



Social Media and Technology Tools for All

By Tammie Sebastian

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas and information and the building of virtual networks and communities. Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) realizes the importance of reaching out to families, consumers, and professionals through social networking services. Our society is extremely fast-paced, and everyone is very busy. Therefore, it is crucial that we utilize social media, which is a highly effective platform and tool for providing information and support to all families in Ohio.

Over the past few years we have been working on increasing our outreach through social media, our website and video conference calling. The Coalition is well aware of the fundamental importance that technology plays in our nonstop world today. It provides an effective and convenient means of communicating with both parents and professionals. It allows them to access our information and resources at their convenience whenever and wherever they desire.

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) Facebook page is one of our social media avenues that we have used to increase our outreach. We have reached over 20,245 individuals across the country and currently have 2,732 “Likes”. Along with Facebook, we also make use of Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Facebook is the most widely used platform by our families to engage with us. One of the format features that has been extremely beneficial to OCECD is Facebook Live. Facebook Live offers the ability to live stream our events and trainings. Not only can everyone participate instantly with us, we can respond to comments and interact at that precise moment. Utilizing Facebook Live allows families to receive timely and useful information at their fingertips. All of the live sessions are then archived, allowing individuals to go back and access the information at their convenience. Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube are among the other social media outlets that we utilize to help provide parents with information and updates.





Accessibility Standards

Section 508 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

In 1998, the U.S. Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new opportunities for people with disabilities, and to encourage the development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Under Section 508, agencies must give employees with disabilities and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others.

OCECD has a language access plan that addresses the requirements under section 508, such as language access, cultural competence, and disability access. We continue to strive to ensure equitable access through our website, social media, and webinars. Some of the means we have employed to make our Facebook posts more accessible are:

- Adding captions or alt text to photos.
- Keeping words simplistic and avoiding the use of acronyms.
- Being more descriptive in a Facebook Live presentation to accommodate an individual who is blind or visually impaired.

- Adding captions as soon as the Facebook Live is archived.
- Limiting the use of emoji's

Additionally, Facebook provides its users with accessibility settings that they are able to customize for their individual needs.

Top 3 tips for parents to gather and share information on social media.

1) While having access to many different social media sites can be empowering, you can also become overwhelmed with too much information or conflicting information. One way of sorting through credible social media platforms is by looking at a trusted organization's page "Likes" on other pages or utilizing the related pages information.

OCECD's Facebook page example

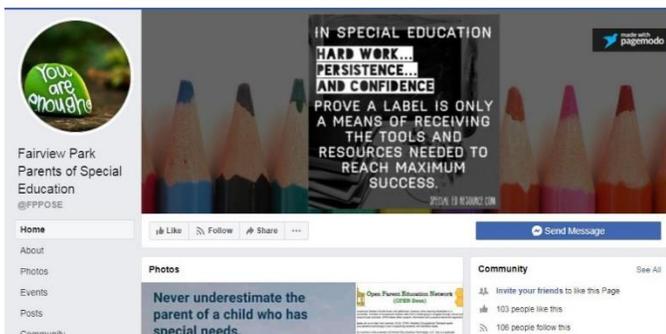
The screenshot displays two sections of a Facebook page. The top section, titled "Pages Liked by This Page", lists three pages: "Life After IEPs" (with a bird icon and a "Liked" button), "America's Prom..." (with a red car icon and a "Liked" button), and "Really Good Stuff" (with a blue star icon and a "Like" button). The bottom section, titled "Related Pages", lists three pages: "Ohio Association of C..." (with an OACB logo and a "Like" button), "Ohio Department of..." (with an Ohio Department of Disabilities logo and a "Like" button), and "Ohio Provider Resourc..." (with an OPRA logo and a "Like" button).



2) There are also many online groups for networking with others on social media. Some organizations also have groups you can join based on your child's needs. This is a great way to connect with others with similar experiences and share information.

3) Many school districts have their own Facebook pages. This is a great way to stay on top of important events and resources within your school community. If your school district has a Parent Mentor, they may also have their own Facebook page or group where they share information. Also, many school districts have parent support groups that utilize social media, as well to get resources and information to other parents.

<https://www.facebook.com/FPPOSE/>



**“Engage, Enlighten,
Encourage and
especially...just be yourself!
Social media is a
community effort.”**

~ Susan Cooper

Webinars

Supporting Parent Mentors of Ohio to empower families through virtual professional development.

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities recognizes the vital role that Parent Mentors have in helping families understand their rights and responsibilities under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), along with providing information and resources to families. We acknowledge that Parent Mentors are also parents who benefit from having timely information at their fingertips.

Through the work of OCECD's Statewide Preschool Parent Mentors a total of 335 parent mentors, district representatives, and staff were trained through virtual trainings for the 2018-2019 school year. Some of the topics that were presented were Parent's Rights, Scholarships, and Advocacy. There was also an ongoing "Basic Tips Tuesday's" virtual training to support new Parent Mentors.





**Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities
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To remove your name from our mailing list, or if you have questions, please contact kellyb@ocecd.org or call 1-844-382-5452.

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