

Changing With the Times

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Changing with the times...

In education, we hear the “changing with the times” phrase a lot, along with several variations of the same sentiment. The world and the world of education have and will continue to change. I don’t believe anyone young or old could deny these “changing times” have been heavily influenced by technology. The progression of technology makes significant changes to the way educators teach and the way students learn. New software, websites, and programs are often advertised to us and claim to improve our test scores, provide remediation, deliver differentiation and challenge students. When I was still teaching in the classroom, technology provided a wide array of advantages to my rural students and developed my own productivity as an educator. Technology can save us time, technology can facilitate our own learning, and technology can give us additional outlets to communicate.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Nevertheless, one of the barriers to effectively using the tool of technology for any of these purposes is knowing exactly which tools to use and when. Listening to amazing principals through AWSP events and breakout sessions at the 2017 Summer Conference, I saw principals utilizing technology tools to engage with their parents and communities. That is exactly where I decided to focus this school year. How could I effectively increase my engagement



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with the community and families, and how could technology tools help?

I read a few years back teenagers were making a mass exodus from Facebook because it became too popular with their parents, and from talking to some of the teenage students in my high school, I believe this might be somewhat true. So while the teenagers in my community don’t use Facebook as much, their parents and our community members do. They use it A LOT! My school has its own Facebook page, but we hadn’t used it much to actually engage the families. Most of our posts were reminders on early release days, or reminders of no school on a holiday. This year, we tried something different and strived for more engagement.

POSITIVE RESPONSES

We started broadcasting real-time events happening in our school day using Facebook Live. When we want to celebrate something, lots of working parents can’t be there in person, so we start a Facebook Live stream for them to either watch live or watch later. Parents are watching and responding. This past month, we kicked off a read at home initiative which invited parents to send us selfies of themselves reading with

their children. We posted the selfies on our Facebook page. Additionally, staff have read “bedtime” stories that were broadcast live in the evenings for families to watch with their children.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive and very simple for us to do. The interaction doesn’t need to be every day, and we didn’t create any special events just for sharing, but giving the inside scoop into our school started many positive conversations and feedback. In my own community, Facebook is the social media platform being used by the majority, but Facebook isn’t the only platform to reach your audience. Whether it’s Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, or Snapchat, all you need is a phone and a social media account and you can start sharing and interacting with your community in ways many of us couldn’t imagine when we started teaching.

Find us on Facebook: Coulee City Elementary. ■



Kelley Boyd is principal of Coulee City Elementary and is serving as AWSP president for the 2017-18 school year.