

Project Title: Using Social Networking to Foster Collaboration

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Project Timeline: 2013-2014 School Term

Executive Summary: Social networking (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Podcasts) can be a very efficient and productive means of collaboration among the administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and community members of a school. As such, the school and district internet and network policies should allow and encourage use of them.

Problem Statement: Currently, Twitter and editing features of Blogger are completely blocked by TCSS, and while e.g. Facebook is accessible, it is only available to faculty and requires acceptance of an ominous warning about its usage being monitored and such. That alone is certainly acceptable, but given that **all** access is monitored and logged, there is no way to use it without revealing your password to TCSS. So long as the frequently-used social networking sites are blocked, school personnel will not be inclined to make use of them for school-related activities and notifications and/or collaboration, and thus parents and community members will not have an opportunity to be involved in that way.

Project Objectives: The objectives of this project are to encourage the school district to relax the policies on social networking usage and then to encourage district personnel to use them for school-related activities, notification, and collaboration.

**Project Implementation:** Stage one is to convince the district IT coordinator and/or central office staff and/or school board to relax the current policies regarding social networking. Quite frankly, I have no idea how that will happen, so I'll proceed with the assumption that it is possible and will occur easily - in fact, the remainder of the project (with examples of implementation) might make it easier to accomplish stage one.

Stage two is to suggest and demonstrate examples of how our district and school personnel could effectively utilize various forms of social media to collaborate with each other and other stakeholders.

Each of the social media options has its own strengths and weakness and thus care should be taken in choosing which is most appropriate. For example, the transportation department could make good use of a system that is usually "talk only" and uses short messages - i.e. Twitter. With a Twitter account, they could inform everyone of individual bus delays and such, but most importantly, it could be very useful for weather delays and similar situations to notify parents (and teachers) that school would be starting late or dismissing early. These sorts of messages can be very short and to the point, but they can also have a link to a more thorough explanation on the district's website. For another example, a group within a school might want to have an easy way to communicate with its members and allow for some feedback from those members, so Twitter would not really be a good choice. However, a Facebook group would be ideal.

**Project Monitoring  
and Evaluation:**

Monitoring and evaluation will be the easiest part of this project. If a few individuals and/or departments within the school district start using various forms of social media for educational purposes, then we'll call it a success. That said, we'll do some followup talks at faculty meetings as things progress to make sure everyone is aware of the ways they can use social media.

**Documentation and  
Sharing Results:**

The best documentation of the project will be the social media outgrowths that result from it, and sharing will be a part of the project all along.

**Project Budget:**

This project will not require any financial commitments.