Final Report

A Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Content-Sharing Tools

Co-sponsored by

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Survey Goals

To benchmark attitudes, perceptions and utilization of social networking websites and content-sharing tools by teachers, principals, and school librarians.

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Survey Methodology

- Online survey conducted blind and deployed by MMS Education to 82,900 randomly selected educators, emails provided by MCH Strategic Data:
    - 46,600 teachers
    - 25,600 principals
    - 10,700 library/media specialists

- 1.55% response rate or 1,284 total responses:
    - 601 Teachers (47% of responders) - 1.29% response
    - 381 Principals (30% of responders) - 1.49% response
    - 262 Librarians (20% of responders) - 2.45 % response

- Margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.71%

- Some inherent bias since study conducted only with educators with email addresses

- Incentive included entry in a drawing for a netbook computer

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Respondent Demographics

Gender

Female	75%
Male 25%	

Age

18-3414%	
35-5457%	
55+	30%

Years in education

2-10 yrs	23%
11-20 yrs	36%
21+ yrs	42%

Grade level

Elementary	46%
Middle School	30%
High School	34%

District metro-status

Rural 14%	
Suburban	52%
Urban	25%
Unknown	9%

States

48 states + DC

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Summary

- Educators, along with millions of other online adults, are joining social networks and adopting a variety of content-sharing tools for personal, professional, and classroom use. This survey looks at three primary topics:

  - Educators and their use of and attitudes about social networking

  - Educators and their use of a variety of content-sharing sites/tools

  - Educators' engagement in online activities that are popular with students

- Based on our survey response, 61% of educators have joined a social network, and these educators engage in more online activities than educators who have not joined a social network.

- Educators who have joined a social network are more positive about the value of this technology for education than those who haven't, buy they want the ability to separate their personal and professional communications.

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Summary

- Educators who have not grown up as "digital natives" feel overwhelmed by technology and feel it takes a lot of time that they don't have.

- Educators see students using collaborative technology every day, mostly outside of school, and understand the need to address and incorporate it into teaching and learning

- As more educators join social networks, and as younger people enter the education workforce, the adoption of this technology will continue to increase.

- There are serious concerns about privacy and liability, and educators express a need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

- Many educators understand the need for some restrictions, but feel that schools/districts are overly restrictive in blocking access to websites.

- Educators would like more training, professional development, and direction on using social networking and other technology from school/district leaders.

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Summary Observations: Educators and Social Networking

- 61% of the educators we surveyed have joined a social networking website. Facebook is the site most educators have joined (85%). MySpace is a distant second (20%). LinkedIn, a popular site for the business community, is third (14%).

- Respondents are using social networking sites primarily to connect with family and friends, although many are also using sites to connect with colleagues and to stay current with Web 2.0 technology.

- Educators who have joined a social network are more positive about the value of this technology for education.

- Overall, educators see a high value for social networking in education for a wide range of applications.

- Social networks dedicated to education (Classroom 2.0, edWeb.net, LearnCentral, Tapped In, TeachAde, WeAre Teachers, WetheTeachers) have low penetration thus far, but there is growing awareness. Some survey respondents were happy to learn about these sites from taking the survey.

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Summary Observations: Educators and Social Networking

- Educators repeatedly expressed the need or desire to keep their online personal and professional lives separate.

- There are some educators with very strong opinions against social networking who feel that more face-to-face communication is needed in education, not more online activities.

- When asked if they were to join a social network in the next year, educators strongly prefer the idea of joining one dedicated to education.

- Although educators are joining social networks, they express a need for guidance, training, and professional development.

- Educators repeatedly mention concerns about time. And they often perceive that learning to use technology takes time.

- Many educators have a high level of concern about joining social networking sites. They are concerned about privacy; they have very little time; and they get too much email. Schools and districts often block access to sites, and many educators are frustrated by this.

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Summary Observations: Educators and Social Networking

- We found significant the differences in attitudes and behavior of teachers, principals, and library/media specialists. Librarians were the most likely to join a social network (70%), followed by teachers (62%), and then principals (54%).

  - Librarians are the most positive about the value of social networking in education, but express frustration with the blocking of access to websites by school districts.

  - Principals have some reservations about social networking and feel behind in the technology, but accept that this is the future.

  - Teachers see how students use this technology every day and believe they will need it for success in life, but teachers feel they have very little time and some reservations about their privacy.

- Many educators recognize that they are behind the times in terms of technology, that their students communicate with these tools, and educators need to learn how to integrate social networking and content-sharing tools into teaching.

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61% of educators surveyed already belong to one or more SN websites

Question: Social networks are growing rapidly in popularity. Are you currently a member of, or have you ever joined, a social networking website like Facebook, MySpace, Ning, LinkedIn or one of the social networking websites created for educators (e.g., We Are Teachers, edWeb.net, etc)?
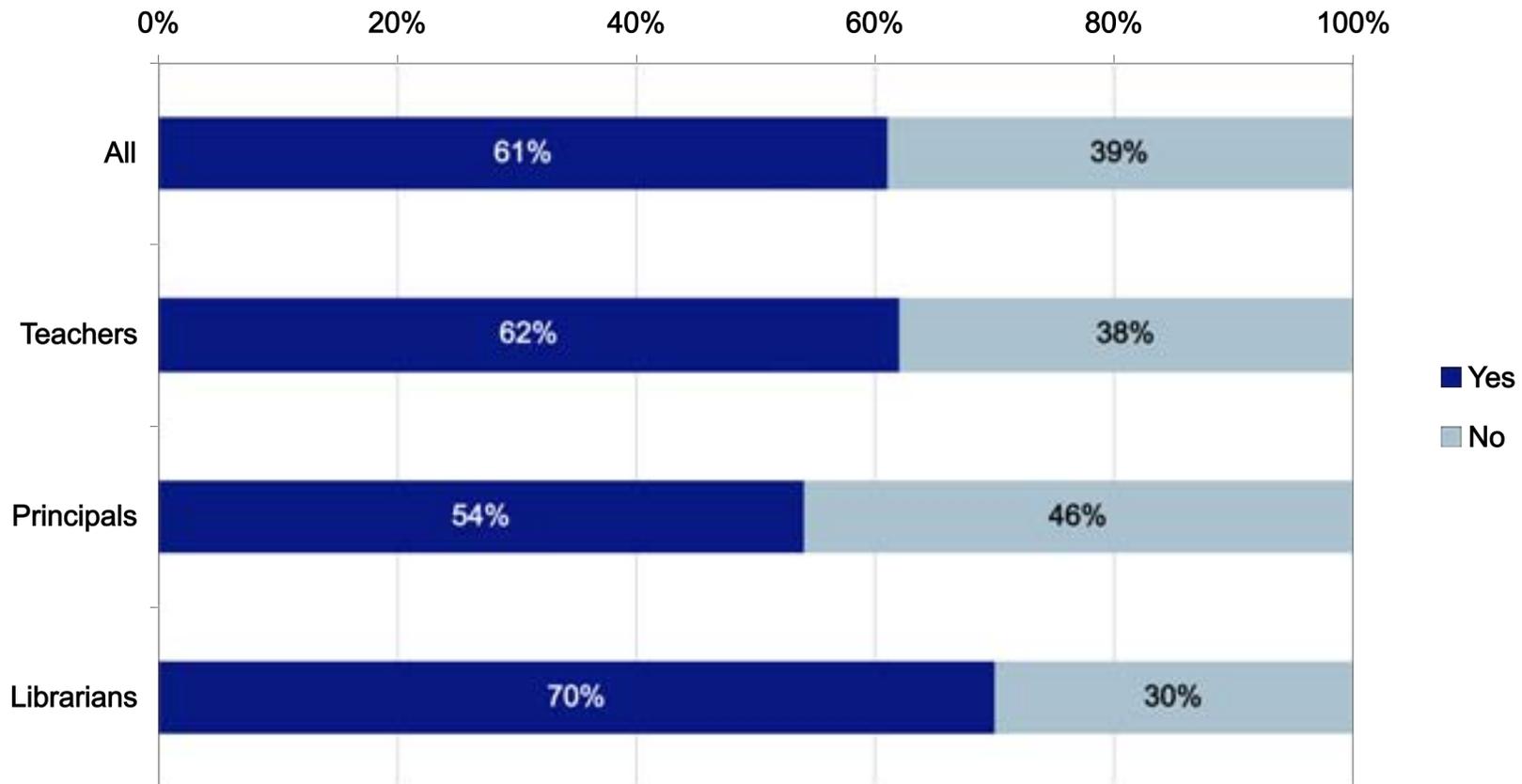
Demographics of educators who have joined a social network

63% of those who have joined are women vs 55% men, but women are also a higher % of educators.

