Final Report

School Principals and Social Networking in Education: Practices, Policies, and Realities in 2010

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Introduction

Since the creation of MySpace and LinkedIn in 2003 and Facebook in 2004, online social networking has quickly become a pervasive way for people to connect and interact all over the world. A trend that largely began with students is now featured on the cover of AARP.

Yet schools are one of the last holdouts, where many of the most popular social networking sites are often banned for students, and sometimes for teachers, librarians, and administrators, too. Many schools and districts have opted for a very restrictive environment amid concerns about safety, privacy and confidentiality, and lack knowledge about how best to ensure appropriate use. Ironically, students and many teachers are now using online, collaborative technology at home, on the go, and even sometimes in the school hallways—but typically *not* in the classroom. This has profound implications for keeping students engaged and preparing them to live in a 21st century world.

To gain a better understanding of educators' attitudes on these issues, several organizations—edWeb.net, IESD, Inc., MMS Education, and MCH, Inc.—collaborated on a multi-phase research endeavor:

- Phase I was quantitative research—an online survey conducted with more than 1,200 educators including principals, librarians, and teachers. The results from this study were published in a November 2009 report, *A Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Other Content-Sharing Tools.* A complete copy of the report can be downloaded at http://tinyurl.com/SurveyK12 or http://www.mmseducation.com.
- Phase II was qualitative research—an in-depth online discussion with 12 school principals who have used social networking professionally. The purpose of this discussion was to gain a deeper understanding of principals' experiences and attitudes—to learn more about how they were using social networking, what they had learned and what they perceived as the challenges and opportunities for the future use of social networking in their schools. This phase focused on principals because many recent studies and reports have highlighted the importance of school leadership and the role of the principal in setting appropriate policies, developing a positive school culture, and providing the necessary teacher professional development that leads to successful schools.

This report combines findings from Phase I of the research with the new results from Phase II in one report that focuses on principals and how they are using this new technology to advance their professional and school leadership goals.

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Key Findings

Below are key findings from Phase I of the research—*A Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Other Content-Sharing Tools*—plus key findings from the Phase II in-depth online discussion with 12 school principals who have used social networking professionally.

Phase I
Quantitative Research—
Key Findings from the Online Survey

Key findings from the Phase I survey include the following:

- Most principals indicated in the survey that social networking sites have value in education as a way for educators to share information and resources; to create professional learning communities; and to improve school-wide communications with students and staff.
- Educators who have used social networking technology are more positive about the benefits than those who have not.
- Educators who have joined a social networking site, and those who haven't, expressed a strong preference, going forward, for joining a social networking site dedicated to education.
- If schools and districts are to develop advocates for appropriate and effective integration of social networking with instruction, they will need to expose more educators to this technology.

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Phase II
Qualitative Research—
Key Findings from the Online Discussion

Principals interviewed in Phase II were prescreened to have used social networking for professional purposes. Key findings uncovered during the Phase II online discussion include the following:

- All of the principals in the online discussion indicated that students have a substantial degree of interest or comfort level with social networking. About half described many of their students as highly involved, engaged, and/or interested in social networking.
- These principals painted a varied picture of educator use of and/or comfort in integrating Web 2.0 technologies with instruction. In many schools, some teachers are integrating social networking with instruction or would be comfortable doing so. In some schools, this is true of many teachers. In other schools, principals reported a low level of interest and/or comfort among their teachers. There is confusion over the use of the term "social networking" and "Web 2.0 technology." There is little, if any, use of "social networking " per se in instruction.
    - There was a sense among some respondents that younger educators and those who have children who use social networking were more likely to be comfortable with this technology.
    - Some of the reasons given for lack of interest and/or comfort with social networking among teachers suggest a need for professional development—to expose teachers to this technology and to provide models of exemplary instructional applications.
- Most of the principals in the discussion group reported some use of education-related social networking sites, and about half said that they use social networking to share ideas, questions, and/or solutions with other education professionals.
    - Most thought that social networking is valuable to educators as a means of sharing professional knowledge.
    - Several felt that social networking and online collaboration tools would change teachers' experience as educators by stimulating greater professional communication and collaboration.

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- Most of the principals in the discussion group thought that social networking and online collaboration tools would make a substantive change in students' educational experience. Specific types of changes they mentioned included:
    - Development of a more social/collaborative view of learning
    - Improved motivation, engagement, and/or active involvement
    - Creating a connection to real-life learning

  Several principals thought use of social networking and online collaboration tools would help make school more relevant to students—i.e., would "reach students where they're at."
- Despite what they viewed as the promise of social networking, most of the principals reported that students are not allowed access to social networks at school (although principals acknowledge that students can bypass these restrictions with their mobile phones).
- The principals in the discussion group mentioned a variety of barriers to the integration of social networking with instruction, including legal concerns, concerns about inappropriate use and the need for proper monitoring, and lack of time (e.g., to set up the system and for professional development and practice).
- None of the responding principals in the discussion group had school/district policies in place on social networking that were deemed adequate. They were either specifically characterized as inadequate or in need of revision, non-existent, or in the process of revision. This finding suggests the need for conversations and collaboration on establishing policies that can facilitate appropriate use of social networking in schools for educational purposes.

Phase I Quantitative Research—Summary of Online Survey Results

In the fall of 2009, an online survey was conducted to benchmark attitudes, perceptions, and utilization of social networking websites and content-sharing tools by teachers, principals, and school librarians. *A Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Other Content-Sharing Tools* was co-sponsored by edWeb.net, MMS Education, and MCH, Inc. and published in November 2009.

Key findings from this quantitative research are summarized below and the results from the principals are included in the Appendix of this report. A complete copy of the report can be downloaded at http://tinyurl.com/SurveyK12 or at www.mmseducation.com.

Participation in Social Networking

The survey showed that overall, 61% of the educators who responded had joined one or more social networks. However, the results varied for the three groups surveyed—principals, teachers, and school librarians. Principals were the least likely (54%) to have joined a social network, teachers fell in the middle (62%), and librarians were the most likely (70%) to have joined a social networking website.

Not surprisingly, the younger the participant the more likely they were to use social networks: 78% of those between the ages of 18 and 34 had joined a social network compared to 65% of those aged 35 to 54, and 47% over 55 years old. As the younger educators mature and move into leadership roles in schools, it is highly likely that they will continue to use and expand the role of social networking.

Perceptions of the Value of Social Networking

When educators were asked about the value they saw in social networking in education, a majority of all three groups—principals, teachers, librarians—noted a high value.

Librarians ranked highest in seeing the value across a wide range of applications including peer networking, creating professional learning communities, and improving school-wide communications. However, a majority of principals perceived social networking to be "very valuable" for:

- Creating professional learning communities
- Improving school-wide communications with staff, students, and parents
- Sharing information and resources with an extended community of educators

Use of Other Web 2.0 Technologies for Professional Purposes

Principals were more likely than teachers to use a variety of Web 2.0 technologies for professional purposes. Particularly noteworthy were differences in their use of:

- Webinars (56% of principals v. 15% of teachers)
- YouTube (31% of principals v. 17% of teachers)
- Podcasts (28% of principals v. 13% of teachers)

Principal and Teacher Open Response Comments

Approximately one-fourth of the principals contributed open response comments that provided insights into the underlying attitudes and issues behind the quantitative data. Some of the common themes expressed in the comments included the following:

- Many principals see social networking and use of other Web 2.0 technology as the "wave" of the future and recognize the importance of incorporating these tools into classroom instruction, yet many principals feel behind in their use of technology.
- The potential for using Web 2.0 technology for educator professional development and networking is powerful.
- Principals are concerned about educators mixing personal and professional communications.
- Confidentiality, privacy, and professionalism are all major concerns particularly when principals refer to the most popular networks such as Facebook and MySpace, where there is a high risk of sharing inappropriate social content or inappropriate "friending" of students.
- Access to social networking sites is often blocked by the district. Policies vary widely for the types of sites that are blocked, and whether they are blocked for students, teachers, and administrators.
- Many expressed concerns about the amount of time it takes for educators and administrators to implement, monitor, and use social networking effectively, and believe this is one of the obstacles they need to overcome.

