

Roblog

Robby's Random Ravings
Was that enough R's? :-)

22 JULY 2013

EDU5506EA Reflections

Prompt: Reflect on the current policies in place regarding social networking in your school or district. How has this workshop shaped your opinions about the potential of these tools to facilitate learning and collaboration? What are the challenges you face regarding incorporating these tools and allowing teachers and students to network virtually? Describe how you plan to address these challenges in the coming school year.

I'd love to comment on the social networking policies in my district, but I'm currently unable to recall exactly what they are. The district has a link to them posted on its website, but the link tries to direct users through an internal proxy server and so requests from outside the district network will simply fail. I mailed our IT coordinator, so maybe it will be corrected at some point.

Based on the blocks and lack thereof with respect to social networking, and of course assuming that my memory of those is entirely correct, my district does not seem opposed to school staff usage of social networking so long as the usage is educational in nature. That's a good thing, although requiring teachers to click through a warning before accessing e.g. Facebook might have some "chilling effect" on their usage of it. Even so, I and several of my colleagues frequently share information (e.g. useful tips, interesting links, etcetera) with each other on Facebook, both during school time and our own personal time.

One of the biggest hurdles I see to using social networking to allow students and teachers to interact more is the general public perception (and extension of it into school leadership) that such interactions are rife with inappropriate conduct. While nobody can reasonably suggest that teacher-student interactions on social networking sites don't create potential for inappropriate conduct, it's also unreasonable to extend a blanket prohibition on it due to that potential. Even so, the biggest hurdle to student-teacher interaction on social network sites within our district is likely our district's complete prohibition of student usage of social networking (note that this might not be entirely correct - refer back to the first paragraph). On the "bring your own device" network (primarily for students), social networking sites are completely blocked (as are some other completely appropriate sites, but that's a discussion for another time), and our IT coordinator stated (paraphrased - not a direct quote) that

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they won't even consider unblocking things on that network and thus we should not waste time by asking. In essence, the only good way to overcome this is to allow/encourage students to use the carrier-provided data access (e.g. 3G,4G) to visit social network sites (I'll note that I've not done this nor am I aware of the actual policy about this - again, refer to the first paragraph).

In short, I think Facebook has some real potential for sharing, discussing, and debating information and issues among teachers and students, and while there are certainly other "school sanctioned" clones of these, a large number of people (teachers and students, and ESPECIALLY THIS TEACHER) don't want to be bothered to create yet another account at yet another site and remember yet another password and especially not for something that I'm only going to use in this one class or during the one school year. Ideally, we can figure out some way to allow the access without requiring students to find creative ways to avoid network roadblocks... :/

posted by Robby Workman @ [02:56](#)

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3 Comments:

At [22/7/13 22:07](#),  [Veronica Haley](#) said...

Having a clear understanding of the district policies will be very important in order to move forward with plans of social networking within the school setting. There are many pros and cons regarding social networks. As educators we must remember that professionalism is at the forefront and at the same time being mindful of our role as a mentor to many students. Teachers who are not careful with their use of the sites can fall into inappropriate relationships with students or publicize photos and information they believed were kept private. For these reasons, many school systems are calling for regulation and for removing social networking from classrooms -- despite the positive affects they have on students and the essential tools they provide for education in today's digital climate.

At [22/7/13 23:24](#),  Anonymous said...

It seems the utilization of social networking is only going to be used by those who will make the effort to reach out and take advantage...typically, our A students. However, I have received a good deal of positive feedback related to my blog by those parents and few students who have subscribed, and are receiving daily updates. This is information that is readily available, but I am trying to make it easier for those who may be extremely busy and/or over taxed, etc. And esp for our struggling students...whose parents are not typically as computer savvy..it seems helpful. Thanks.

D. Channell

At [25/7/13 13:26](#),  [Jason Griffin](#) said...

Social Networking has tremendous benefits in education. As with anything....there are going to be negatives, but I agree that we need to attempt to utilize the tools that students use to help with education. Best of luck on your endeavor!

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