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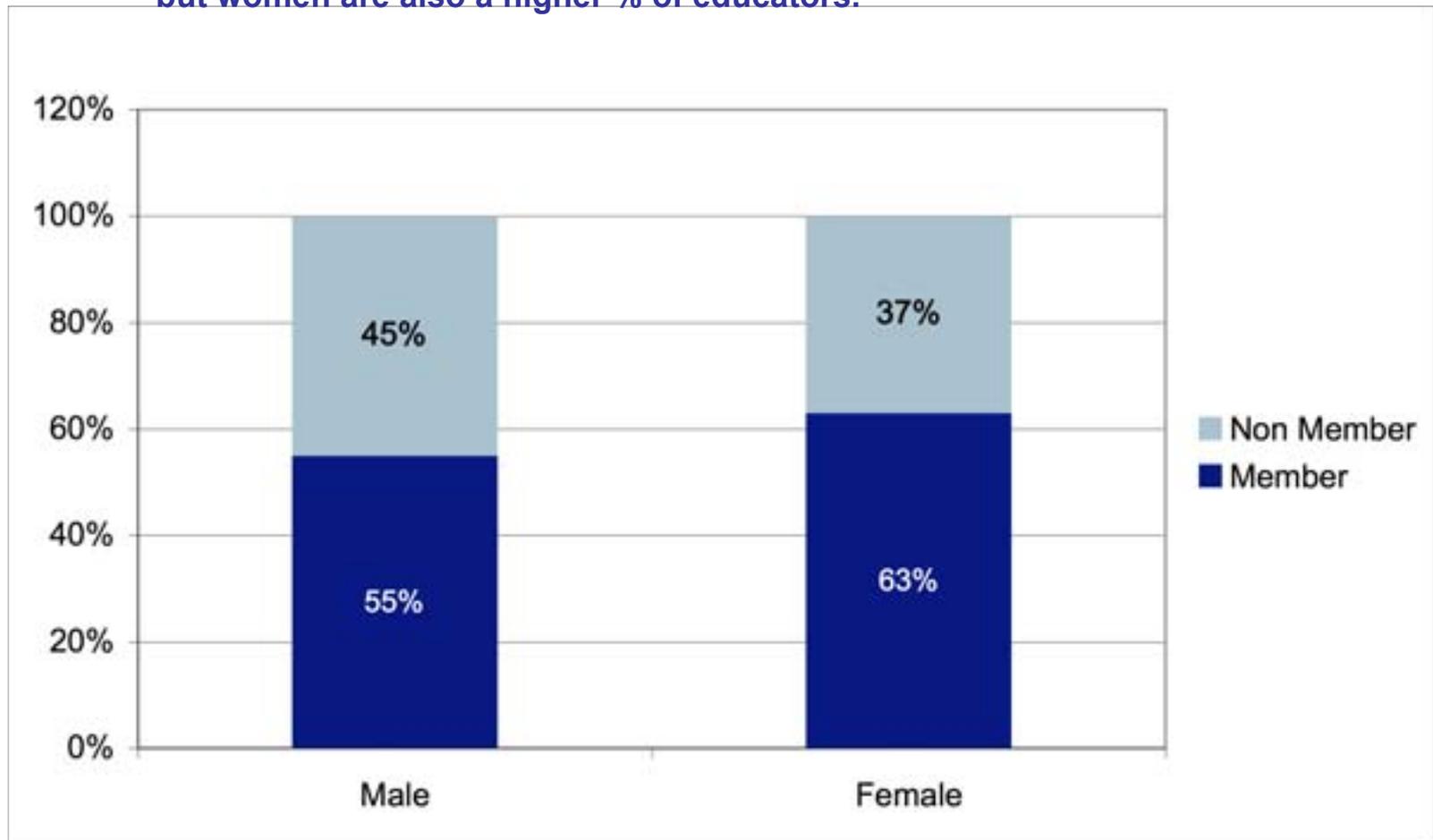
# Demographics of educators who have joined a social network

As expected, younger educators are more likely to be a member than older educators, but 47% of older educators have joined a social network.
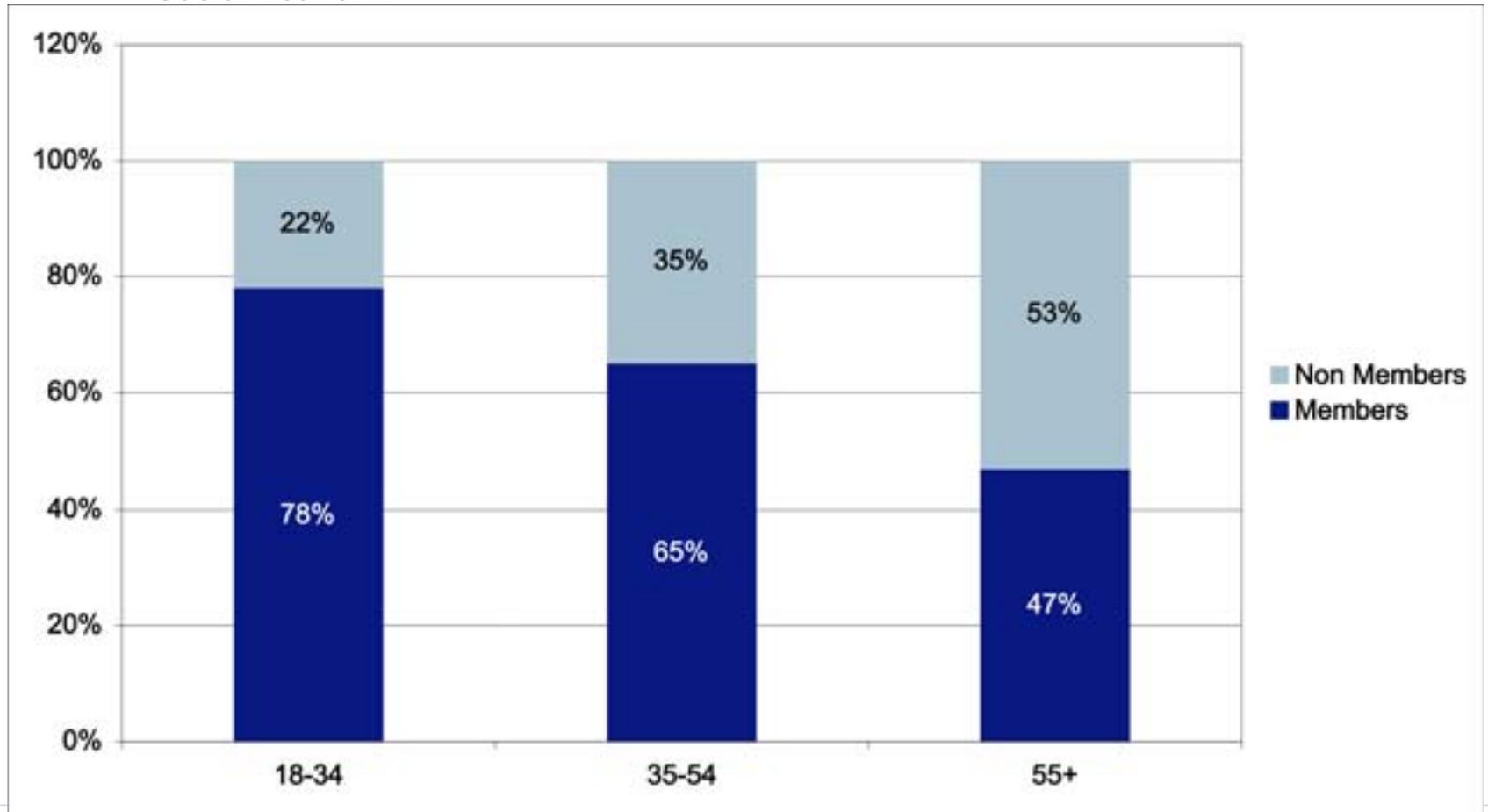
Demographics of educators who have joined a social network

Educators in lower grades are slightly more likely to be a member of a social networking site.

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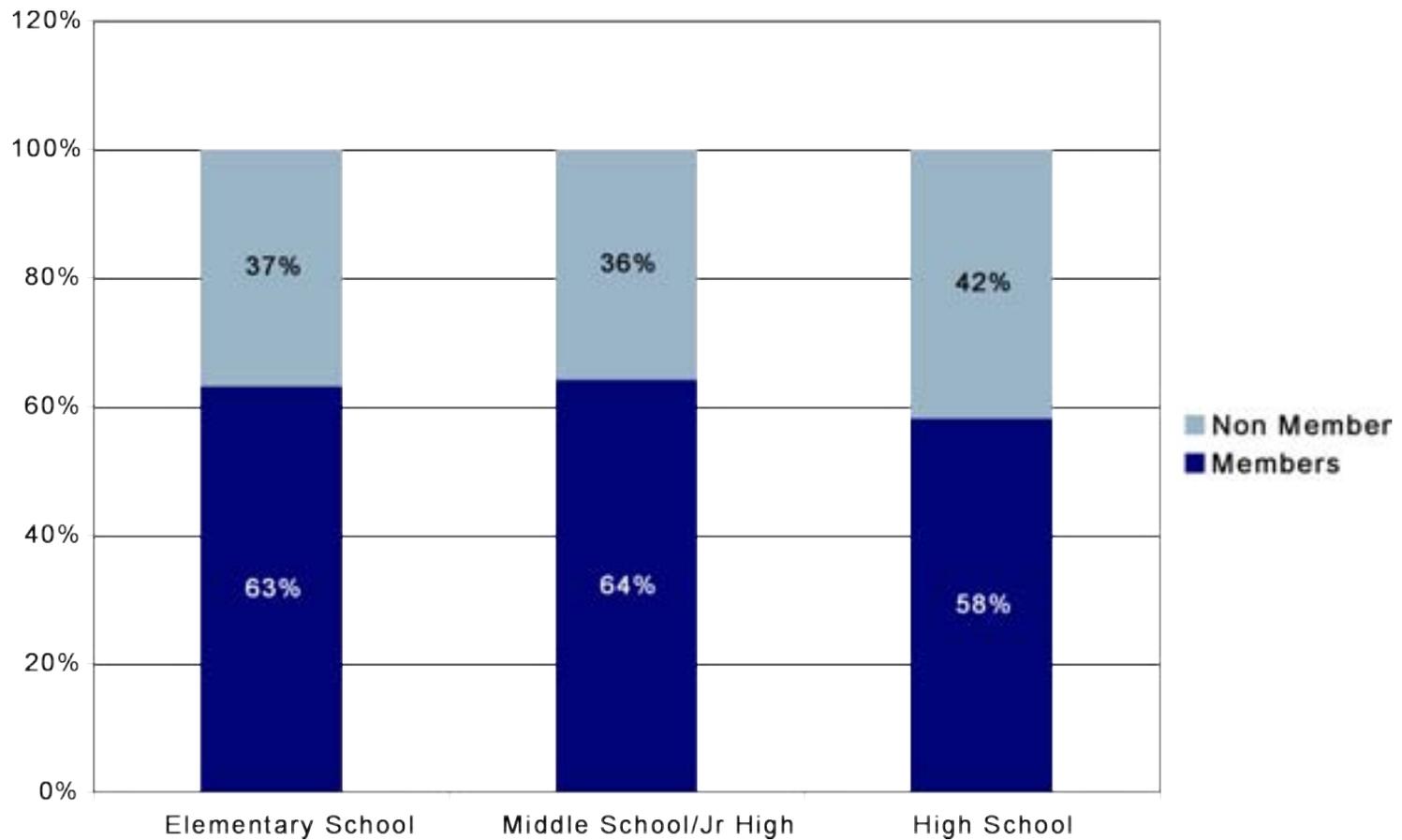
Demographics of educators who have joined a social network