Open response comments provided by teachers mirrored many of the themes expressed by principals. Over 20% of the teachers provided comments.

- Teachers see how central social networking and other Web 2.0 technologies are in students' lives, and they see the need to adopt these technologies to keep students engaged and motivated—yet teachers have very little time to explore and learn these technologies.
- Teachers share many of the same concerns as principals about privacy and professionalism.
- Teachers often complain about access to websites being blocked.
- Teachers are looking to principals for leadership, professional development, and permission to use these tools.

The survey results identified the significant role that principals can and need to play within the school community in order for these new technologies to gain widespread adoption.

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Phase II Qualitative Research—An In-Depth Discussion with Principals Who Use Social Networking

After completing the quantitative research in Phase I, the sponsors of this research decided to engage in an in-depth discussion with principals who have used social networking in their professional lives, and to explore the use of social networking in their districts and schools.

The goal of this follow-up research was to find experiences, practices, and models that would provide lessons for other principals on how social networking can be used effectively for professional development, to advance educational initiatives, and to create positive change in school culture.

This second phase of the research was conducted by Interactive Educational Systems Design, Inc. (IESD) between Monday, February 22, 2010, and Monday, March 1, 2010, using IESD's EDRoom online research facility.

The results of this online discussion are published for the first time in this report.

Twelve principals took part in the discussion, including six who were recruited through edWeb and six who were recruited by MMS Education from the respondents who participated in Phase I of the research. Participants were screened to have used social networking for professional purposes and to be actively engaged in at least one social networking site. There was representation from elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

Participants were asked to respond to questions on the following topics:

- Personal experience with social networking and the use of social networking in education
- Interest and comfort level of educators and students in using social networking for educational purposes
- Uses of social networking in their local schools and/or districts
- School/district policies related to social networking
- Principals' views of their role in supporting the adoption of social networking and other collaborative technologies by their teachers and staff
- Looking into the future, how principals see social networking and online collaboration tools changing the education experience for teachers, students, and the entire school community

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Common Themes in Principals' Responses Across Questions

Reported below are some common themes that were identified across principals' responses to the questions that were asked.

- **Value of social networking as a medium for sharing professional knowledge.** Most of the principals indicated that social networking was valuable as a medium for sharing professional knowledge among educators.
- **Issues related to teacher-student social contact.** Most of the principals felt that teacher-student social contact via social networking (e.g., Facebook "friending") could create potential problems and/or should be avoided.
- **Advantages to student use of social networking.** About half of the principals described potential educational value that could be derived from student use of social networking.
- **Need for educational focus.** About half of the principals voiced a concern that use of social networking in schools by both educators and students should be focused on educational purposes.
- **Legal concerns.** About half of the principals mentioned legal concerns as one of the factors to be considered in implementing social networking in schools (e.g., lawsuits regarding inappropriate student posting, laws obligating schools to address cyber bullying outside of schools, free speech issues, whether or not districts have the legal right to enforce policies in the absence of parent agreement).
- **Lack of time.** About half of the principals mentioned lack of time—for setting up the system, for monitoring activity on a regular basis, and for professional development and practice, etc.—as one of the barriers to implementation of social networking in schools.

Following is a summary of the principals' responses to the eight questions. Beyond the summary, their verbatim responses provide a window into the world of these 12 principals as they grapple with the adoption of new technology. For a transcript of the verbatim responses, see the appendix.

Personal Experience with Social Networking

Topic 1/Question 1:
Please give us a quick overview of your experience with social networking.

- ***What social networking sites have you joined and why?***
- ***Which sites do you find most worthwhile and why?***
- ***How actively do you participate? For example, do you check in daily, weekly, or a few times a month? Do you tend mostly to read other people's posts, or do you contribute often?***

Most of the principals reported use of general purpose social networking sites, and most mentioned some use of education-related social networking sites.

- Specific general purpose sites included Facebook (mentioned by most of the participants), Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn.
- Education-related social networking sites included sites specifically for principals; sites sponsored by a national education-related organization (e.g., ASCD, What Works, National School Leadership Network); sites related to professional development external to the district (e.g., Technology Academy, Certification for National Principal Center Mentoring); sites administered and/or sponsored by the district; and sites maintained or used by local teachers.
- Principals made a distinction between their use of the most popular site, Facebook, and other professionally-oriented sites. Facebook was most often used to connect with friends and family.

Most of these principals reported checking their social networking sites at least once a week, but they indicated that they contribute less often.

Their reasons for participating in more professional social networking sites included:

- Sharing ideas, questions, and/or solutions; tapping into the wisdom of other professionals
- Building informal and/or social connections among members of the school community

Personal Uses of Social Networking in Education

Topic 2/Question 1:
How are you using social networking in education? Please address any of the following ways you may be using social networking.

a. ***To communicate and collaborate with colleagues inside your district***
b. ***To communicate and collaborate with colleagues outside your district***
c. ***To improve communication within your school or district***

d. To provide professional development for your teachers

e. To engage with students

f. To connect with parents and/or the local community

Topic 2/Question 2:
Are there any other ways you are using social networking in education?

Topic 2/Question 3:
How does using social networking compare to other ways you communicate?

Topic 2/Question 4:
What are the advantages/disadvantages of using social networking?

Principals cited a wide variety of uses of social networking in education:

- Most of the principals were using social networking to communicate and collaborate with colleagues outside the district.
- About half of the principals were using it to communicate and collaborate with colleagues inside their districts.
- About half were using it for professional development for teachers.
- Several principals were also using it to engage with students, parents, and/or the local community.

Advantages of social networking in education that were identified by a noteworthy number of principals included the following:

- As a tool for sharing information, ideas, and experiences with other educators (about half of the participants)
- Access to a wealth of information, including breadth of other educators' experiences (several participants)
- Capability to see an entire conversation in one place (several participants)
- As a tool for communicating school, class, and/or district information (two participants)
- As a tool for centralized communication in the school community (two participants)

Disadvantages of social networking in education that were identified by more than one of the principals included the following:

- Lack of facial and vocal cues
- Too much content to sift through; not enough time

Interest and Comfort Level of Educators and Students with Social Networking in Education

Topic 2/Question 2:
How would you describe the overall interest and comfort level of other members of the education community in adopting social networking in education:

- ***Your colleagues***
- ***Your teachers***
- ***Your school library media specialist(s)***
- ***Your students***

For the groups above that are less interested or less comfortable adopting social networking in education, please explain why you think that is.

Responses for each of the four groups prompted in the question are summarized as follows:

- **Colleagues.** Most of the principals described some degree of use, interest, and/or comfort level among their colleagues with respect to adopting social networking in education. Several principals indicated a substantial variation among their colleagues in degree of use, interest, and/or comfort level.
- **Teachers.** About half of the principals indicated that some of their teachers are integrating social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies with instruction or would be comfortable doing so. Several respondents indicated that *many* of their teachers are integrating social networking and other Web 2.0 technologies with instruction or would be comfortable doing so. Several principals indicated a substantial variation among their teachers in degree of use, interest, and/or comfort level from very high to very low levels.
- **Library media specialists.** About half of the principals described a relatively high level of interest or comfort with social networking among their library media specialists, but several principals indicated a relatively low degree of interest.
- **Students.** All of the principals indicated a substantial degree of interest or comfort level in social networking on the part of at least some of their students. About half of the principals gave a general characterization of their students as very engaged and/or interested in social networking. About half of the respondents mentioned a high level of involvement with social networking on the part of a substantial group of students, but not all of them. Several principals mentioned the importance of transitioning students from purely social uses of social networking to educational uses.

