

EXCLUSIVE:

SCPS's Humorous Social Media Manager Revealed!

by Dori Gerber



If you follow the social media accounts for Seminole County Public Schools, you may have noticed the feeds have become much more fun in recent months. But who's behind this delightful injection of personality? It's been a fascinating Facebook mystery... until now.

Han Solo is featured there. Boss Baby has also made an appearance. Even a wacky, yellow minion from *Despicable Me* has played a part. It's quickly become one of the most entertaining and engaging social media accounts in town, but it's not from a celebrity or major media company. It's the Seminole County Public Schools Facebook page.

In recent months, sprinkled between the important – but often dry – informational posts from the district, gregarious gems have begun to appear. These humorous GIFs or memes have brought personality to the school district's social media outreach, and it's not just for fun.

The unconventional posts and comments have caught the attention of the school system's nearly 18,000 Facebook followers, and engagement on the district's page has skyrocketed. That means more parents, students, and other followers are getting essential information from SCPS, and they're getting a laugh, when appropriate, to boot.

One of the most interactive moments came when SCPS posted in mid-September that Tallahassee was waiving two additional student instructional days due to the impact of Hurricane Irma. That meant two fewer days of school for hardworking students this year. With the announcement, SCPS's mystery poster included an image of a popular professional wrestler pumping his fists in the air while wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the words, "YES! YES! YES!" The post was a hit, and a long chain of animated GIFs followed in reply, everything from a dancing Elmo and Jimmy Fallon to the cast of *Seinfeld* all expressing their glee.

So, just who is responsible for these peculiar posts? The author



Some of the entertaining posts that are driving engagement in the school district's social channels

has been somewhat of a mystery, even poking fun at his or her anonymity by posting a meme from *The Wizard of Oz*, telling followers not to pay attention to the man behind the curtain. Was that a clue? Perhaps. It seems that the man behind the district's social media curtain is none other than Michael Lawrence, the communication officer for SCPS.

Michael says he started infusing the district's Facebook and Twitter accounts with entertaining images around early September, right when Hurricane Irma was preparing to pay Central Florida a visit. It was a difficult time, and he wanted a way to uplift the families while delivering important news.

"These posts on our social media sites have given our district a face with the families," says Michael. "They make us human and relatable. It shows that we know what our families have to deal with and that we are here to help them in any way we can."

Michael also says that these posts have allowed him to show a bit of his personality to the public, even though his identity is (or was) hidden behind SCPS's official social media moniker. Michael uses humor and memes on his personal social media pages and thought it would be a fun way to, when appropriate, step out of the box of typical government-run social media accounts.

"These posts are just a little bit of me saying that we may be a school district, but we don't always have to be so serious," says Michael with a chuckle. "On occasion, when we can, we want to take that opportunity to engage with our families in a humorous and lighthearted way."



Michael Lawrence, the Seminole County Public Schools communications officer, preparing to post one of the entertaining memes that have recently made the SCPS Facebook page and Twitter feed wildly popular.

Posting information on the district's Facebook and Twitter accounts is an important aspect of relationship-building for SCPS. Michael says many local families may only follow the social media sites of the schools their children attend. By following the district's Facebook page, SeminoleCountySchools, and @SCPSInfo on Twitter, residents can be connected to what's happening in the entire district.

"We have lots of good things happening all over the district," says Michael. "I encourage everyone to follow our Facebook and Twitter pages and connect with us on a larger scale. This is a great forum to ask questions, seek explanations to issues, and receive feedback quickly and accurately."

It's also a reliable way, Michael says, for SCPS to stay in front of the news. In this digital age, when a majority of the students have a smartphone and the ability to share information at the touch of a button, Michael says the district's social media pages have allowed him to provide parents and the community important information through a rapid response platform.

"Sometimes, we have to share news or information that is not always favorable," explains Michael. "By getting the information out there on our social media pages, we are letting our families know that we will respond quickly and that they can trust us to deal with even the most sensitive of situations with great attention and respect to those involved."

So the man behind the curtain of SCPS's social media efforts

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So the man behind the curtain of SCPS's social media efforts may have been revealed, but that doesn't mean it's the end to the humor and levity found on the district's pages.

Just what will the wizard post next? You'll have to follow to find out.



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