Educators working in a suburban setting are slightly more likely to be a member of a social networking site.
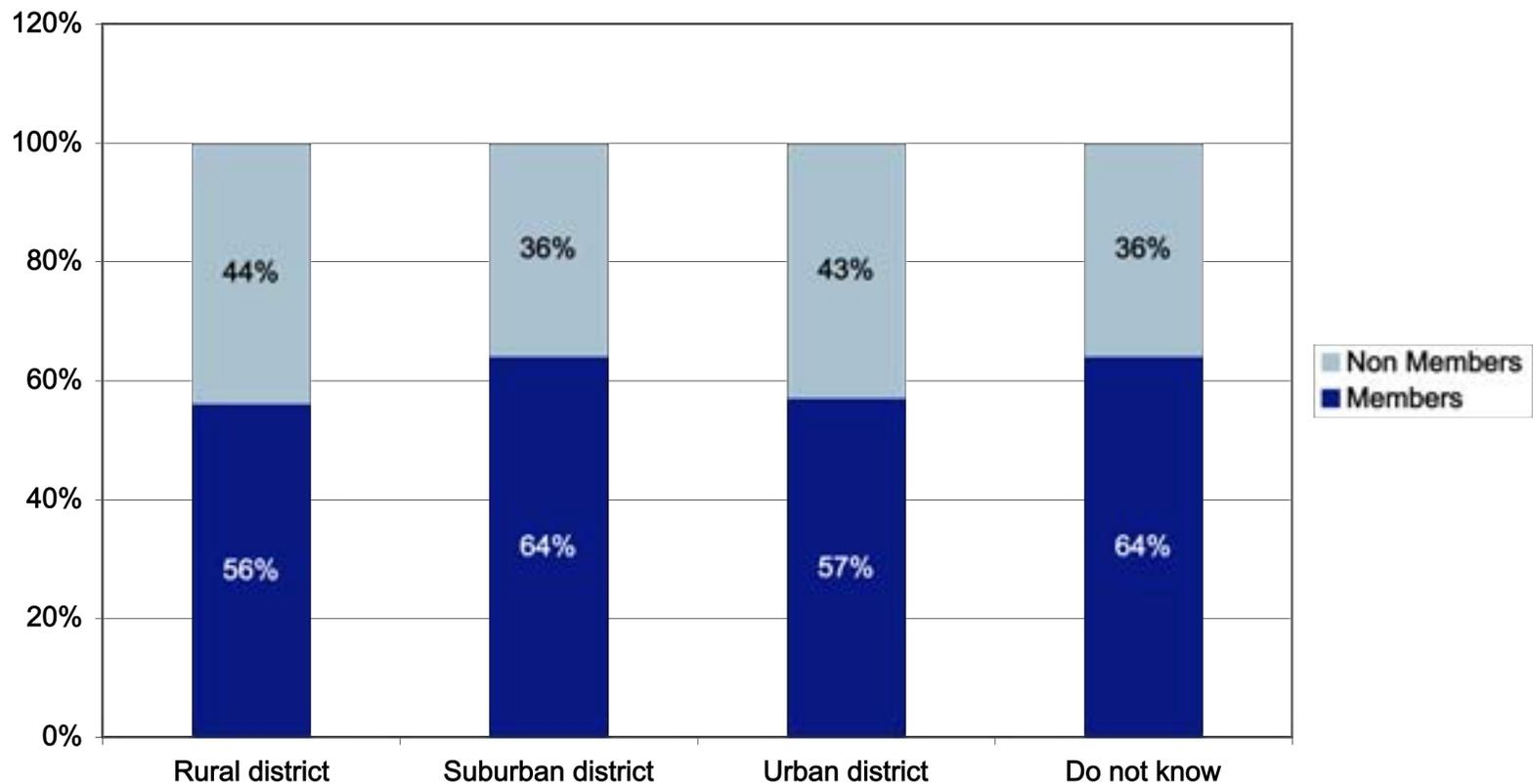
Facebook has highest membership; education sites still in early growth stage

Question: Please indicate if you are a member of any of these sites.

Site	Percentage
Facebook	85%
MySpace	20%
LinkedIn	14%
Ning	11%
Classroom 2.0	5%
edWeb.net	2%
Ning in Education	2%
We Are Teachers	2%
Learn Central	1%
Tapped In	1%
Teachade	1%
We the Teachers	1%

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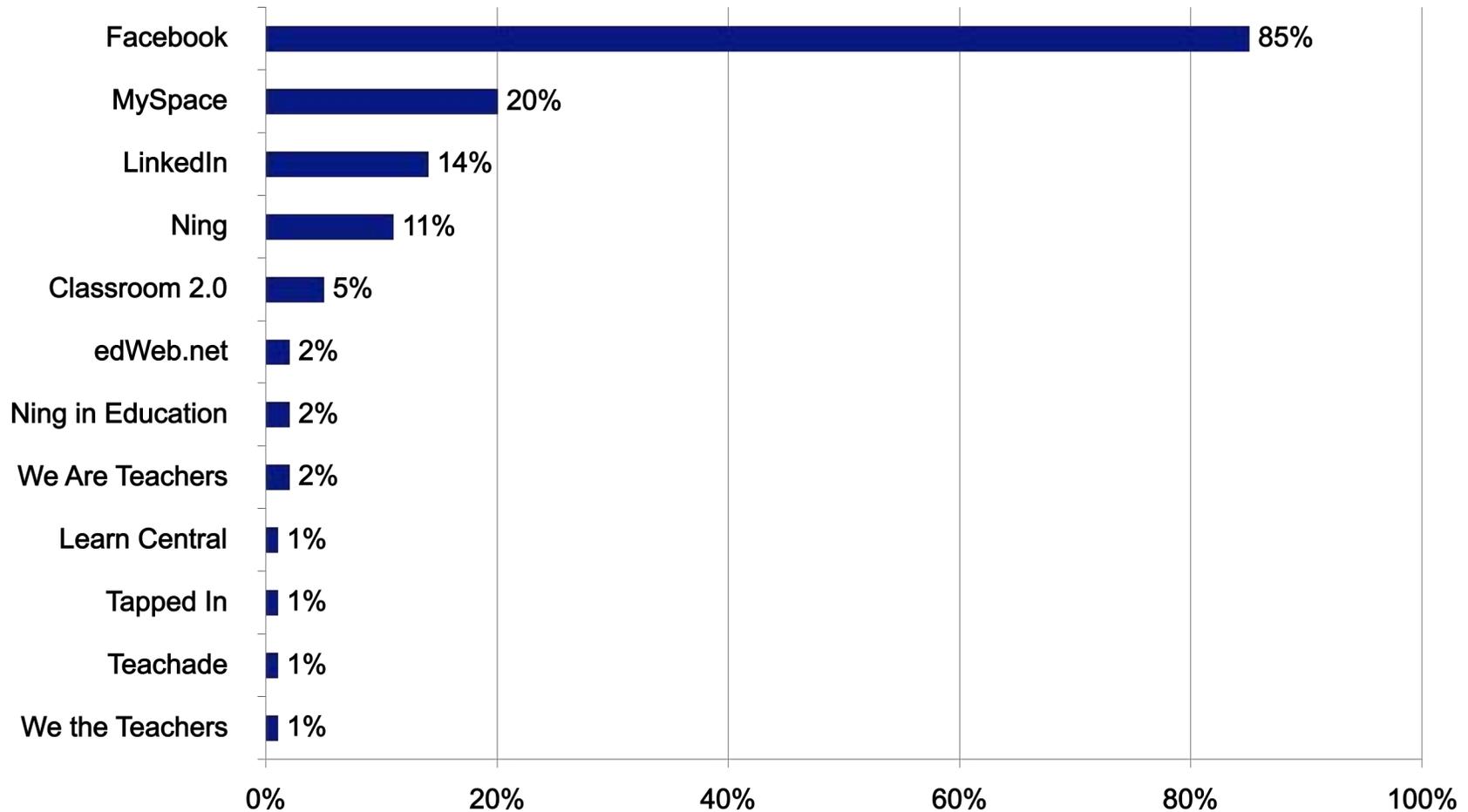
Educators who are not members are still familiar with social networks

Question: Please indicate if you are familiar with any of these sites.

Site	Percent
Facebook	78%
MySpace	76%
edWeb.net	16%
Classroom 2.0	13%
LinkedIn	12%
Learn Central	5%
Ning	4%
We Are Teachers	3%
Ning in Education	2%
Teachade	2%
We the Teachers	2%
Tapped In	1%

Note: respondents may have received previous email promotions about edWeb.net which may influence response

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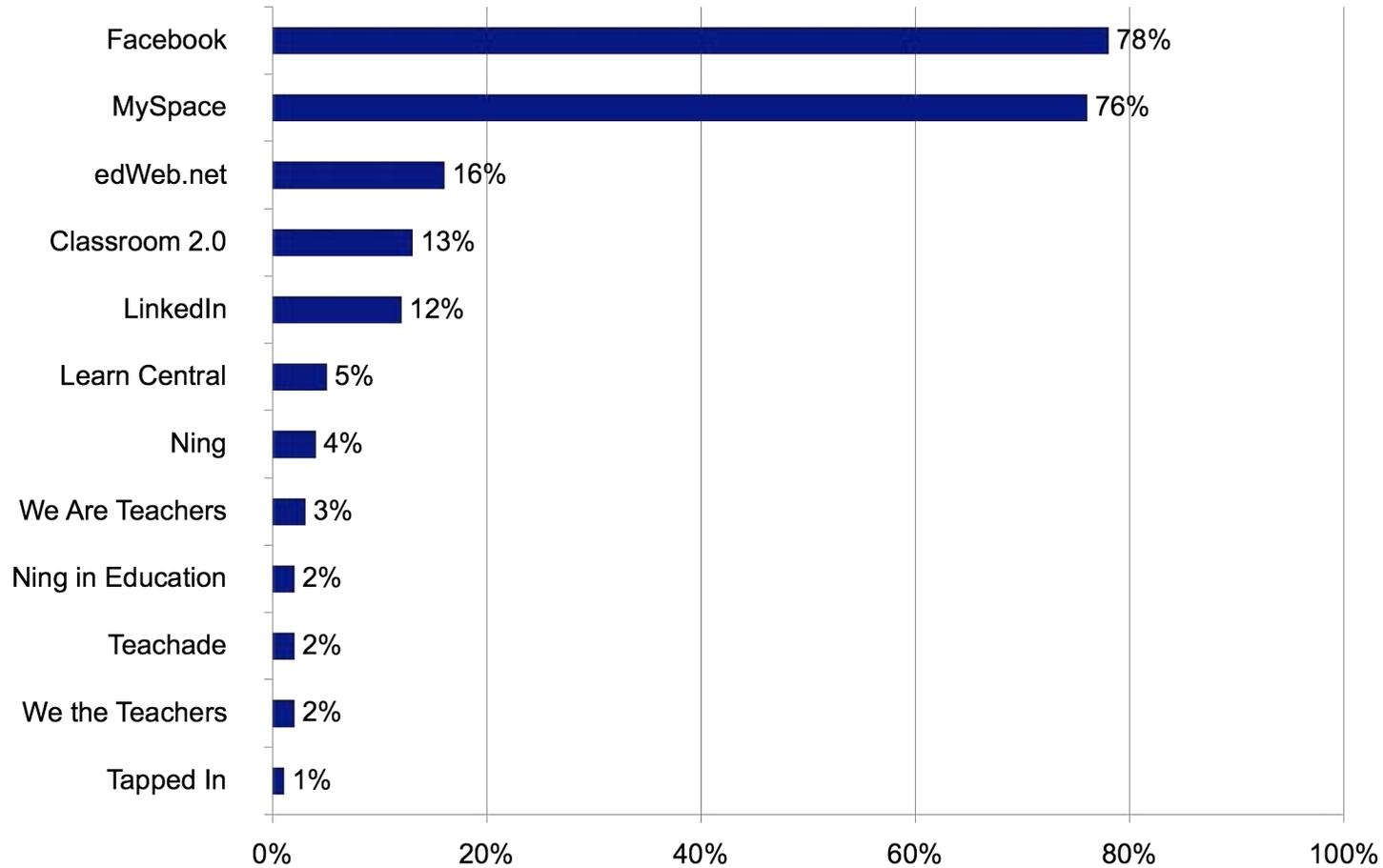
SN sites have different appeal for principals, teachers, and librarians.