Principals mentioned a variety of factors that influence the interest level and comfort in using social networking in education.

Factors leading to higher interest/comfort levels included:

- The age of the educator. About half of the respondents indicated that the younger the educator, the more likely he or she was to be comfortable with social networking.
- Having children who used social networking.

Factors leading to lower interest/comfort levels included:

- Lack of exposure
- Lack of time
- Failure to see value in it
- Technical problems (e.g., lack of high-speed connection, system crashes)

Uses of Social Networking in Local Schools/Districts

Topic 3/Question 1:
Are you using social networking in your school or district?

If so:

- ***What systems are you using?***
- ***How well are they working?***
- ***How has it impacted communications?***
- ***How has it impacted the school culture?***

If you are not using social networking in your school or district, why not?

Based on the responses below, it seems there was confusion among the participating principals about the distinctions among social networking sites, other Web 2.0 websites, learning management systems, and computer networks. Most of the platforms mentioned are not social networking sites.

- **Extent of use.** About half reported some use of social networking in their school or district. Specific types of networks that were mentioned by a noteworthy number of principals included the following:
    - School and/or district-sponsored sites used by educators, students, and/or other members of the school community
    - Networks for general communication among educators, students, and/or other members of the school community
    - Networks used by students (including Google Docs: e.g., to turn in assignments, collaborate)

- **Platforms.** The following platforms were mentioned by a noteworthy number of principals as one they had used or were using:
    - Ning
    - Google Docs
    - Wiki
    - Moodle
- **Concerns/Barriers.** Concerns and/or barriers related to school use of social networking that were mentioned by a noteworthy number of principals included the following:
    - Social networking as opening the door to negativity and/or becoming an arena for complaints. (Several of these principals mentioned this as a concern specifically with respect to parents.)
    - Misuse of social networking, the need for proper monitoring, concerns with inappropriate sharing of private information, and/or security concerns
    - Lack of useful examples and/or knowledge about the potential value of social networking
    - Need to maintain an educational focus for online discussions
- **True impact still to be seen.** Several principals indicated that they felt they still had not seen full use of social networking and its true impact in their schools.
- **School Facebook page.** Two principals said they were considering establishing a school Facebook page.

Educational Use of Social Networking with Students

Topic 3/Question 2:
Social networking is an integral part of many students' lives, but most students engage entirely outside of school. What do you think are the implications of this?

If you are using social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies with students in your school, how has it impacted their engagement levels and attitudes regarding:

- ***Specific school subjects?***
- ***School in general?***

If you are not using social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies with students in your school, why not?

Extent of use.

- Most of the principals reported some use of Web 2.0 technologies with students in their school or district, but social networking per se is mostly blocked for students.
- Several reported that there was no use of social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies with students in their school or district. All of these were also principals who had reported that there was no use of social networking in their school or district in response to the previous question.

Barriers to use. Each of the following barriers to educational use of social networking and other Web 2.0 technologies with students was reported by a noteworthy number of principals:

- Concerns regarding appropriate use and/or community standards
- Lack of money
- Lack of time (for training, practice, etc.)
- Lack of professional development and/or knowledge and exposure to these technologies
- Little perception of benefits from or perceived need for these technologies
- Lack of personnel to manage the system and/or IT support staff
- Concerns regarding loss of control (on the part of teachers or the district)

Instructional implications. A noteworthy number of principals reported the following instructional implications of widespread use of social networking and Web 2.0 technologies:

- Students must be taught about appropriate boundaries to online social interaction and/or Internet safety.
- Students must be taught critical reasoning and/or how to process data.

School/District Policies Related to Social Networking

Topic 3/Question 3:
What are your school/district policies on using social networking websites:

- ***For teachers and staff?***
- ***For students?***

Do you think the policies in place are good ones?

Top-level status.

- About half of the principals indicated that they felt their current policies were inadequate and/or needed revision.
- Several principals indicated that they had no written policy dealing specifically with social networking.
- Two principals indicated that their policies were in process of revision or were a "work in progress."

Elements of existing policies.

- Most of the principals indicated that students did not have access to social networks at school. Of these:
    - Several principals said these sites were completely blocked or mostly blocked on the school network.
    - Two principals said the firewall blocked access for everyone except principals and/or administrators.
- Two principals mentioned a policy related to cyber bullying.

Elements that should be addressed in policies. Each of the following elements was mentioned by a noteworthy number of principals.

- Discouraging or preventing social contact between educators and students (e.g., "friending" students)
- Freedom of speech issues (including limits in areas such as defaming others)
- Inappropriate student posting
- Sexting
- Cyber bullying (with two principals expressing the opinion that in cases such as cyber bullying, it might be better to take a teaching approach to reinforce correct behavior, as opposed to a violation and punishment mindset)

Student access. Several principals specifically indicated that they felt students should have some access to social networks in school.

Legal issues. Several principals mentioned a concern about legal issues such as lawsuits as one of the factors that should be considered in developing district policies.

Principal's Role Related to Social Networking

Topic 4/Question 1:
As the head of your school, how do you see your role in helping your teachers and staff become more knowledgeable about using social networking and other online collaboration technologies?

The following roles were mentioned by a noteworthy number of principals:

- Promoting, supporting, and/or arranging for education opportunities related to social networking, including training, PD, and discussions (mentioned by most of the responding principals)
- Facilitating and supporting implementation of social networking
- Demonstrating and/or modeling uses of social networking
- Providing for resources to support social networking (e.g., managing purchases and budget, getting technology resources to staff)
- Considering, teaching, and/or enforcing parameters, limits, and proper etiquette

Future Impact of Social Networking on Education

Topic 4/Question 2:
Looking ahead, how do you see social networking and online collaboration tools changing the education experience:

- ***For teachers?***
- ***For students?***
- ***For your entire school community?***

Changes to students' educational experience. Most of the principals indicated that they thought social networking and online collaboration tools would make a substantive change in students' educational experience. Specific types of change that were mentioned by a noteworthy number of respondents included the following:

- Promote movement toward a more social/collaborative view of learning
- Improve student motivation, engagement, and/or active involvement
- Connect to real-life learning

Enhanced teacher communication and collaboration. Several principals indicated that they thought social networking and online collaboration tools would change teachers' experience as educators by stimulating greater professional communication and collaboration.

Importance of incorporating technologies. Several principals stressed the importance of incorporating social networking and other new technologies, including the necessity of "reaching students where they're at" and of adjusting instruction in order to avoid becoming less relevant to students going forward.

Other noteworthy themes/changes. Other changes as a result of increased use of social networking and online collaboration tools that were mentioned by a noteworthy number of respondents included the following:

- Increased communication with the community
- Increased access (e.g., homework, home-bound students, teacher availability outside school hours, ability of teachers to direct instruction even when not able to be present in the classroom)
- Replacement of printed textbooks
- Reduction in face-to-face human contact (more efficient, but also a negative in some ways)

Conclusions and Recommendations

This two-phase, quantitative and qualitative research project has provided an opportunity to look closely at the practices, policies, and realities of principals' use and thinking about social networking, particularly in regard to education.

