- 12: The Big 3: A Simple Guide to Leading with Heart
- 14: Statewide Mentoring Meeting for Superintendents, Middle School/ Secondary Principals
- Statewide Mentoring Meeting for Elementary and Assistant Principals
- 22: SAI Women in Leadership Masterminds Group

In Memoriam

Please email <u>lbuck@sai-iowa.org</u> to share In Memoriam names that we can include in future publications.



The SAI Report is published for association members and select community and business leaders by School Administrators of Iowa. The views expressed in the SAI Report do not necessarily reflect SAI opinion nor does acceptance of advertising imply SAI endorsement. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Laine Buck
Communications Director
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Legal Vortex with Matt Carver, legal services director Subpoenas and Other Legal Things

Those of you who have read my columns for some time have a good idea by now that I like to focus on a practical approach to operating in our schools without focusing too much on legalities. This might seem odd for an attorney, but I am not afraid to admit I AM an odd attorney!

While practicality is typically my focus, I am going to put that focus in check this month and share some legal nuances that come up frequently in Iowa's schools.

Is It Legal to Record Others Without Their Permission?

Because lowa is a single consent state, it is legally permissible to record others without their permission, as long as it is clear that they are present for the interaction or conversation. Below are some examples in which it is NOT a violation of lowa law to record a conversation:

- A parent/guardian calls you on the telephone and records the conversation without sharing that they are recording.
- An employee is in your office for a conversation about their own employment and records the conversation without sharing that they are doing so. While this is legal, it is arguably not professional.
- A student records a conversation they are having with a teacher in the classroom.

While these recordings are not a violation of lowa law as described, they may be prohibited based upon your school policy. Here's an example for context: Cell phones with cameras and other technology devices capable of storing and/or transmitting and/or receiving images are banned from use for any purpose in locker rooms and restrooms at ALL times. Students may be disciplined for any use of technology devices in school locker rooms or restrooms. At no time are students or visitors authorized to video capture, photograph, or audio record others in the school building, on school property (to include school vehicles), or at school activities (unless recording a public performance, such as a game, honor assembly, concert, contest, etc.), without the consent of a teacher, coach, or school administrator.

In those cases, the student or employee who recorded a conversation or interaction may be disciplined and visitors or parents/guardians could face restrictions on school access. In addition, there may be implications if the individual is recording something and later sharing it in violation of a student's or employee's confidentiality rights.

Please note that I shared above how the individual must be present or participating in the conversation. An individual cannot leave a recording device behind, use technology to enhance their ability to hear from a distance, or plant a hidden device to record a conversation. In those situations, they would be invading the privacy of others and it would be a criminal violation.

Subpoenas, Documents, and Depositions

What should you do if you receive a subpoena? First, consider the purpose of the subpoena. The subpoena may commonly relate to providing documents or to attend a deposition. If the subpoena concerns a student's records or the records of an employee, then you should notify that student's family or the employee, unless there is an accompanying order prohibiting such communication. This provides the parties involved an opportunity to "quash the subpoena" (make it invalid or void).

If the subpoena is not quashed, then you should expect to comply with the subpoena and provide the information requested. If you are concerned about whether information is confidential or privileged, please check with your school district's legal counsel. Questioning whether the information is confidential or privileged may result in a hearing prior to provision or use of the information. Typically, if the information is confidential (not privileged), you will still need to provide the information. However, it's possible that the judge may choose to not use it in a court proceeding.

If the subpoena relates to longer documents with more extensive information, then you or the district legal counsel might contact the attorney or party providing the subpoena. Ask if they are needing all of the information or are seeking something specific. Sometimes standard language is used in subpoenas when the actual need is much more refined. If it's determined that you do not need to submit as much documentation, be sure that you receive an email, amended subpoena, or some other documentation showing that they have approved for the school district to provide less information than originally requested.

Law enforcement does not have access to all student or employee records. If there is an exigent circumstance (e.g., they are immediately seeking information to protect the health or well-being of others), then you should have them share the nature of the exigent circumstance and provide the information without a subpoena. For example, if law enforcement has probable cause that a student has made a threat against another and they need information from the student's records to prevent that threat from being carried out, then you should provide the information.