Analysis of membership by job function: teacher, librarian, principal.
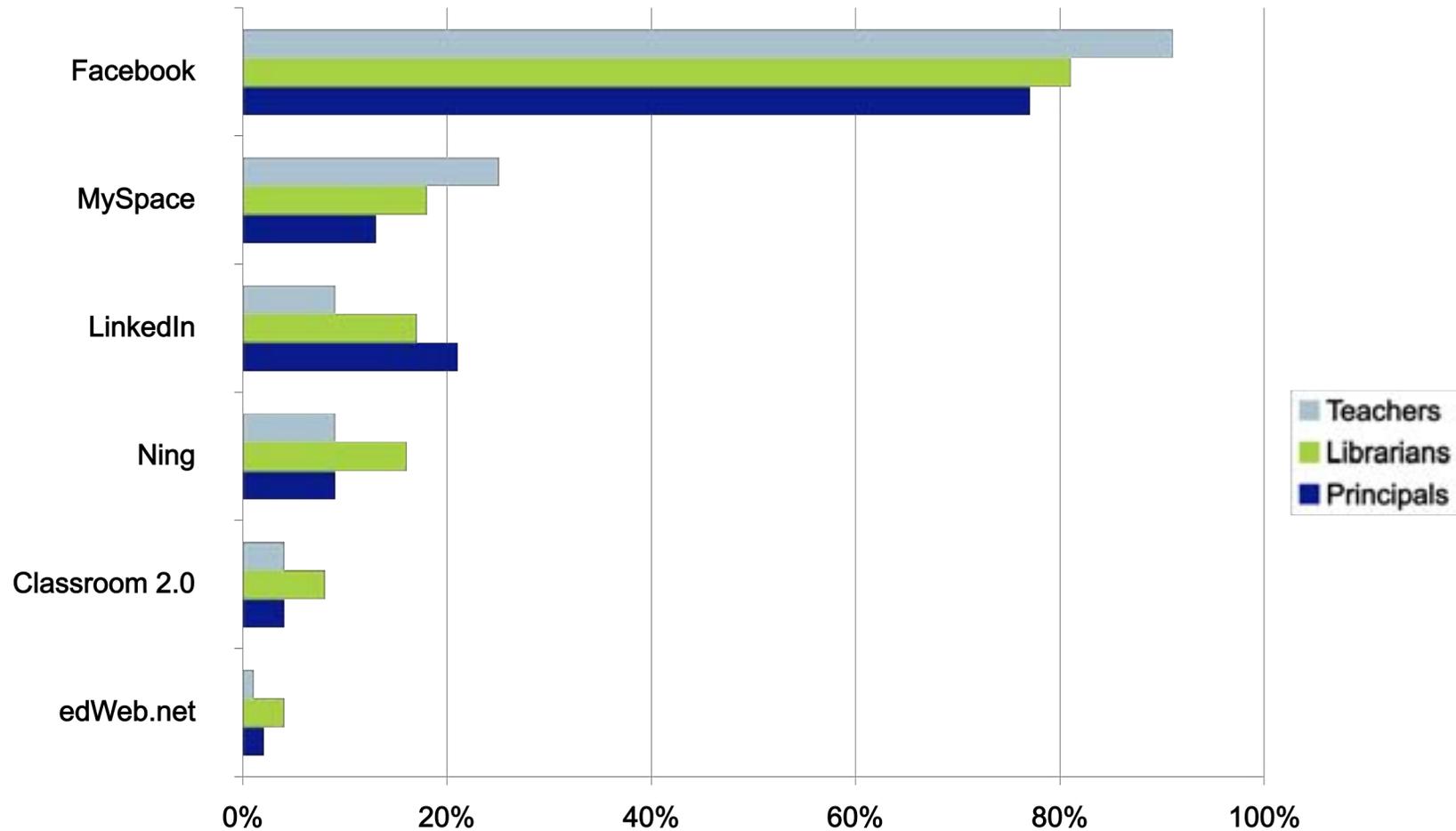
Educators use different types of social networking sites for different purposes

Question: Please tell us how you are using general social networking sites vs. professional/education sites (e.g. LinkedIn, Ning in Education, We Are Teachers, edWeb.net, etc.).

Purpose	General	Professional/Educational
To connect with friends	85%	6%
To connect with family members	72%	2%
To connect with professional peers and colleagues	47%	30%
To stay current with the latest Web 2.0 technology	18%	15%
To make connections for job and career opportunities	5%	8%
To generate or try to generate income	2%	1%

Legend:
- General
- Professional/Educational

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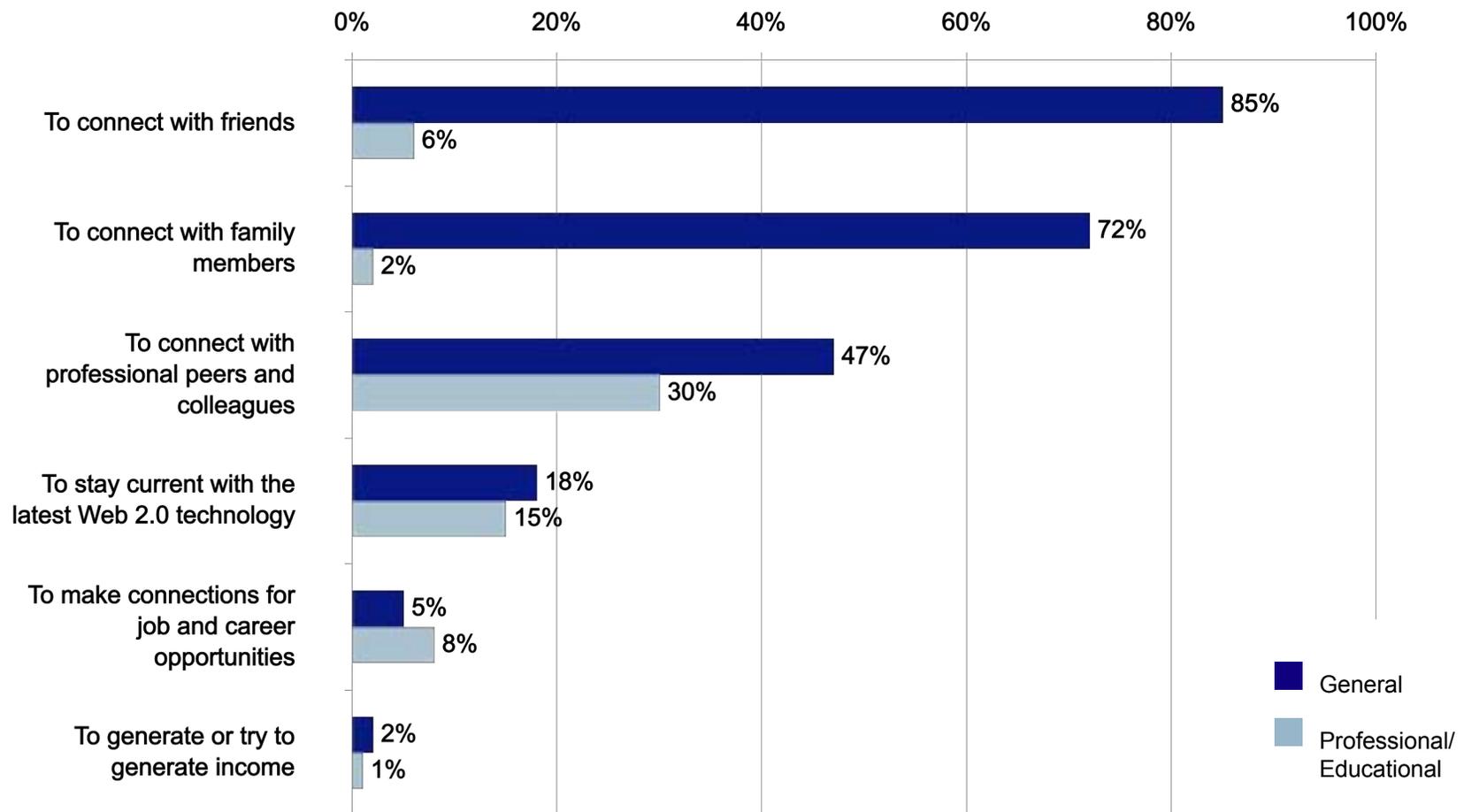
The frequency of use varies site by site

Question: Please indicate how frequently you visit the sites you belong to.


