Responding to Negative Facebook Posts

Facebook administrators need to take strong leadership of their Facebook communities to manage a successful page.
—Why Social Media Matters by Kitty Porterfield & Meg Carnes

1. Analyze the Comment

- Who is making the comment?
- What connections do they have to the school community via Facebook?
- Do you (or does someone else on your staff) have a relationship with the person?
- How bad is the comment? Does it contain defamatory or lewd language?
- Where is it made? Personal site or district site?
- Does it identify students or share inappropriate information?
- What time did the person make the comment and how long has it been up?
- Has it attracted Likes or Comments?

2. Select a Course of Action

A. **Hide/Delete it**
Hiding critical comments violates open discussion and calls into question the transparency of the school or district. (p. 60)
Hiding comments that are defamatory or lewd, or violate an individual's privacy, however, is well within the guidelines of acceptable use. (pp. 60-61)

Example 1:

Jennifer Bevans: How is it possible it didn't affect anyone if the bus never showed up for some kids??

23 hours ago · Like   Served to 101 people

Muskegon Area ISD: Thanks for your question Jennifer. We are not aware of any students that were not picked up due to the bus driver shortage, however there could have been some confusion as those who typically man radios at the central office were also driving buses. Please contact your local school if you have a specific concern and share the news that we are having a New Bus Driver Job Fair on September 23, from 9AM to 1PM at the MAISD.

Example 2:

Example: *What the ***@@@ is wrong with this #$@%% school? My kid waited two hours and never got picked up by his bus. Someone will die!*

Response: Delete and Block from future posts

Call parent directly, ASAP and say: Hi Mr. Johnson, I noticed that you posted some information on our school Facebook page and I wanted to follow up with you personally. First, let me apologize to you for your son's inconvenience. I looked into the situation and this is what I found out… This is how we are fixing the problem. By the way, because your Facebook post did not meet our school policy of being free of profanity and respectful of others we did need to take that off of our Facebook page. I hope you will understand our need to do that.

Note: Make sure your policy is on your Facebook page so you can refer to it.

MAISD's Policy is:

Posts must be lawful, respectful, contain no profanity, and not easily identify students and/or staff in defamatory, abusive or negative terms.

B. Allow **other members of the Facebook community to challenge the negative comments** of others users. Example from Missouri's Park Hill School District: Parents grumbled on Facebook about extended school year due to snow days. Other parents said "They did what was best for the kids!" (p. 61)

3. Make sure the facts are up-to-date on your website/social media sites

"School-sponsored sites that are actively maintained with transparency serve as a go-to source for reporters who may be tipped off to a story by a community…a reporter…will immediately check the school sites for the truth." (p. 30)

"Social media can help us communicate our respect and desire to collaborate and partner in ways that publications, PowerPoint presentations, and letters sent home in students' backpacks cannot." (p. 37)