Key Findings

- Overall, a majority of educators (including principals) see a high value for social networking in education despite concerns about confidentiality and privacy, legal liability, professionalism, and the time required to implement social networking effectively.
- Those educators who have joined a social network are more likely to be positive about the use of social networks in education.
- A majority of principals see high value in social networking in supporting professional learning communities, improving school-wide communications, and sharing information and resources with other educators. However, many principals feel behind in their use of technology.
- There is greater interest among educators in joining education-focused social networks than general purpose social networks such as Facebook and MySpace. (Many educators have already joined Facebook, but many of these are *not* active participants.)
- Many principals and teachers recognize the importance of incorporating social networking and other Web 2.0 technology into classroom instruction, viewing them as the "wave" of the future and a means of keeping students engaged and motivated.
- Younger educators are more likely to have joined a social network and may be more comfortable with this technology. (It remains unclear whether or how this might translate into younger educators integrating social networking into instruction.)
- Many teachers are looking to their principals for leadership, professional development, and permission to use social networking technology for educational purposes.
- Based on the comments expressed in the Phase II online discussion, it is likely that many principals who are active participants in social networking for education-related purposes:
    - Think that integration of social networking and other online collaboration tools with ongoing instruction would make a substantial positive change in students' educational experience, including promoting a more social/collaborative view of learning, improving student motivation/engagement/active involvement, and connecting students to real-life learning

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- Work in districts where:
  - Students do *not* have access to social networks at school
  - Examples of effective integration of social networking with instruction do *not* exist or are *unknown* to the principal
  - At least some of the teachers would be comfortable integrating social networking with instruction or are already doing so
  - A substantial group of students have a high level of involvement with or interest in social networking
  - Current policies related to social networking are inadequate, in need of revision, nonexistent

Recommendations

Principals and teachers need more experience with education-focused social networking technologies.

Our primary recommendation based on the research findings is that both principals and teachers need greater awareness and understanding of the available social networking/collaborative options, greater experience using those tools, and professional development on how to apply them in a wide variety of educational contexts:

- For collaborating with a wider network of colleagues
- For building professional learning communities in their schools
- For incorporating collaborative technologies into the curriculum

The dominance of Facebook in our culture has been both a blessing and a curse for education. When using the term "social networking," Facebook is the first site that comes to many educators' minds. The recent, national publicity about Facebook and how the company "pushes the envelope" on sharing personal information with "friends" has only heightened existing concerns about social networking and privacy issues. In some cases, fears about social networking have led to the blocking of many of these sites in schools.

Fortunately, there are a growing number of social networks designed especially for educators. Some of those sites include the ASCD Community, Classroom 2.0, edWeb.net, Google for Educators, Learn Central, Microsoft Teacher's Network, Ning in Education, TeachAde, We Are Teachers, and We the Teachers, among others. In addition, many associations and states are building their own networks to help educators connect. We recommend that principals, in particular, become more aware of these sites and begin to use them for their own professional networking and to build professional learning communities in their

schools. Professional organizations for principals and district staff development departments should consider taking the lead in offering professional development to help build awareness of appropriate, education-focused networking websites.

After principals have increased their own awareness about education-focused networking websites, they should lead efforts in their schools to create appropriate professional development for teachers.

Educators need models for promising practices using social/collaborative networking in education.

There is a significant need to develop and disseminate promising practices demonstrating how teachers can effectively and efficiently integrate social/collaborative networking into the curriculum. Teachers need a variety of models, including descriptions of how others have done this, corresponding lesson plans, and the presentation of results of such efforts.

Another area where promising practices are needed is in the application of social/collaborative technologies to educator professional development. These technologies are particularly well-suited to support professional learning communities, a growing phenomenon that contributes to school success. Social/collaborative technologies can support professional learning communities both *within* schools and districts and *across* district boundaries.

Principals can play a critical leadership role in identifying, developing, and disseminating promising practices in the use of social/collaborative technologies to enhance both classroom instruction and teacher professional development—and teachers are looking to principals for this leadership.

There is also an opportunity for a variety of organizations—including education professional associations, teacher's unions, education-focused nonprofit organizations, and education companies—to develop solutions, provide professional development, and document successful models for educators. In particular, the National Association for Elementary School Principals and the National Association for Secondary School Principals have an opportunity to play a significant role.

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Schools need more effective policies on the use of social/ collaborative technologies.

Our research identified a critical need for better policies on the use of websites that have social/collaborative features. Some teachers and librarians simply want such sites to be unblocked. However, many principals who are already using this technology seek to strike the right balance between access and opportunity on the one hand, and safe, secure, and appropriate education-focused use on the other hand.

The research did not reveal the existence of any constructive policies and practices. At best, policies were described as a "work in progress," and many were described as too restrictive. We recommend that principals collaborate with their district administration to establish policies and procedures that address the following:

- Alignment of social/collaborative networking use to curriculum
- Assessment of skills and abilities related to social/collaborative networking use
- Safety and security in connection to social/collaborative technology use
- Appropriate staff and student uses of social/collaborative technologies, including consequences for misuse
- Teacher professional development in appropriate uses of social/ collaborative technologies

Ideally, the process for developing district- and school-wide policies and procedures should involve students and teachers, to help ensure that policies and procedures take advantage of expertise at the local school level, are feasible, and achieve buy-in at the classroom level.

Acknowledgement

We thank the many principals, teachers, and librarians who took the time to participate in our study. Their concerns for the learning experience and the futures of their students were clearly of primary importance. We understand that those educators who expressed skepticism about the advantages of social networking often did so because they value the face-to-face interaction with students, and don't want to lose that.

We hope this report provides insights, ideas, and recommendations that will drive adoption of effective policies, procedures, and promising practice models for social/collaborative technologies in all areas of education—especially for school principals who are in a unique position to effect change in the school culture.

About the Sponsors

edWeb.net is a professional social network for the education community that makes it easy to connect with peers, share information and best practices, spread innovative ideas, and create professional learning communities. The user-friendly interface includes a wide range of Web 2.0 tools that support online collaboration and professional development. edWeb members are developing new models and best practices for integrating social networking into education. edWeb.net is free for all individuals and educational institutions. Sponsorship opportunities are available for other organizations involved in education. edWeb.net was founded in 2008 by Lisa Schmucki, CEO, and is located in Princeton, NJ. For more information, call 800-575-6015 ext 100 or email info@edweb.net.

Interactive Educational Systems Design (IESD), Inc. provides a variety of services related to research on education technology issues and the evaluation and development of educational software, multimedia products, and websites. IESD was founded in 1984 by Ellen Bialo and Dr. Jay Sivin-Kachala, the firm's President and Vice President. IESD's clients include education market publishers, technology hardware manufacturers, government agencies, nonprofit institutions, and school districts. IESD designs and implements qualitative and quantitative research—including focus group research (in person and online), structured interviews, survey research, user testing, demographic and financial data analysis, literature reviews, and text document summary and analysis. IESD also custom-designs and implements evaluation research on educational programs, products, and services. For more information, call 212.769.1715 or email iesdinc@aol.com.

MCH Strategic Data is a leading source of compiled data on education, health, and government institutions in the United States. MCH is a privately owned company that has been in the education market for over 80 years. MCH is a strategic partner of edWeb.net and is helping to spread the word about the edWeb to the preK-12 education community. For more information, contact John Hood, president, at 800-776-6373 or by email at johnh@mchdata.com. Visit the MCH Strategic Data website at www.mchdata.com.