Legend:
- Weekly or More
- Monthly
- Periodically
- Seldom/Never

Categories: We Are Teachers, edWeb.net, Classroom 2.0, Ning, LinkedIn, MySpace, Facebook
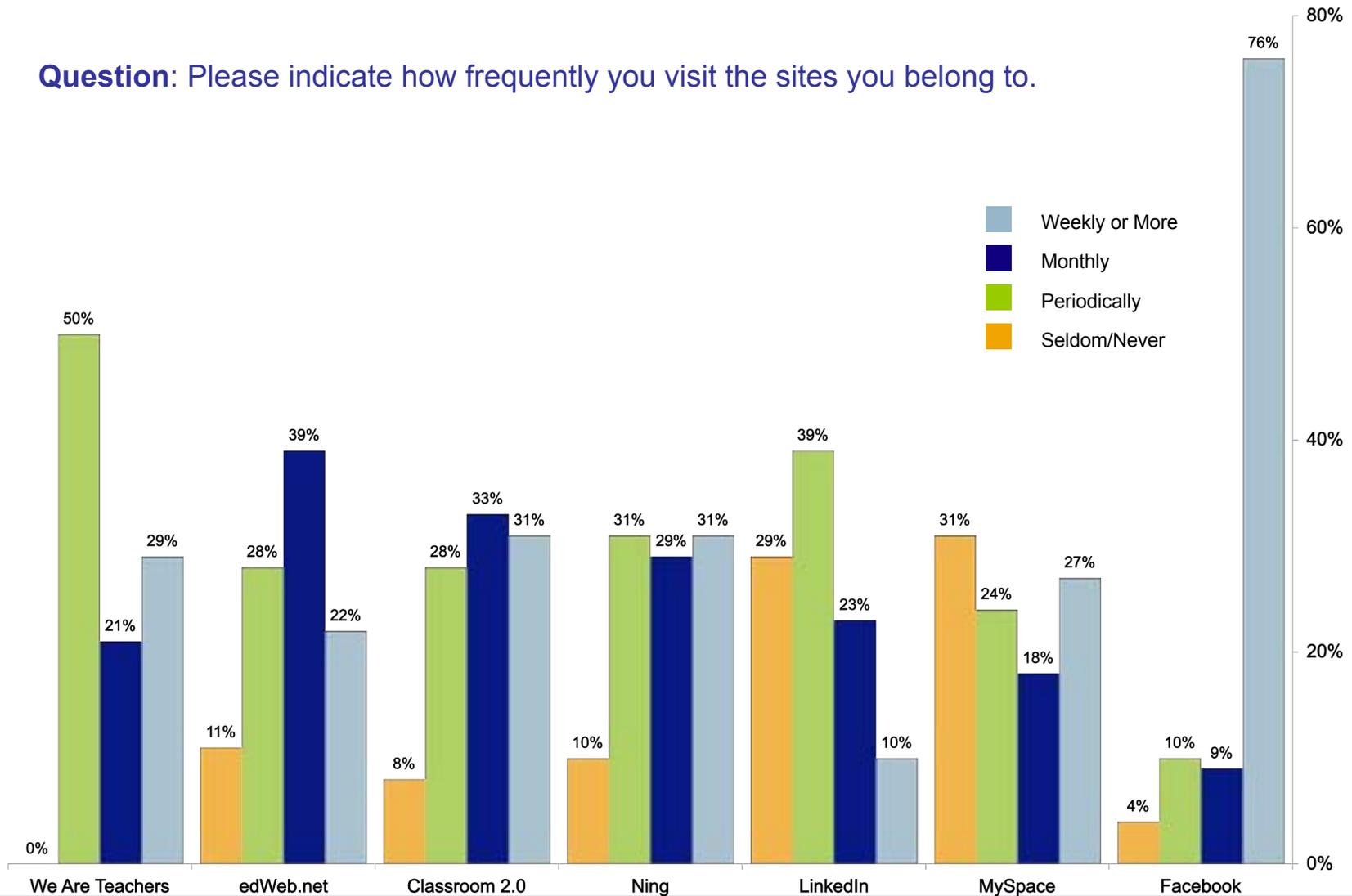
Looking ahead, educators are more likely to join a social network dedicated to education

Question: How likely are you to join a new or additional social networking site in the next 12 months?

Legend:
- General Site
- Professional Site
- Education Site

Already a member: General Site 16%, Professional Site 23%, Education Site 34%

Not a member: General Site 5%, Professional Site 10%, Education Site 21%

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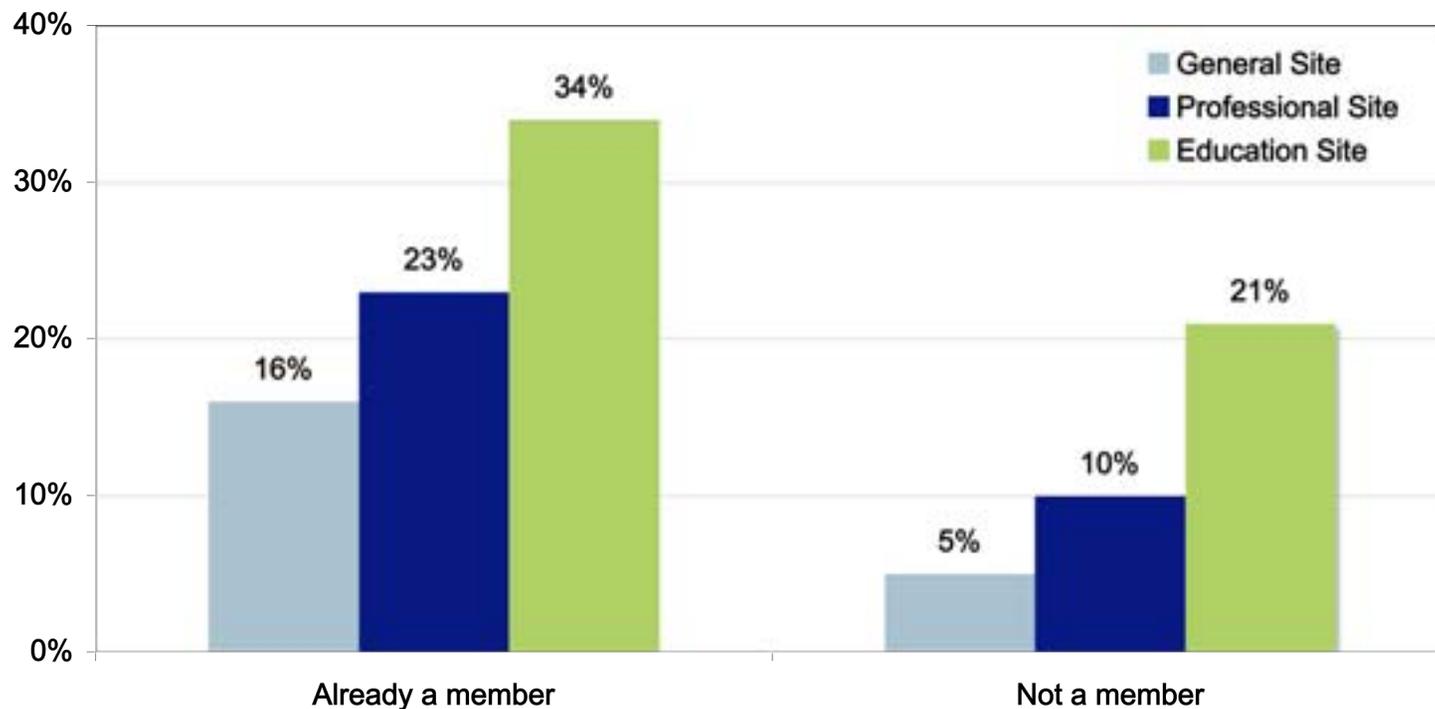
Educators see value for using social networking in many areas of education

Question: Social networking sites provide tools for people to connect and collaborate online. Whether you are, or are not, a member of a social network, please indicate if you see value in using this type of technology in education for the following purposes:

| Purpose	Value
Share information and resources with educators	58%
Create professional learning communities	55%
Connect with peers and colleagues	54%
Improve school-wide communications	51%
Create groups to collaborate on projects	48%
Learn about social networking and Web 2.0	47%
Receive professional development support	47%
Get support from peers	46%
Connect with parents	42%
Connect with students	42%
Connect with the local community	35%
Find job and career opportunities	31%
Find information on products and services	31%

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Educators who have joined a social network are more positive than those who have not

Perceived value of social networking: those who are a member of a SNS vs those who are not.


Category	Members	Non-Members
To share information and resources with educators.	64%	44%
To create professional learning communities.	61%	45%
To connect with professional peers and colleagues.	60%	42%
To improve school-wide communications with staff, students and parents.	56%	44%
To create groups to collaborate on projects.	53%	39%
To learn how social networking and Web 2.0 applications can be incorporated into teaching.	51%	40%
To receive online professional development support.	50%	41%
To get support from peers to cope with job challenges.	46%	38%
To connect with parents	44%	40%
To connect with students	43%	39%
To become familiar with social networking.	40%	27%
To connect with the local community to get local support.	37%	31%
To find information on products and services.	33%	29%
To find job and career opportunities.	29%	35%

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Librarians see the highest value overall

Perceived value of social networking by job function: teacher, librarian, principal

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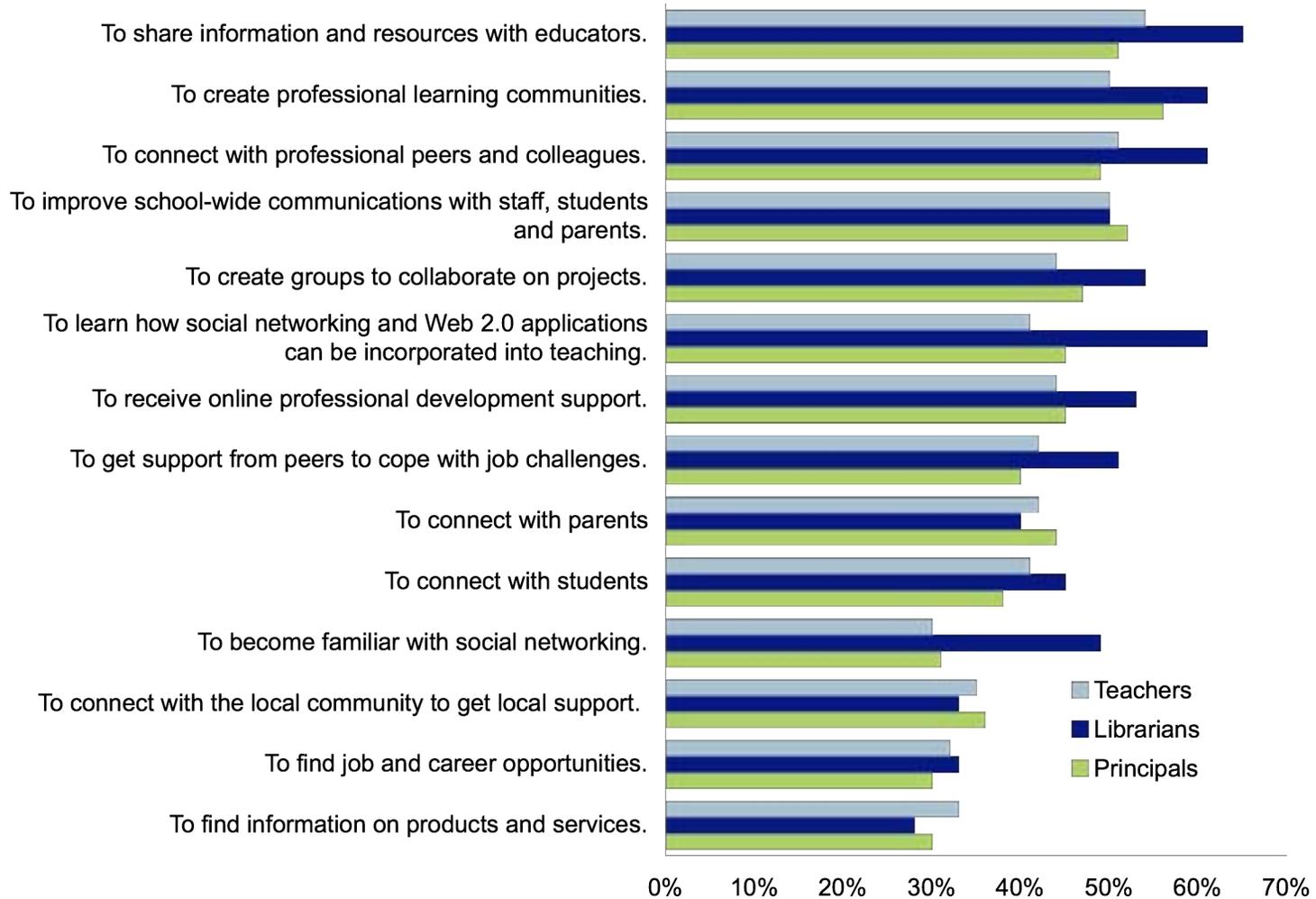
Concerns include privacy, lack of time, email overload and restricted access

