

Facebook: What It Can Do For You!

By: Chad Houser, New Haven Middle School

Contact: chouser@eacs.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

One of the needs that I noticed after taking over as principal last year was the need for more parent communication and involvement. Through observations, I noticed that our school had very low parent involvement possibly from the lack of parent communication.

I wanted to find another way to keep parents informed of daily happenings. Throughout the year I wanted to find another way to communicate to parents other than our website, newsletter, and School Messenger. I was also looking for a way to increase student achievement through parent involvement.

Through my action research I hoped to familiarize myself with Facebook. Our district asked that each school create a Facebook page. Large majority of parents seemed to use Facebook on a daily basis. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to increase parent communication and parent involvement with the intent of increasing student achievement.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered how the use of Facebook can increase parent communication, parent involvement and student achievement.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I attempted to make daily posts to Facebook informing the community of daily happenings in our school and district. I challenged myself, our assistant principal and our guidance counselors to find weekly happenings to share on Facebook with families. Finding things to post was not always, it was more of a challenge to remember to post things when you aren't used to communicating in such a way. Through time it became much easier.

Each month I went through the page titled, "Insights" and it allowed me to view my data.

Each month I was able to print off a monthly overview of our account. This is easily found under the "Insights" tab. This allowed me to track our progress and how many people are viewing our page. Monitored how many "Likes", "Reach" and "Post Engagements" each month. Also looked at how much growth each area grew during the research period. Facebook provides the much of the data for me.

It has been difficult to tie student achievement to the use of Facebook. Until we receive final ISTEP+ results will we be able to examine the impact of Facebook followers to their students.

After looking at the month data I was able to see the amount of activity our Facebook page was receiving. The more we posted, the more visits and likes we received. We continued the patter of creating posts and continue to date. Parent communication has been effective, but until we receive ISTEP+ results we will not be able to see the impact on student achievement.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned included: I learned that parents and community want to be informed more ways than one.; the second thing I learned parents want to see their children what they do each day at school.

Parents and community members want to be informed in many ways. Not only did they want to receive communications from newsletters, school messenger, but Facebook too. The number of “views”, “post engagements”, “reach”, and “likes” increased each month that the research cycle took place. The amount of people “reached” during the cycle ranged from 337 to 3,045. “Post engagements” rose from 482 to 2,056 that allowed us to engaged and reach as many parents and community members that we can. One parent during March requested that we do away with our regular newsletter and share all of our information via Facebook. The use of Facebook as a communication tool for me as principal has been a tremendous asset. It forces me to pause during my day when things are busy to share good news about what is happening in the building. Taking time to share positive news makes a positive impact on the school culture. I’ve learned that it is important to be consistent in posting stories and photos multiple times a week.

The importance of posting information lead to the second thing I learned with that being, parents want to see what their children are doing on a daily basis at school. When parents feel informed they seem to take a more of an interest in their students learning which leads to an increase in student achievement. Daily page views increase from 30 to almost 105 views a day. Our page followers increase each month anywhere from 8% to 10%.

Overall, this has been a good learning experience not only for myself but for our staff as well. We deal with so many issues with social media with our students we can now see some of the positive. Within a couple minutes you can convey a positive message to parents and community members. The data supports that using Facebook effectively and often can create positive communication to so many people.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As I reflect on the past year of not only familiarizing myself with Facebook, but using it as a communication tool for parents it has emphasized the importance of finding the right communication tool. Facebook provides a quick and easy way to reach out to not only students, but parents and community members.

Action research helps provide me the information that I seek in such a manner that it makes it can be done quickly and provides useable data. Facebook maintains data for our page and allows me to gauge the level of further communication needed to get information to parents and community members. I have learned that even though we are busy as principals we need to take a step back and take a minute to share with parents and community. We have to make a conscious efforts to make posts on Facebook because parents enjoy seeing their child online. I am also encouraging teachers to do much of the same. Teachers can take a quick picture or write up a short statement and simply email me or the assistant principal to post.

As a result of my project I am challenging our staff to follow my lead using Facebook a quick line of communication to parents outside their current expectations through Canvas. I am also going to create an incentive for our students to encourage family and friends to “like” our page. If we can get the number of “likes” over 500 we will have a school wide celebration. My next wondering will have to do with the impact of a greater number of followers and parent involvement.