**Advocacy, Media & Social Media Guidelines**

In addition to cultivating your professional relationships, educating your elected officials and advocating for students, part of grassroots advocacy is showing the world what you did. In a global society that is driven by instantaneous new updates, push notifications and a news cycle that is 24 hours a day, if you cannot prove it with a photo, it did not happen.

***Always start before you need something***

One easy way to get ahead of the game on social media is to set up professional accounts on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. While it is more work to keep your personal and professional lives separate on social media, this is the best practice for maintaining professional relationships. If you are an active user of social media, this can also be useful for keeping your family and other personal details separate from work.

ACSA is proud of its membership and recognizes the huge potential for statewide advocacy via social media. In order to show statewide ACSA who you’ve met with and what you’ve been working on at home, following ACSA accounts on social media before you have anything to share is a great way to open the lines of communication *before* you have anything to relate. In order to make posting about your event or meeting seamless, make sure you do the “work” of finding everyone involved on social media before the day of the event, including state ACSA.

Not every person will have social media, and not all school districts will have social media, but you should be prepared to “tag” them in your post if they do. “Tagging” the other people/organizations involved in your advocacy also makes it easier for your teammates and your legislator to re-post the photo (which means even more people will see it).

***How to respond to negativity on social media***

If you are confronted with a negative reaction to something you post on social media about meeting with you legislator, there are several different ways you can choose to react. When deciding how to respond, there are essentially two paths to choose from: engage or ignore. There are many factors that go into this decision, but some questions to ask yourself before engaging are:

* Who is the person who has posted negatively? Do you know them outside of social media?
* Can you put into context their negative reaction? Do you know anything about them that would help you understand why they would respond negatively?
* Based on how detailed their comments are, can you single out the underlying issue that may have caused them to post negatively?

If you answer all of these questions with “no,” you may want to consider ignoring the person who posted negatively. If you don’t know them, don’t understand the context of their comment or think that there are underlying fundamental differences of ideology between you and the other person, we suggest you not engage with them.

However, if you answered “yes” to one or more of the questions listed above, consider responding in a positive, non-confrontational way that still stays on topic. When you created talking points before meeting with your legislator, you also created potential responses to negativity on social media. Based on your talking points and what you know about the individual who has commented on your post, try to build finality into your response. Engaging on social media can sometimes mean having a thoughtful conversation. But it can also mean responding to someone you don’t know well in a professional manner, with statements that reflect your overarching ideology.

***Do’s & Don’ts***

* **Be positive.** Social media is not a place to share the negative aspects of your meeting. If your legislator was unable to make your event or meeting, do not call them out on social media. This is counterproductive.
* **Take photos.** They don’t all have to be perfect, the key here is quantity. Whether it is a wrap up picture at the end of your meeting, a photo during your legislator’s presentation/speech at an event, or simply a group photo of all the ACSA advocates on your team, try to gather as many as you can. Social media thrives on photos – so if you want your post to circulate well, make sure to include a picture or seven.
* **Be concise.** Twitter is limited to 140 characters, but other platforms will let you be more longwinded. Do your best to be succinct but inclusive – share your appreciation for the opportunity to meet, tag everyone involved, then post and call it a day.
* **Say thank you.** Take this opportunity to thank your team publically. This might take a second post, but it is totally worth it. It often takes a group to organize an event, so make sure everyone is included in the thank you.
* **Double check your privacy settings.** Please make sure your professional account is set to “Public.” The only way to share your post with people outside your network, is if your settings allow anyone to see what you post. This includes the people you tag in your post – even if you tag them, if your account is “Private” they may not be able to see what you wrote about them.
* **Use the hashtag #ACSAadvocates.** Hashtags are useful for a variety of reasons, but the most important is that it chronicles every post on a platform that has that specific hashtag. So, if you are looking for examples of other grassroots advocacy social media posted by your colleagues, search the hashtag #ACSAadvocates. This is another instance in which doing your social media homework ahead of time is best.