Question: Please indicate the concerns you may have about joining a general social networking site (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Ning) vs. a professional/education social networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn, Ning in Education, We Are Teachers, edWeb.net).
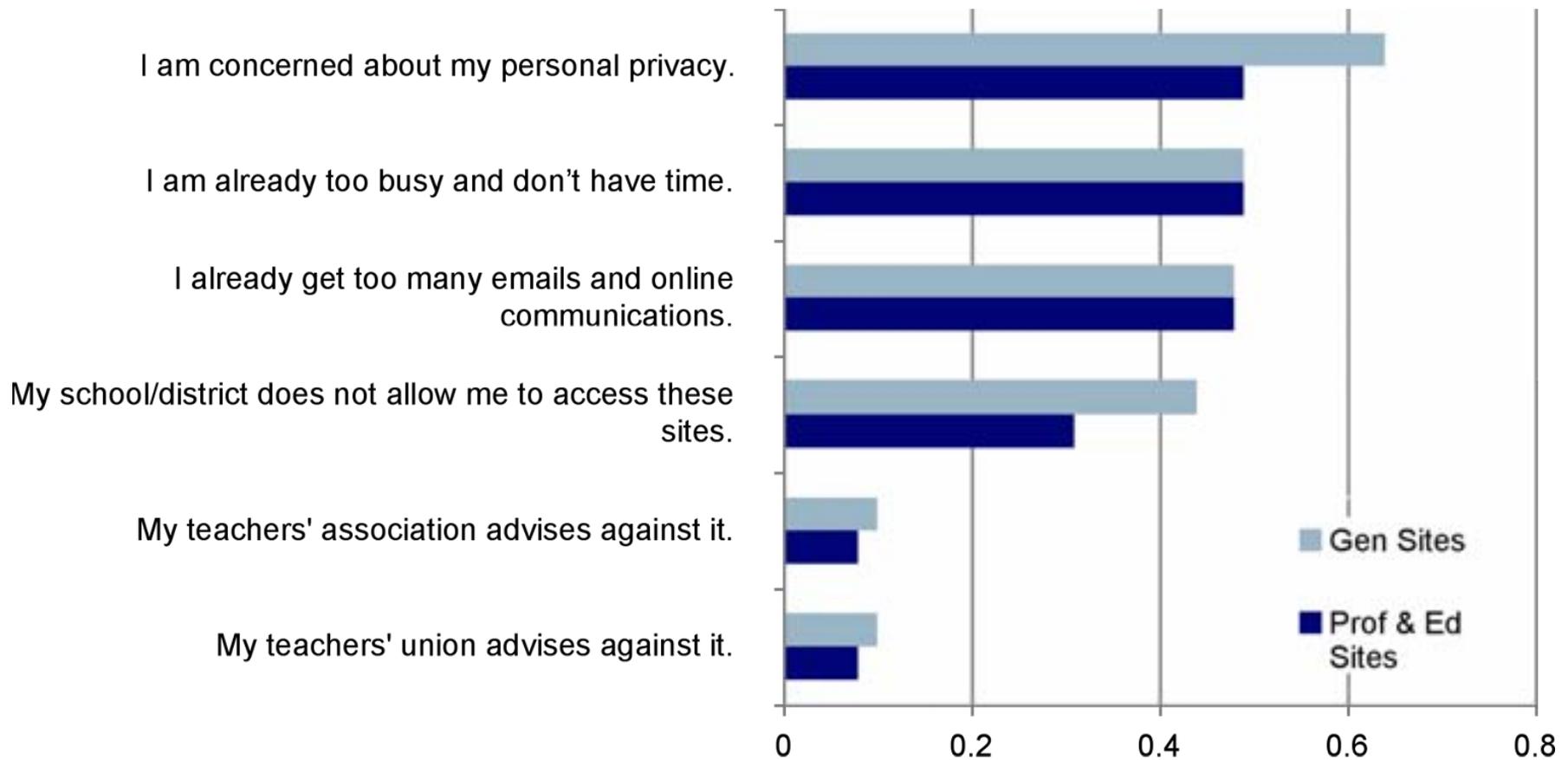
Summary Observations:
Other Content-Sharing Tools

- We asked educators about their use of a variety of content-sharing sites/tools: YouTube, TeacherTube, Wikipedia, blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, Google Docs, Delicious, Digg, Ustream, webinars, Twitter, podcasts, Flickr, and widgets.

- For personal use the #1 tool is YouTube; for professional use the #1 tool is webinars; for classroom use the #1 tool is Wikipedia.

- When we looked closer at **professional use** of these sites by job function, webinars are the #1 tool used by principals and librarians; for teachers the #1 tool is Wikipedia.

- For **classroom use**, Wikipedia, YouTube, and Teacher Tube predominate.

- The results indicate the advantages of using webinars for communications and professional development with principals and librarians; incorporating the use of Wikipedia into lesson plans; and creating high-value educational video for YouTube and TeacherTube for teachers to use in the classroom.

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Adoption varies for personal, professional, and classroom use

Question: Are you currently using any of the following content-sharing tools/websites for personal use, for professional use, or in the classroom?

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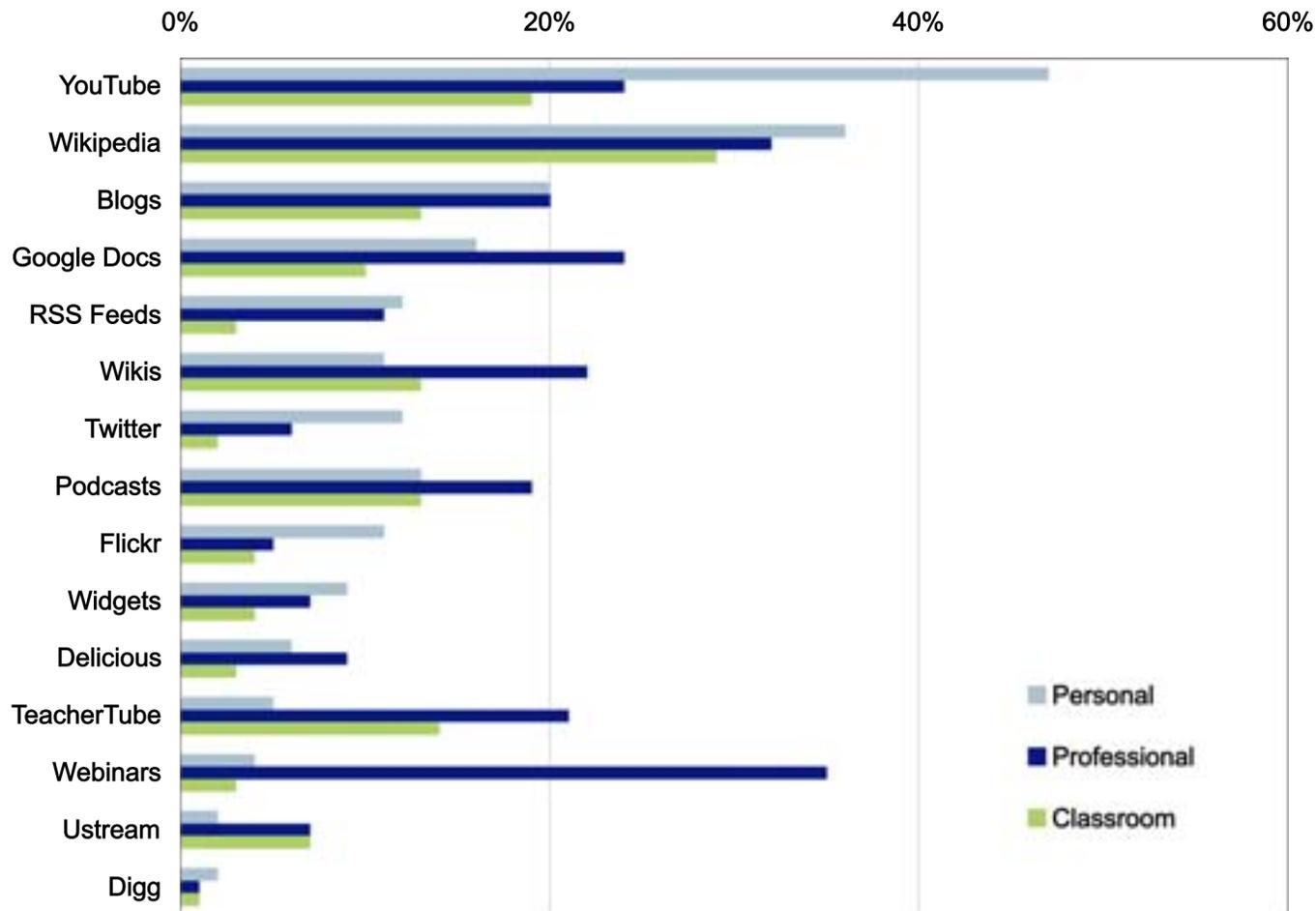
Use of tools for professional purposes varies by job position