MMS Education is a national market research, consulting, and marketing company specializing exclusively in the education market. MMS is helping its clients understand how social networking and social media provides enhanced opportunities for educators to collaborate peer to peer, and provides a way for organizations to connect more directly with the educators who use their products and services in classrooms every day. Please contact us to discuss how we can help you with:

- Strategic Planning
- Market Research
- Marketing/Communications/Social Media
- Inside Sales and Sales Support
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Appendix

Phase I Quantitative Research—Detailed Results of the Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Other Content-Sharing Tools

Co-sponsored by:

- edWeb.net
- MCH, Inc.
- MMS Education

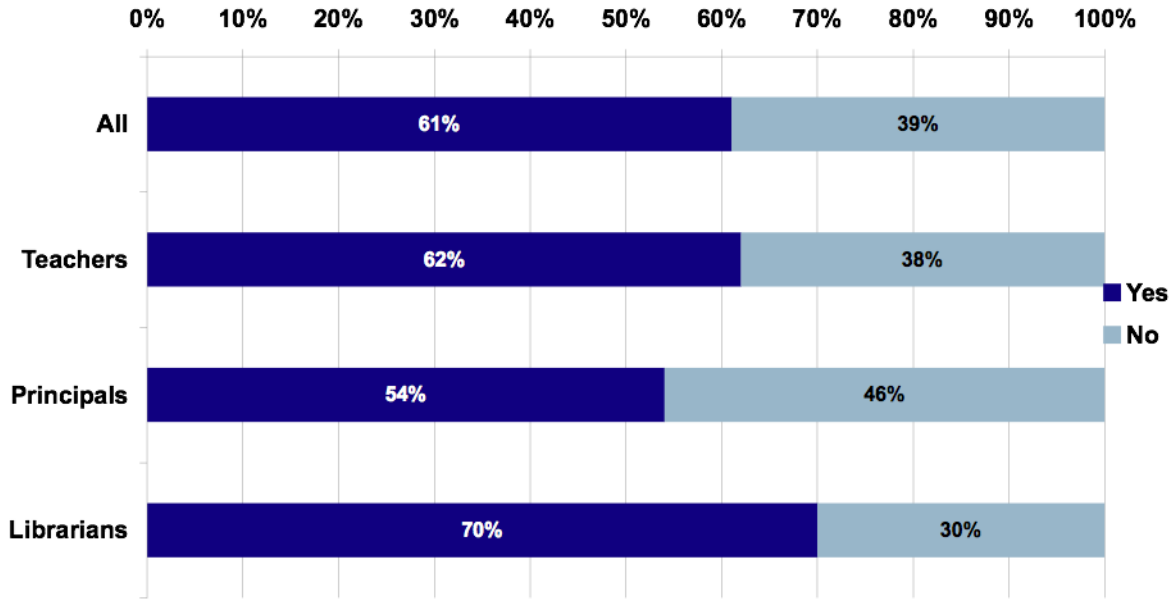
In this section, we present an in-depth look at how principals responded to our *Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Other Content-Sharing Tools,* published in November 2009. Our compiled results show how principals responded to questions relative to teachers and librarians, to provide benchmarks on the relative attitudes of the three groups about adoption of social networking within the school community. We have also provided all of the comments we received from principals on these questions. This opens a window into the personal perspectives of a wide range of principals on this topic.

The online survey was conducted blind and deployed by MMS Education to 82,900 randomly selected educators with emails provided by MCH, Inc. The number of emails deployed by job function was: 46,600 teachers, 25,600 principals, and 10,700 library/media specialists. We received a 1.55% response rate or 1,284 total responses: 601 teachers (1.29% response), 381 principals (1.49% response), and 262 librarians (2.45 % response). The margin of error at the 95% confidence level was +/- 2.71%. The incentive for participation was a drawing for a netbook computer.

A complete copy of the report can be downloaded at http://tinyurl.com/SurveyK12 or a www.mmseducation.com

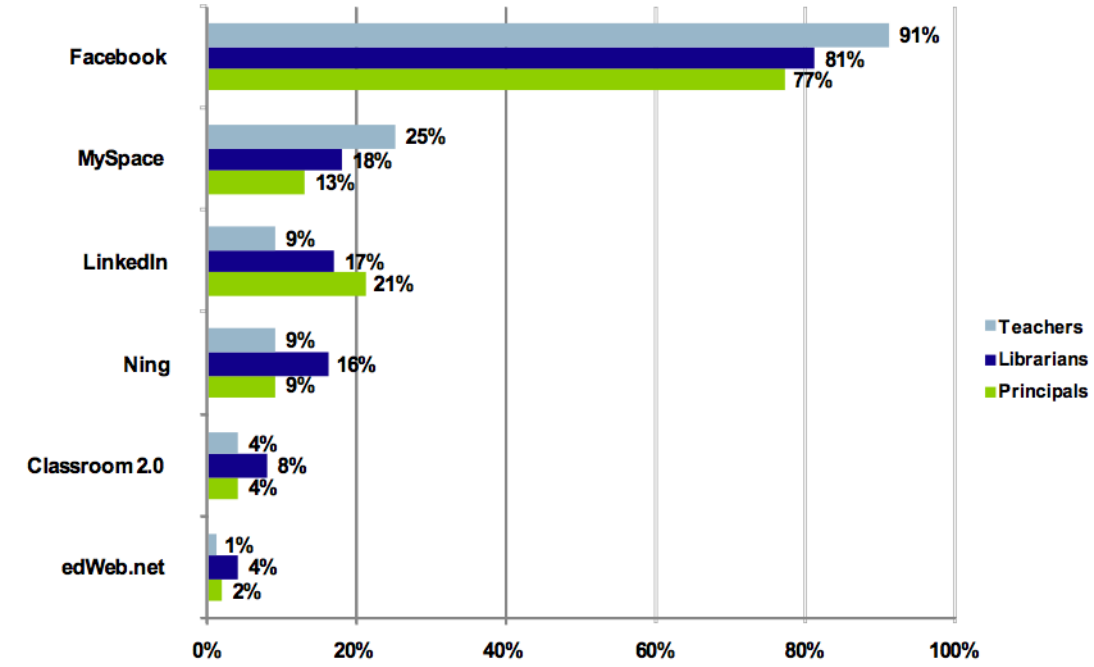
Principals were less likely than teachers or librarians to have joined a social network

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.)?



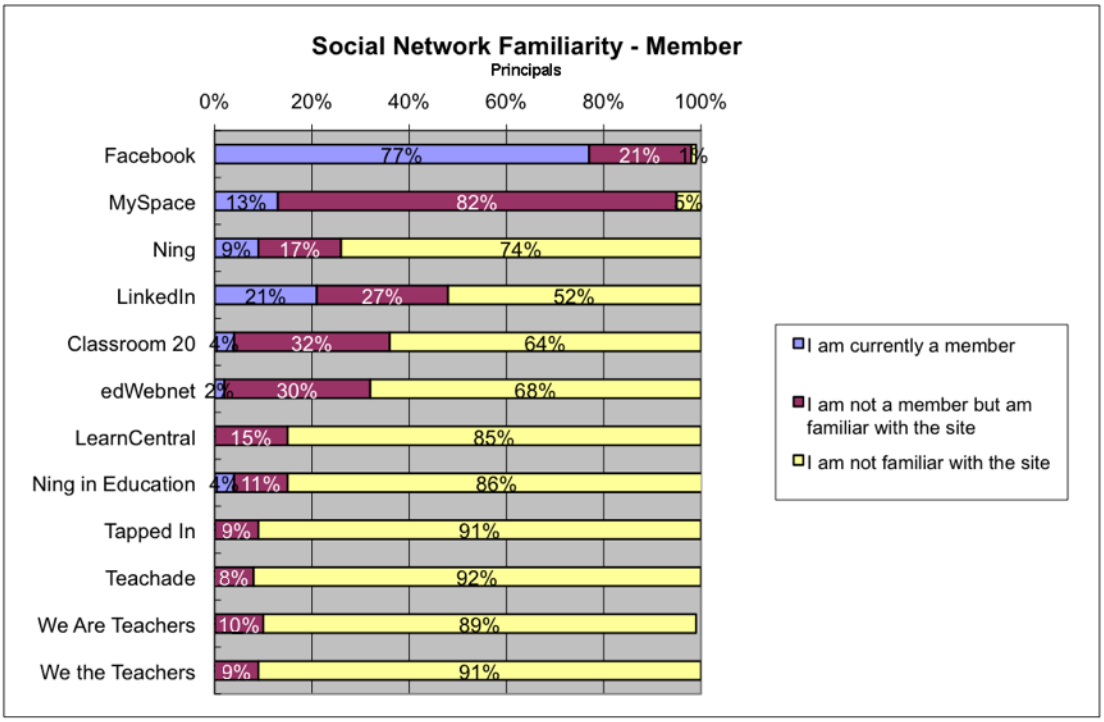
Social networking sites have different appeal for principals, teachers and librarians

Analysis of membership by job function: teacher, librarian, principal.

