Arlington Community Schools offer educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability or genetic information and adheres to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Using Instagram to Communicate with Students

In communication plans, we often hear how districts should reach and communicate to various stakeholders. Internally, we talk about the need to connect with teachers and staff, parents and members of the board. Externally, the business community, local governments and other tax-paying citizens frequently make the “must-contact” list. But as we should often remind ourselves, what about the students? How are we connecting and communicating with students from the district level?

Arlington Community Schools was founded in 2014 and has roughly 5,000 students across two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. It wasn’t until January 2018, however, that a communications department was formed in the district. Following the creation of the department, we did an internal audit of ways we were communicating with stakeholders from the district level. These platforms included Blackboard for mass notifications, a quarterly newsletter, and Facebook and Twitter for social engagement. For the most part, none of these platforms were reaching students in ways they want and need. Specifically, we wanted to focus on 6-12th grade students. Today’s 6-12th grade students, born between the years of about 2002 to 2009, are not on Facebook – they’ll tell you it’s for old people like their parents and grandparents. Some are on Twitter, but even this platform isn’t widely used by today’s teen. Instagram has taken over in popularity. While many districts, specifically in Tennessee, are not utilizing Instagram, we felt this platform could prove as a useful method to engage students and message to them directly.

ACS launched its Instagram account (@alington_schools) in September 2018. From the start, we took a different approach when using this account. It’s not simply a repeat of content you’ll find on Facebook; its organic content catered to students. Excluding one post about the coronavirus pandemic, the ACS Instagram feed features students and student success stories only. We keep our feed free from announcements and ordinary posts you may find on other platforms. While we use Instagram Stories to keep students updated on upcoming events or announcements, our timeline is a complete celebration of students and their accomplishments, which is why we’ve seen tremendous growth over the year and a half we’ve operated the page.

ACS now has about 2,700 Instagram followers. Since September 2018, we have generated about 315 posts, each with approximately 200 likes. According to Iconosquare, an internationally known social media analytics and management platform, the average engagement rate per post on Instagram is 4.7 percent. ACS is nearly four times that average rate with an 18 percent average engagement per post.

Links:
- Instagram Account- (@alington_schools)
- Relevant Post #1 (Student Life)
- Relevant Post #2 (Sports)
- Relevant Post #3 (Performing Arts)
- Relevant Post #4 (Student & School Achievement)