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However, If there is not an exigent circumstance and law enforcement is unable to provide a provision in lowa or federal law which grants them access to the information requested, then request a subpoena prior to providing them with the information.

In other situations, the subpoena will relate to an employee attending a deposition. If the deposition is at a time that is particularly disruptive for the employee, then it is okay to share about a scheduling conflict or request the deposition to occur at a different date or time. Depositions often occur on the same morning, afternoon, or day when the attorneys are deposing numerous other individuals. It might turn out that it will make no difference to the attorneys involved if your deposition is in the afternoon, rather than the morning, or perhaps later in the afternoon, rather than early in the afternoon.

Another helpful reminder to employees is to focus on telling the truth and not to get nervous about the experience. If they do not recall a particular fact or event, it is okay for them to share that they do not recall that particular detail. Likewise, they may share that they would have to check records if those records are not present.

Employees should not feel obligated to answer a question if they do not believe they have the expertise on the subject. For instance, it is common during custody disputes for parties to request that employees give their opinion about whether a student is emotionally healthier when they stay with mom or dad. I would encourage employees to share that determining a student's mental well-being is not within their professional expertise. A student might be happy or sad on a particular day when it has nothing to do with whom they stayed the prior night. Of course, if the student shared that a particular parent/guardian abused them, then this matter would have already been disclosed to the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the employee should share that the student made such a comment.

Teachers may share about a student's attendance record or assessments of the student, or other matters relating to student records or interaction. However, they should hesitate to connect dots on why the student is behaving a certain way unless the student has shared particular information with the staff member that would cause them to be able to connect those dots.

While the topic of subpoenas is complex and can be stressful, I hope this information helps provide some clarity. I also hope you never need to use this information this year! Stay well and Go Irish!!!



Legislative Notes from Dave Daughton

government relations director

How can it be November already? I have the feeling I'm not the only one thinking that the first two months of school flew by.

With the election only days away, there has not been much activity with the Legislature or legislators. Instead, their primary focus seems to be on campaigning and/or waiting to see the results of both state and national elections. In the December SAI Report (or sooner), I will provide a summary of the election and what that could possibly mean for education legislation in 2025 and beyond.

In the meantime, two committees are active: School Safety and Security and Chronic Absenteeism. They are working on potential recommendations for changes to building code and guidance on Chronic Absenteeism.

On the other hand, the AEA Task Force has not met, nor have they put the committee together because they are waiting until after the election. We are hopeful that this group will conduct a thorough review of the implications of last year's bill and make some positive recommendations in the coming months.

The SAI Legislative Committee has finalized the legislative priority recommendations to the Executive Committee and the Representative Council. Once approved, we will publish the 2025 Legislative Priorities document and you will be able to review and use that document for advocacy purposes.

We had a good turnout at Executive Leaders in mid-October and discussed ways to advocate with your legislators, not only in an election year, but at any time. Key recommendations include **building relationships** with them, getting them **into your buildings**, and **educating** them on what is really happening in our schools. Now is a really good time to do that — prior to the legislative session. It will hopefully help them with decision-making throughout the year.

As always, if you have specific questions feel free to contact me, and I'll do my best to help.

It's been SAId: Conversations on Leadership Podcast

In the latest episode, SAI Executive Director Lisa Remy talks with three leaders from Winterset Community Schools. Director of Teaching and Learning Corey St. John, Coordinator of Student Services Kendra Alexandra, and Winterset Junior High Principal Josh Sussman share the philosophy and tactics they use to see an improvement in student and staff attendance.

Listen to this and previously recorded episodes.