Use of content-sharing websites/tools **FOR PROFESSIONAL USE** by job function.
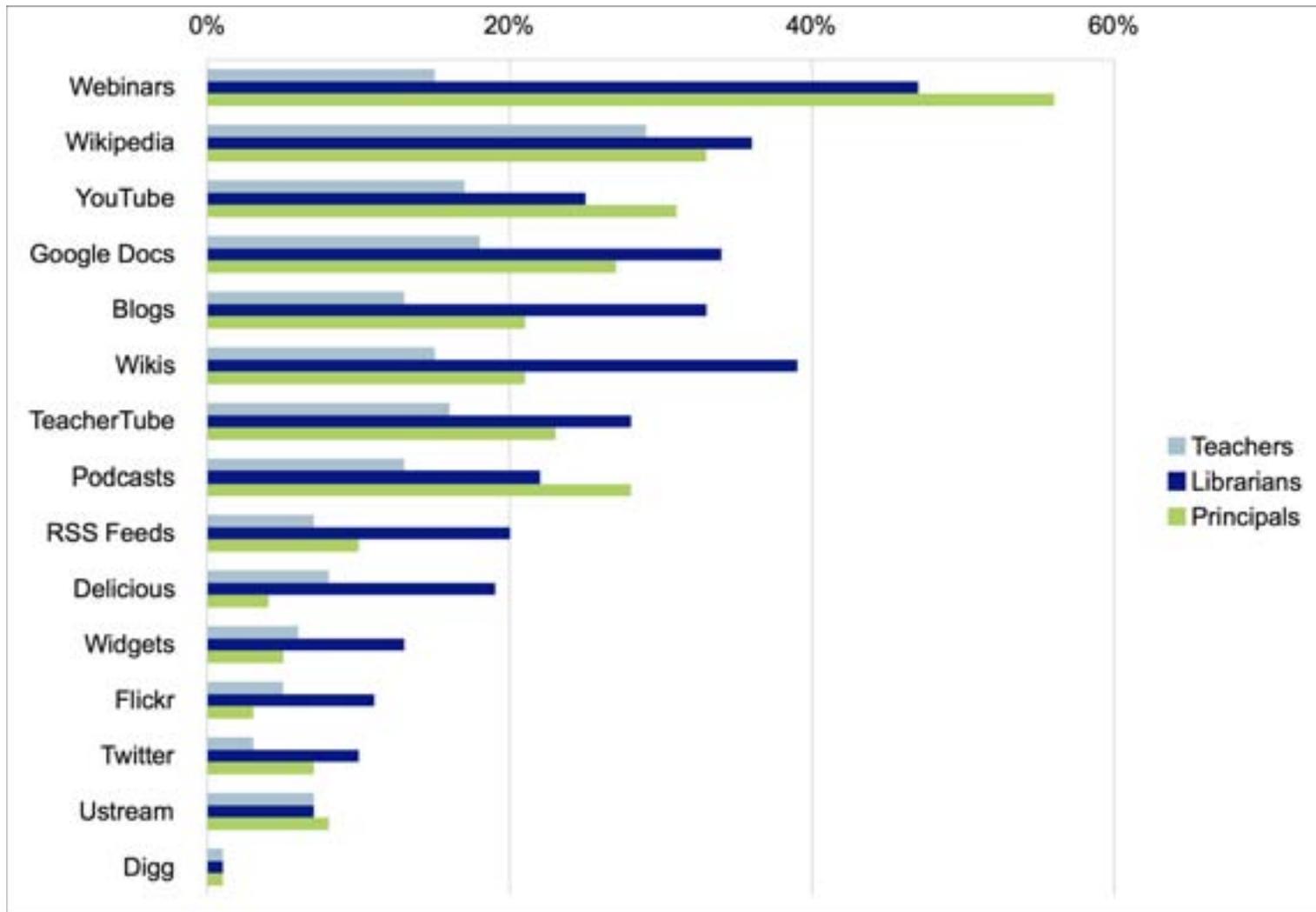
In the classroom, wikipedia and video predominate

Use of content-sharing websites/tools **FOR CLASSROOM USE** by job function.

Legend:
- Teachers
- Librarians
- Principals

Categories (top to bottom): Wikipedia, YouTube, TeacherTube, Wikis, Blogs, Podcasts, Google Docs, Ustream, Widgets, Webinars, Flickr, Delicious, RSS Feeds, Twitter, Digg

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%

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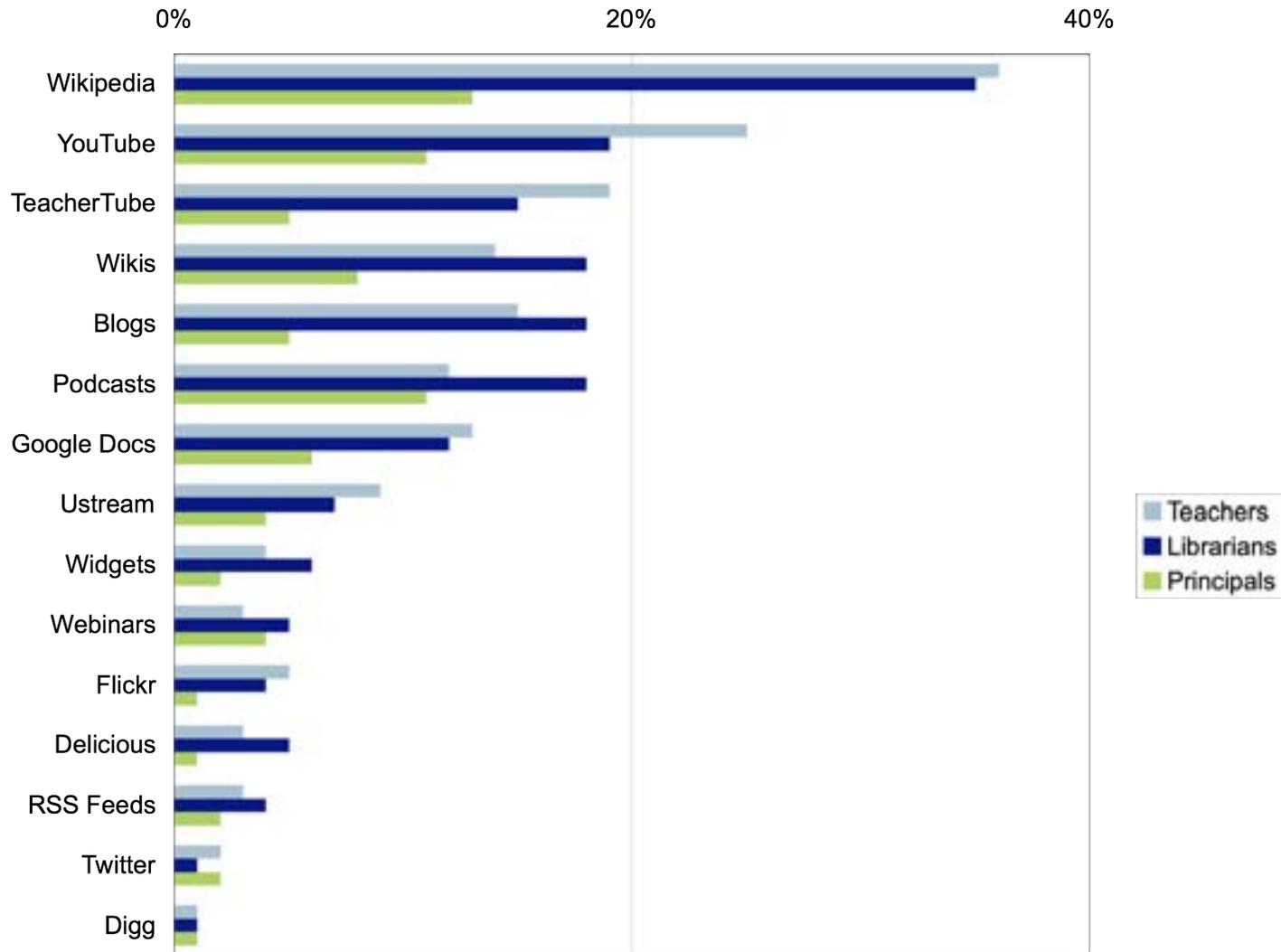
Summary Observations:
Use of Popular Online Activities

- Activities with the highest level of engagement are using search engines and searching for products and services, followed by sending text messages, uploading photos, watching videos, and downloading music.

- Activities with the lowest level of engagement are playing video games, uploading and sharing videos, maintaining a personal blog, and visiting a virtual world.

- We looked at the level of engagement in online activities if the respondent was a member of a social networking site vs not a member. Not surprisingly, those educators who are members of social networking websites are more likely to engage in a wide range of other online activities.

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Educators who engage in these activities on a weekly basis

Activity	Percentage
Use online search engines	89%
Search for educational products and services	63%
Send text messages	59%
Upload digital photos to a computer	56%
Watch videos online	38%
Download music	28%
Read blogs	26%
Take videos using any type of device	24%
Use an online photo service	22%
Maintain/update a personal website	21%
Download podcasts	14%
Play video games online	14%
Upload/share videos online	13%
Maintain / update a personal blog	10%
Visit a virtual world	8%