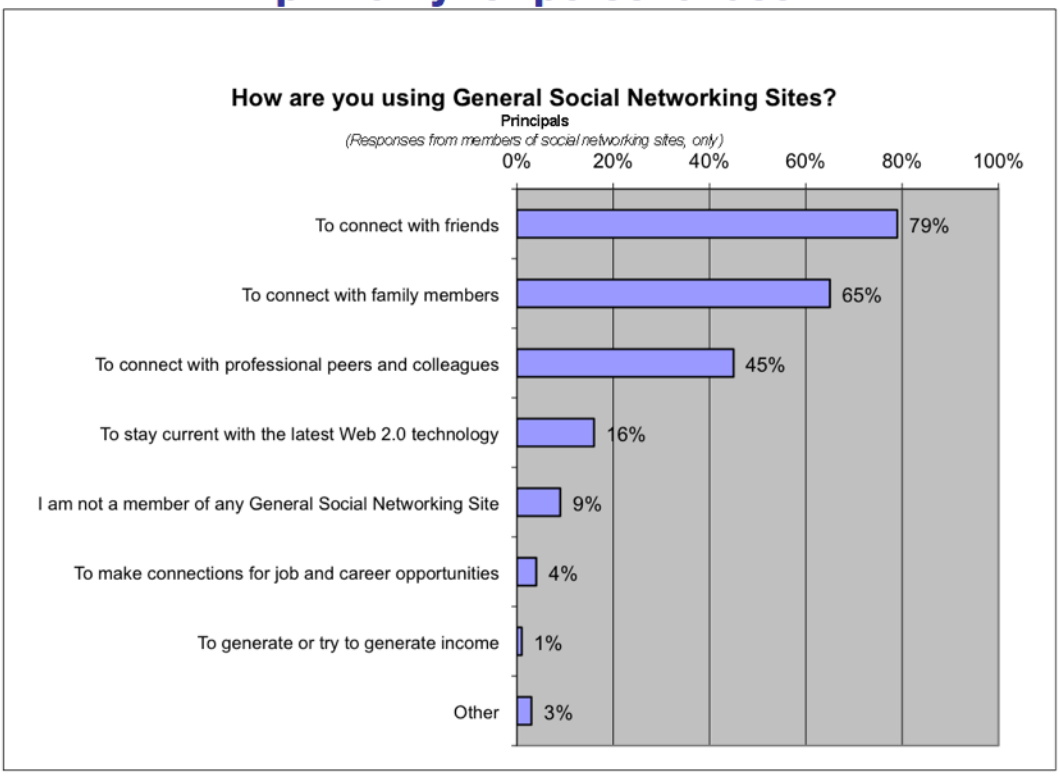


An overview of principal awareness of social networking websites

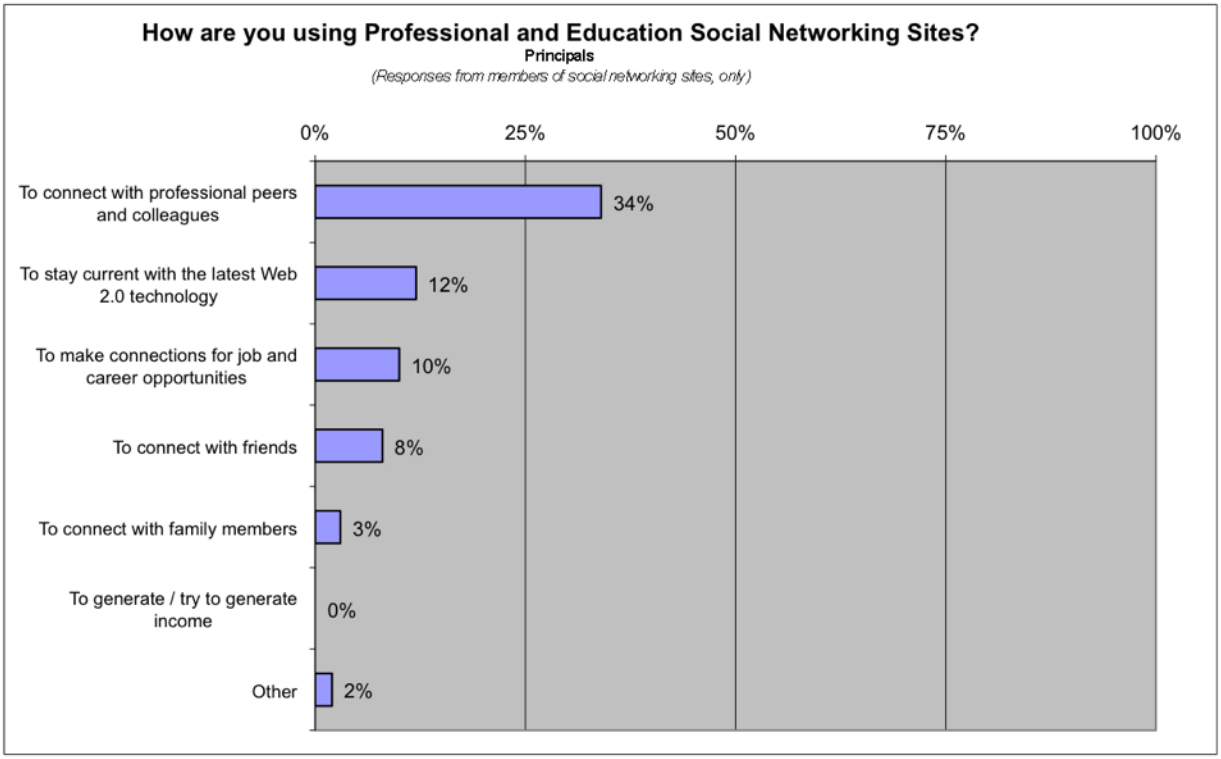
Results for principals who have joined one or more social networks.