In Brief

Executive Committee October Highlights



- Sept. 11 meeting minutes approved.
- Executive Director Dr. Remy shared information regarding the upcoming appointment of the NAESP Zone Director position and the committee supported Rick Varney as the incoming Zone Director.
- Remy shared about her meeting with Director Snow, AEA Superintendent meetings, the Iowa Best Summit, the IPLA decision, and consideration of changing SAI's IT services.
- Finance Director Debbie Wrenn shared active membership is currently at 1,822, but she anticipates the number to grow as she adds members throughout the fall. Wrenn shared the Financials Report, reminding the committee that Sept. 1 was the start of SAI's fiscal year.
- Professional Learning Director Dr. Dana Schon led the group in an energy boost exercise, followed by an update on the 135 new leaders within this year's Mentoring and Induction program. She updated the committee on a recent Professional Learning Advisory Committee meeting and invited the Executive Committee to provide feedback in a spreadsheet. Schon also discussed SAI's commitment to growing the Coaching Program and asked for feedback regarding any barriers to leaders taking the step to participate. She finished her report by highlighting upcoming professional learning events scheduled for the remainder of the calendar year.
- Associate Professional Learning Director Al Neppl discussed the upcoming 50th Annual Conference to be held Aug. 5-7, 2025. He asked the committee to provide feedback on any themes as SAI plans the anniversary conference.
- Communications Director Laine Buck shared that Darwin Lehmann was selected as Superintendent of the Year and that Mike Mulder was selected as the Arts Administrator of the Year. Announcements of both recipients were scheduled for October. In addition, with October celebrating Principals Month, she said SAI plans to celebrate by posting comments submitted by members through social media. Buck went on to share about the goal of transitioning from PDFs to digital content and asked the committee for feedback.
- Legal Services Director Matt Carver was not in attendance, but Remy outlined his legal and IPERS reports.
- Government Relations Director Dave Daughton did not submit a report, but Remy shared that the legislative committee met recently and the 2025 priorities will be brought to the November meeting for approval.
- Prior to adjournment, committee members signed up for when they would facilitate a monthly learning component (book study).



The Latest in Learning with Dana Schon, professional learning director

Build Relationships? We Already Did That.

How frequently, in response to questions about culture, student behavior, or community engagement, do we encounter the advice to "build relationships"? "Everything comes down to relationships." Just as frequently, such advice is met with an eyeroll or heavy sigh or a side-bar comment to the effect of "Seriously? Tell me something I don't know." What's problematic is that both the advice-giver and the recipient are operating on an assumption that they share a common understanding of what it means to build relationships. Most often, we think "we're already doing that...what next?"

As I considered the nature of relationships, my thoughts wandered back to my administrator preparation program and the counsel of one professor, "Relationships. Relationships. Spend 95% of your time building relationships, especially that first year in a role." At the time, I was preparing to transition into my first administrative role within our district, and I remember thinking, "I already know our staff. I've been here eleven years, and I've been in leadership roles within the teacher association. I know everyone, and they know me. I won't need to spend as much time on relationships..."

I learned a key lesson that year: people attach your identity to your title and often apply their beliefs about anyone with that title to you. Our staff knew me as a teacher, not as an administrator. Several started behaving differently around me; they made assumptions about me based upon previous experiences they had had with other administrators. I soon realized we always need to be investing time and energy into relationships regardless of the longevity of that relationship, especially when roles shift or change.

I became more intentional about effectively communicating who I was as a leader and what staff could expect from me. It helped to surface people's awareness about the narratives they were telling themselves about administrators in general and invited them to consider the truth of the assumptions embedded in their stories.

I would imagine many parents/guardians, students, and teachers project their previous experiences with a particular role onto anyone occupying that role. As a result, their unspoken beliefs about one another occasionally impede the development of a healthy "I would imagine many parents/ guardians, students, and teachers project their previous experiences with a particular role onto anyone occupying that role. As a result, their unspoken beliefs about one another occasionally impede the development of a healthy relationship."

relationship. Instead of encouraging those we lead simply to "build relationships," we might instead invite them to recognize that everyone has a story. By getting curious, we can unpack these narratives and better understand how to build stronger connections.

For example, if an exasperated teacher says that they have reached out to a student's family several times since the start of school with no reply, we might ask that teacher what story they're telling themselves about the student and their family.

