

Free Talk Fridays Summary

In today's cultural and technological milieu, everyone uses some sort of social media. According to a Pew Research Center study in 2018, 88% of respondents between the ages of 18 to 29 reported using some social media platform. Eight out of ten 30- to 49-year-olds said the same. (It's doubtful, however, that they are using the same platform!) Almost two-thirds of people between the ages of 50 and 64 use social media on a frequent basis. It's the last two demographic segments that we are trying to reach with Free Talk Fridays – parents, grandparents, and community members who have a vested interest in our school district.

Free Talk Friday is a series of video vignettes that allow our Superintendent to speak directly to families and staff on the platform that many use every day – Facebook. The videos are recorded in a familiar setting, with no notes or teleprompter. Our goal is a “fireside chat” authenticity. Unscripted and often done in just one take, Free Talk Friday also appears on our home page. However, it's the post on our social media platforms that gives our families more of what they want and helps us create better relationships. It's obvious that video has become one of the most influential devices in the marketing toolbox. We make every effort to optimize our engagements by writing good copy, with proper keywords (for searchability) and additional information to entice viewers.

The series is produced by the Communications Department and takes no special equipment beyond an HD-SLR with a large memory card, a tripod, a lavalier mic set, and a good editor (and good editing software!) The advantages of posting these vignettes to social media are numerous: low cost, brand reinforcement, and greater engagement than any other medium just to name a few. With the ever-increasing sophistication of metrics offered by Facebook, we can get a better understanding of who is engaging with our posts and when.

Outcomes

Free Talk Friday posts always attract a diverse audience. While it is largely a one-way distribution, the posts generate responses from our wide audience. The responses allow us to take the temperature, so to speak, of the market and many times, we learn of issues that need to be addressed, or we hear from someone that this was exactly the information they were seeking. We can address questions on the spot or take it to another level for further action. It's tempting to “correct” people with disparaging (or wrongheaded) comments, but our policy is no to engage with negative comments (and there are going to be negative comments...it's social media!) but we will take any negative comments offline to handle away from the public discourse. Many times, a screen shot of a post that references a problem gets a personal reply from an administrator.

The post from June 2020 reached over 6,300 viewers. There were over 1,100 engagements, generating a total of 8,630 impressions. The August 2020 post reached over 5,800 people and garnered more than 1,300 engagements. The video posted September 2020 reached just under 3,100 people, with 384 engagements, and 3,700 total impressions. None of our posts are boosted or sponsored. While we do use social media advertising to alert families of events, changes, or new information, the reach of Free Talk Fridays is strictly organic.