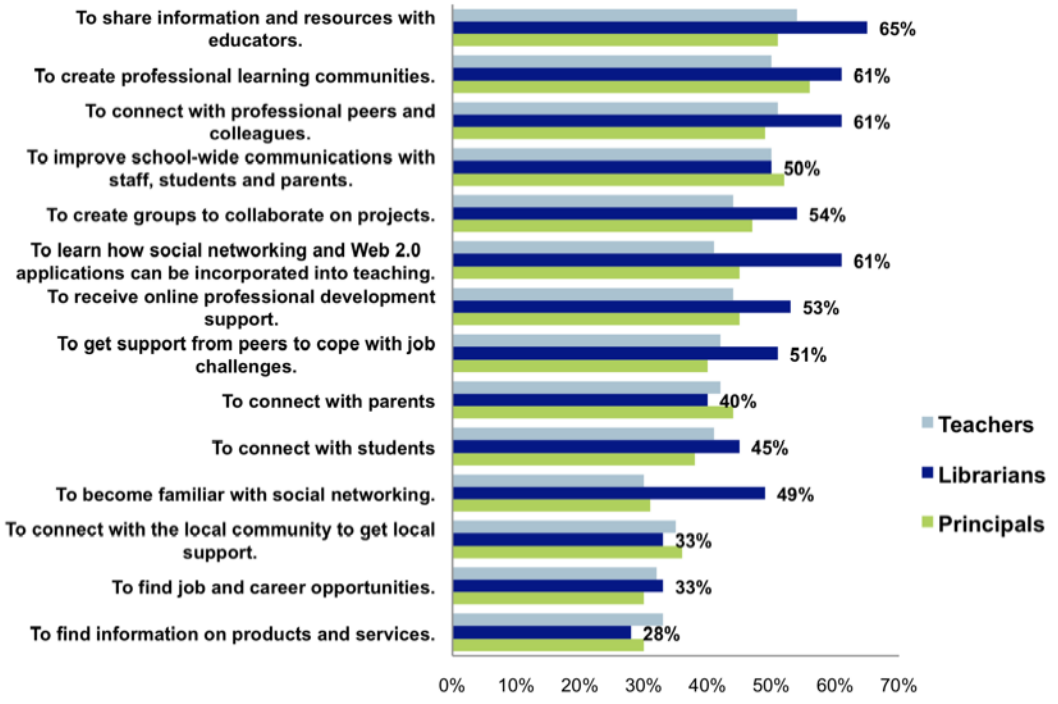
Principals use general social networks primarily for personal use



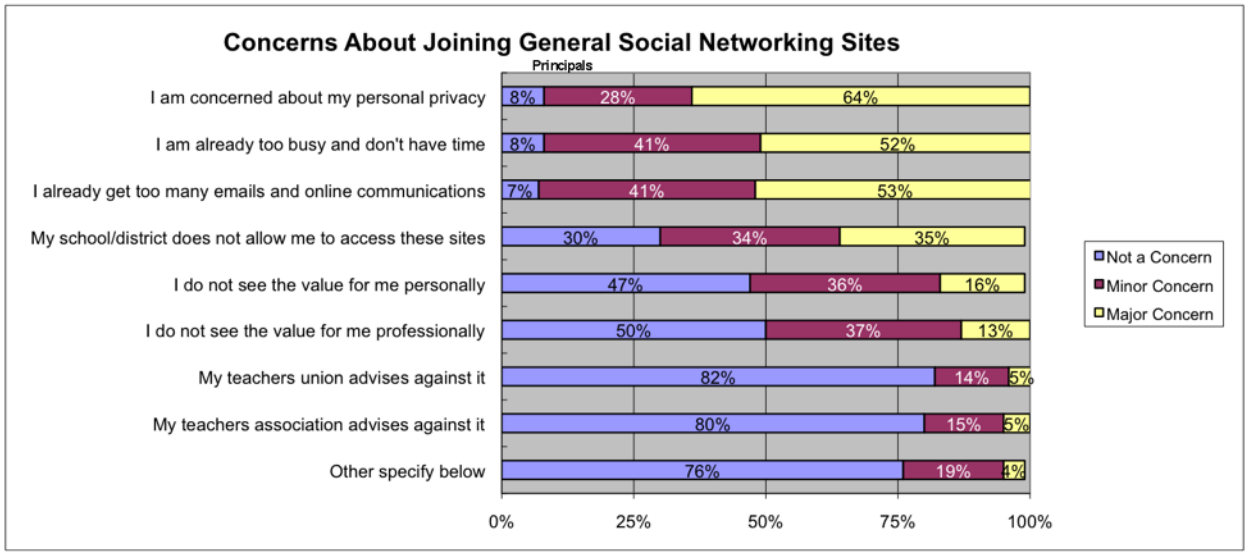
Principals prefer professional/educational social networks for professional use



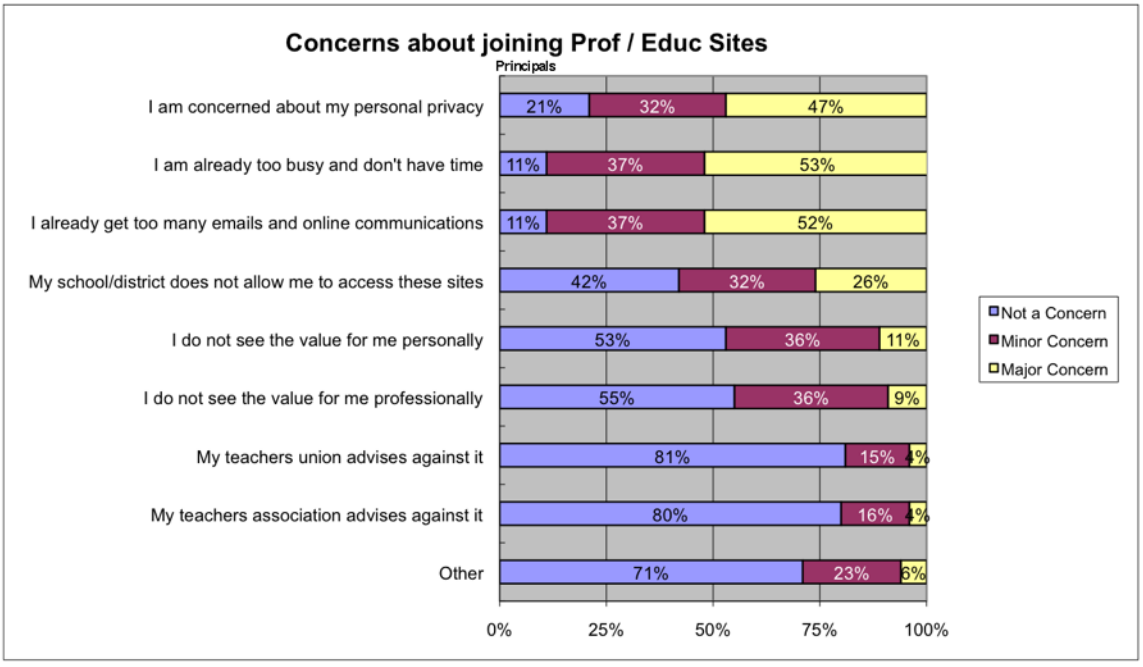
Librarians see the highest value in social networking, followed by principals, then teachers



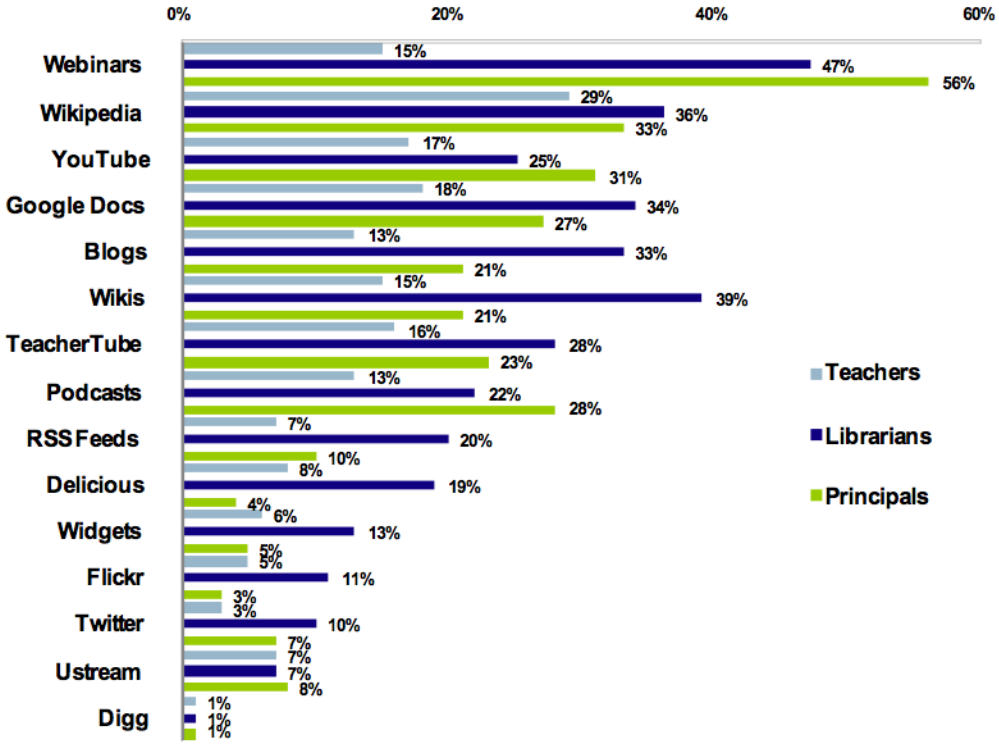
Principals have many concerns about joining general (non-professional) social networks