- How is that story shaping the way that teacher engages with the student?
- What might be the history of this family's experience with school?
- What does this family believe about school and the teacher?
- How can we find out?

With answers to these questions, the teacher can better understand the wants and needs of the student and family in order to determine how best to provide support. Opening lines of communication lays the foundation for a strong relationship.

That first leadership role also taught me the value of external versus internal focus when building relationships. I had viewed the situation through my lens, my perspective, which only served to affirm my belief that they were the problem for not accepting me as the same person I had always been. When I shifted my focus externally, I gained insight to their perspective and experience. Rather than talk about building relationships, we might instead discuss empathy for those we teach and lead and how it can build stronger connections. We can seed the discussion with questions like Who is this person and what do they need from me? What's it like for them to have me as their teacher (principal, superintendent, parent/quardian, etc.)? Tapping into empathy helps us appreciate another's experience.

What does it mean to build relationships? It means acknowledging the influence of past experiences on new relationships in order to identify potential barriers and be more intentional in how we communicate. It means shifting to an external, empathetic focus so the person before us feels seen and heard. Conversation that includes these considerations leads to quality relationships.

The Big 3: A Simple Guide to Leading with Heart

Nov. 12 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. (virtual event)

We are excited to offer a free one-hour, interactive virtual session offered to our members from SAI's Platinum Corporate Partner Capturing Kids' Hearts® (CKH).

During this session, CKH Leadership Strategist Dr. Shane Naterman will introduce actionable insights for creating positive change, inspiring teams, and guiding others with purpose and intention. Spotlighting leadership behaviors that are reshaping schools across the nation, Dr. Naterman will share unique ways to foster connection and trust. Prepare to walk away with simple, yet effective, tools that will help you lead with heart and transform your campus.

About the Presenter

Shane Naterman was raised in Fort Worth, Texas, where he built a career in secondary education before joining Capturing Kids' Hearts® as a Leadership Development Strategist.

In addition to serving campuses nationwide, Shane collaborates with professional organizations and educational advisory boards. He is a writer, guest lecturer at local universities, regular keynote speaker, and self-professed "school nerd," a term that captures his deep passion for all things education.

Register for this free event online at sai-iowa.org/events.

Creston Superintendent Honored as Communicator of the Year

We are excited to share that Creston Community Schools Superintendent Deron Stender was recently honored as the 2024 Communicator of the Year at the Iowa School Public Relations Association (ISPRA) Fall conference. Family and friends were in attendance for the surprise award.

Stender shared his appreciation for the recognition. "I am deeply honored to be named the Iowa School Public Relations Association's School Communicator of the Year. This recognition reflects the network of exceptional public school communicators from whom I've had the privilege to learn and grow. It also represents the dedication of the Creston Community Schools team, who support our students, staff, and community. This award is a testament to the power of collaboration and our shared commitment to ensuring the best for our schools."

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Creston Superintendent Deron Stender and IASB Associate Executive Director of Communications and Events Jen Woodley

ISPRA is the state-chapter of the National School Public

<u>Relations Association</u> (NSPRA). Its members include public relations professionals, superintendents, and other educators who wish to grow their communications skills and connect with their peers across the state. They hold two conferences a year, and at its most recent conference in October, they announced that Stender was the recipient of this prestigious award.

ISPRA's website describes the award in more detail, stating the award recognizes "the exemplary leadership of lowa's outstanding communications professionals for demonstrated commitment to the enhancement of communication and relationships between their school systems and the families and communities they serve. The award honors those who recognize that communication is a critical component of leadership."

ISPRA President Alexandra Wade shared her appreciation for superintendents and other district leaders investing their time in ISPRA. "Deron demonstrates an admirable dedication to communications in his role as superintendent. By consistently investing his time and expertise in collaborating with fellow school communicators, Deron has broadened the impact of his leadership beyond the Creston community," she said.

If your district is interested in having a representative join ISPRA, you can learn more by contacting SAI Communications Director Laine Buck or by visiting the <u>ISPRA website</u>.