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Members of social networks are more engaged in all online activities
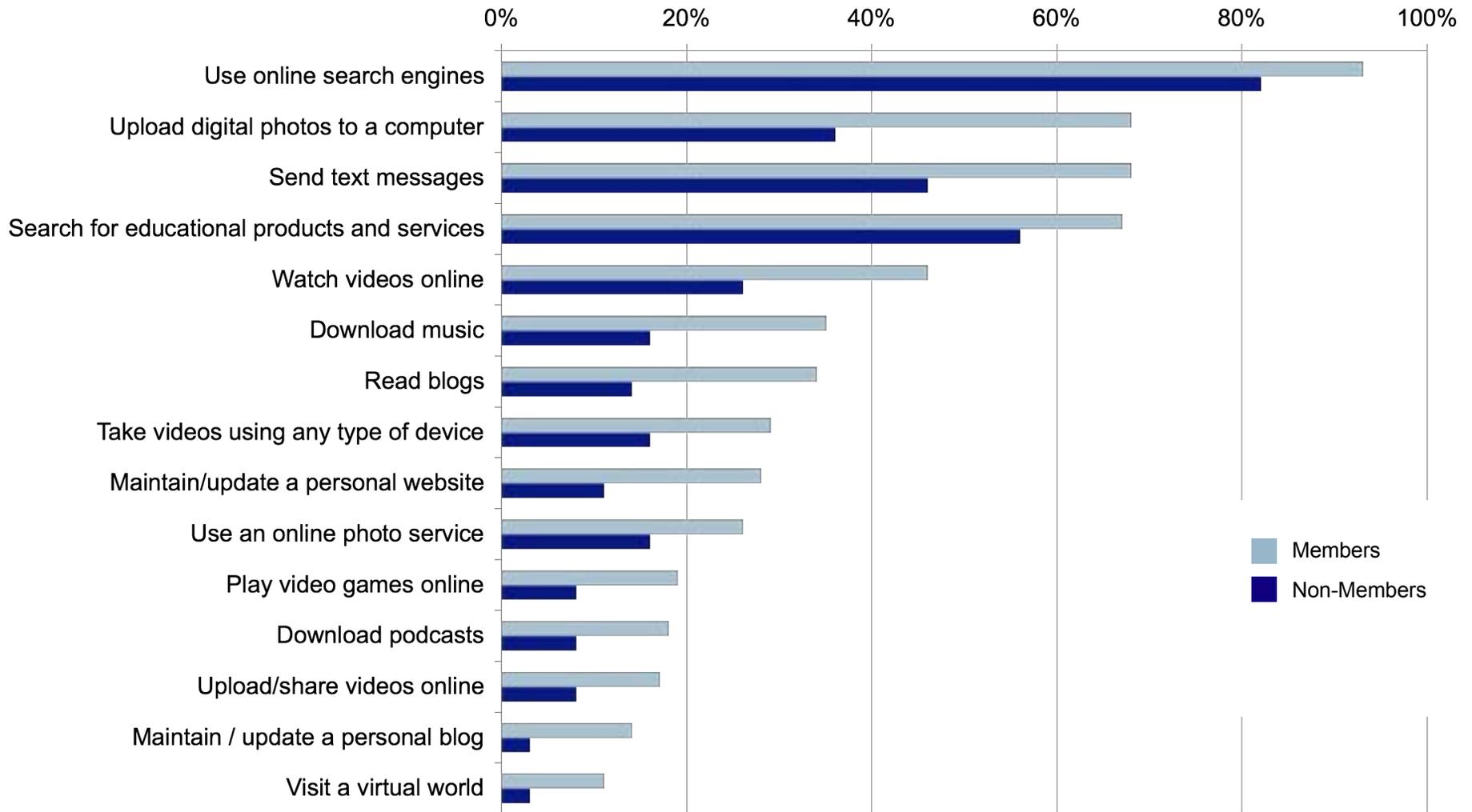
	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

- Use online search engines
- Upload digital photos to a computer
- Send text messages
- Search for educational products and services
- Watch videos online
- Download music
- Read blogs
- Take videos using any type of device
- Maintain/update a personal website
- Use an online photo service
- Play video games online
- Download podcasts
- Upload/share videos online
- Maintain / update a personal blog
- Visit a virtual world

Legend:
- Members
- Non-Members

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Educator Comments

25% of the survey respondents provided comments. Many spoke articulately about their opinions on this emerging technology. The following slides include a sampling of those remarks.

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Comments from Teachers

It should become more accepted in the world of education to use social networking sites in the classroom. The students we have now will need to be familiar with and navigate through this virtual world to be successful in their futures.

It's a new way of communicating to others across the country. I think younger educators will use mostly. 50 plus will try and use but not to enthused. But we need to keep up. Hopefully the social networking will be free.

These sites are becoming the key to communication in the world. Teachers need to keep up with this, especially at the secondary level, as most of their students are active members of many sites. School districts should not limit the use of these sites for their employees and some not for their students, depending on the content and purpose behind the network.

I hope to become more involved with social networking websites to improve students' learning and my professional development. I also want to share these websites with my peers.

This kind of tools is not an option in education anymore. As teachers and practitioners preparing 21st century learners we MUST better educate and inform ourselves about how to take the best benefit out of them. The most important reason for this is: THIS IS THE WAY IN WHICH OUR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING TODAY!

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Comments from Teachers

There is indeed concern by our school district about security, which often hampers what is available for teachers and students. So many sites are blocked from view for both teachers and students. It is often frustrating and difficult to use technology to the degree that it could be used to impact students in a positive way. Some teachers don't even allow Internet use in their classrooms. As a digital educator, it is difficult to strike a balance here.

There are major privacy issues if students gain access to personal information about their teachers; from lifestyle preference, religion, and sexual orientation. Often young teachers join these social networking sites to reach out to their students and blur the lines of the profession thus undermining their authority and the respect the students will extend to them.

The power of the computer is amazing. Older teachers are getting left behind in life by the younger generation, who powers forward in technology. I am not young, but I want the power of the computer and Internet for my own career and life.

Teaching is a people profession, face-to-face is best. If you depend on a computer to communicate, don't be a teacher!

My concern is that there remains a clear and distinct line between the social networking sites used for personal reasons and those for professional ones.

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Comments from Teachers

Social Networking sites are being used widely by the parents and students of our school community. It is our responsibility to educate the students of our school about the ethical and security issues associated with using online services and social media.

My school system does not restrict membership, but does advise that we not join social networking sites due to becoming too familiar with students, saying things that can be misconstrued, etc. We have already had several instances of being a member of these sites adversely affecting the teacher in our county.

I need to learn more about each different networking site and how it may impact me as an educator in order to use technology more efficiently in the classroom.

I think it's a great tool. I just wish I had more time to pursue it.

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Comments from Principals

As a principal we are strongly encouraging our teaching staff to use the technology listed and we are providing the professional development that will allow them to become familiar with many of those listed. Teachers are using these programs in their classrooms and enhancing communications to a great extent. As a long-time educator (41 years and counting) I am still somewhat behind in my use and knowledge of existing technologies but we are all working on adapting them to our campus, classrooms and communication network.

The wave of the future. Educators must learn to infuse these technologies into lesson planning and curriculum development.

Some use of social networking sites are beneficial and meet various needs; however, to be inundated with trivial information (a 24 /7 account of personal lives) is not only counter productive but crippling. Although there is value for each, when networking sites for personal, professional, and educational purposes are all utilized there is no time for person-to-person interaction which is critical to human development.

Several of my teachers are on social networking sites, mostly for personal use. While their potential value is obvious, social networking sites combining personal and professional purposes is dangerous. I discourage my staff from using their personal networking sites for any professional use. However, the potential for educator preparation, training, and networking is something that could be powerful.

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Comments from Principals

Seems like the direction things are headed. I'm an advocate of making technology useful and real world-like in the classroom. Seems like we should have students doing reading and composing on computers, but we only have one lab and not enough computers to be able to do this. We look for grants, but run out of energy to find ways to get more technology in students' hands.

It is essential that educators begin incorporating the use of these sites into classroom instruction. Student is intimately familiar with their use and possible applications. Our jobs require us to prepare students for the future. Without knowledge of how to apply this technology meaningfully in the classroom, we are failing in our professional duties.

It is difficult to use these networks when I cannot access them through the school's Internet and I am here 9-11 hours daily. It is a shame because I do use FaceBook for personal use and to keep up with other principals when I can.

I think social networks can bring benefits to the school but there must be specific parameters associated with this for all staff and students.

I think a person would have to really think about privacy issues. We must remember this is a public domain, so student confidentiality and professionalism really comes into play.

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Comments from Principals

I love the potential Web 2.0 tools offer to education and learning. I am fearful it is not being embraced as well as it should.

I know they are the wave of the future especially in education. I have my reservations about using them, but know that I will grow in their use in the future.

I don't believe that the sites should be mixed. There should be a clear definition of what is personal and what is professional.

I cannot seem to 'keep up' with current trends in this type of technology which, unfortunately, leads me to see little value in it.

I believe that they can be a very effective tool for educators to share ideas and materials about any aspect of teaching. When used professionally I believe that educators will be able to find a wealth of knowledge.

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Comments from Librarians

School districts must begin to see their value and, if concerned about privacy, protection, etc., find ways to allow access that are deemed safe — they are too productive as interactive learning environments to ignore!

The major complaint is that they are blocked within our district. Would love to use wikis, blogs, and many other 2.0 sites with some great lesson plan ideas, but administrators are too concerned with privacy/legalities to actually allow access. The irony however is that we are supposed to be implementing more and more technology, but all the training we receive is for naught since we can't access many 2.0 on-campus. A bit frustrating.

They are tools in the world we live in, and our students know more than we ever will about them. Our job is to facilitate their understanding of ethical and appropriate use of these tools. We are doing everyone a disservice by not using them in the educational environment.

Time and student impact are the major reasons for not using them. My district has blocked most of them and then ones that are available, take time to learn to use.

I understand the risks but I think there are some amazing educational opportunities that will be possible in the web 2.0 world. It can be overwhelming at times though and there is just not enough time in the day.

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Comments from Librarians

All these are wonderful as long as they are used in the manner intended. I prefer to separate my personal and professional lives. I am so tired of education requiring 'just one more thing.' It might eventually save time, but mostly it just takes so much time to learn, it isn't worth it.

I am always interested in how such things are valuable to a student's education and can be used effectively in a classroom setting. My district has very tight controls over access as well as limited bandwidth. This makes it difficult for us to do anything radically up-to-date.

I enjoy using them for both personal and professional/educational purposes. They have greatly increased my access to information.

I think social networking sites are great to use on our own time, provided we remember that we are role models in the community and what we post is viewable by the outside world. Professionally, it seems that many teachers resist using technology, which is why I haven't used social networking sites for this purpose--I think pushing for it with my teachers would alienate more of them than it would help. Educationally, they are a slippery slope. We don't want students using school time to put their personal information out there through sites like MySpace or FaceBook, and we are discouraged from friending them as a liability issue. It could be a great way to connect with our students after the bell rings, but do we really want to be available 24/7?

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Comments from Librarians

I think there are many uses for social networking, for personal, professional, and educational purposes. Unfortunately, some districts are behind the times and filter out access to such sites.

I would like to keep up more but time is a major issue. Also, there's little motivation when the district in which I work blocks all sites, making us use them on our own time.

I think the social networking sites give a false & very superficial sense of connectivity that will detract from human intimacy and personal contact between peers as well as teachers and students.

In the educational setting many schools have filters in place that block the social networking sites. I am hearing; however, that some changes are being made with regards to social networking, blogs and wikis. It's time we caught up with the kids!

It all takes so much time!! The information volume is overwhelming... the amount of time SITTING in front of a screen seems excessive if you utilize all this technology.

It is the future of communication, but school policy will always lag behind technology.

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