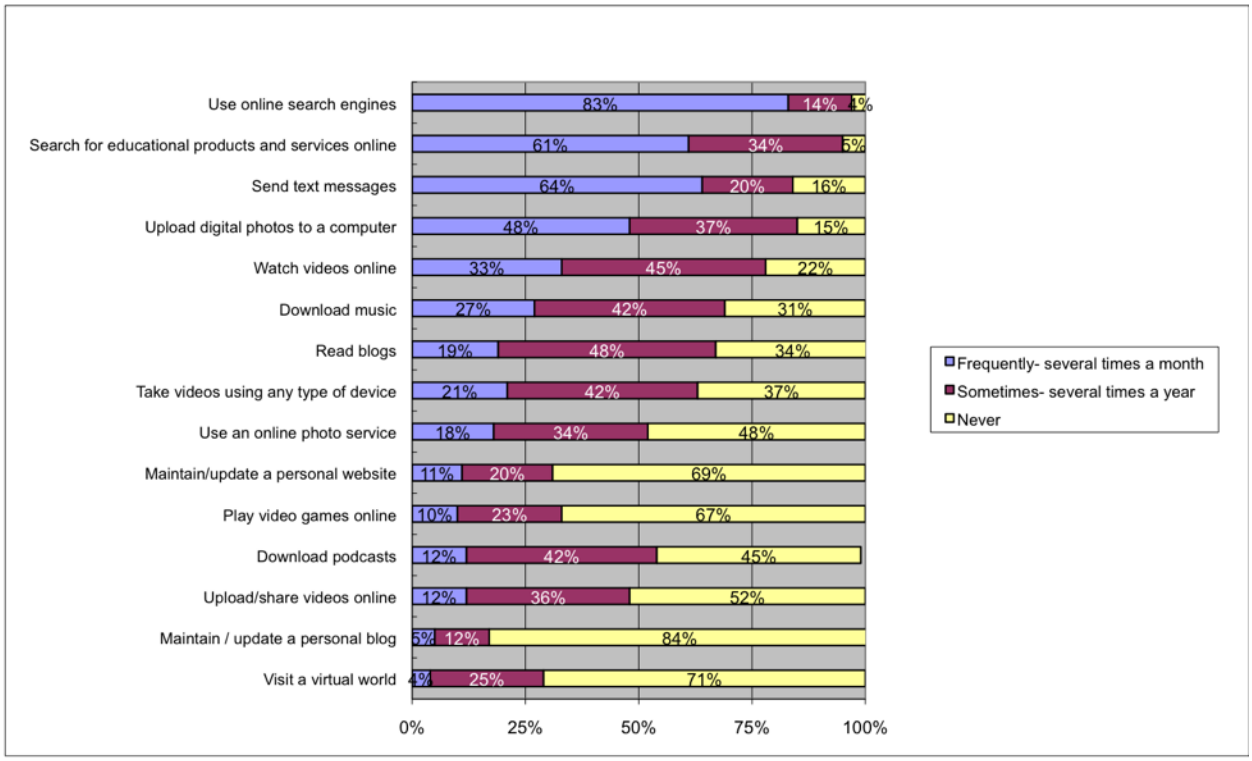
Principals' concerns about privacy are lower for professional/educational sites



Principals are more active users of other collaborative technologies



An overview of principals' participation in other online activities



Phase II
Qualitative Research—
Transcript of an In-Depth Discussion with Principals Who Use Social Networking

The following is a verbatim transcript of principals' responses to the eight questions that were asked as part of the research conducted by Interactive Educational Systems Design, Inc. (IESD) between Monday, February 22, 2010, and Monday, March 1, 2010, using IESD's EDRoom online research facility. The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants.

Twelve principals took part in the discussion, including six who were recruited through edWeb and six who were recruited by MMS Education from the respondents who participated in Phase I of the research. Participants were screened to have used social networking for professional purposes and to be actively engaged in at least one social networking site. There was representation from elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS DESIGN · INC
33 W 87 Street NY • NY 10024 212 • 769 • 1715 631 • 691 • 2513 FAX 212 • 769 • 0909

IESD ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP

Discussion Name: Social Networking in Education
End Date: March 1, 2010

Topic 1

Read First

This first phase of the discussion focuses on your experience with social networking, and has only one question.

Please complete your response to the question by Tuesday, February 23, midnight Eastern Time.

Also, after completing your answer, return to the EDRoom before Tuesday at midnight to read the comments of other participants and to write your reactions to them.

- To read the question, click the tab with its question number above.
*- When you've answered all the questions, click the **Follow-up** tab above.*

Question 1

Please give us a quick overview of your experience with social networking.

- What social networking sites have you joined and why?
- Which sites do you find most worthwhile and why?
- How actively do you participate? For example, do you check in daily, weekly or a few times a month? Do you tend mostly to read other people's postings, or do you contribute often?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

BellaC Monday, February 22, 2010 8:20:32 AM
I belong to work-related networking sites that give me a quick way to get in touch with multiple cohorts at the same time. We are able to share ideas and find solutions in a short amount of time. I probably participate a couple times a month, although I check the sites daily.

> **Jay** Monday, February 22, 2010 4:18:34 PM
> BellaC,
> Could you provide more detail about the work-related networking sites you mentioned? For example, are these external sites or sites that are maintained by your district? Could you name some of these sites--including which ones are most valuable, and why?
>
> Also: In addition to these professionally oriented sites, are you involved in other types of social networking (e.g., for personal purposes, communicating with friends and family, etc.)? If so, please describe, including your level of participation and the value you find in these sites.

> **BellaC** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 8:31:06 AM
> Jay, I belong to the T3 site, which is grant-related involving those school districts. I monitor discussions among teachers daily, commenting about once a week. I find the site very valuable for information and love the fact I can get on when my schedule allows.
> Our district was working on a wiki, but lost our personnel and no one has picked up that job.
> I am not involved in any personal sites.

JarredN Monday, February 22, 2010 8:25:42 AM
The primary site that I use for professional purposes is the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals website. On this site, members have the ability to post questions which is capable of being viewed by members from across the state of Michigan. I view these weekly and scroll through those that may apply to me. I have posted several inquiries over the past two years and received quality feedback from them. I try to respond to others' inquiries if I can be of assistance. I check these at least weekly.

Facebook has become an asset as well in having discussions with professional colleagues although not used on a regular basis.

Jay Monday, February 22, 2010 4:24:47 PM
JarredN,
In addition to these professionally oriented sites, are you involved in other types of social networking (e.g., for personal purposes, communicating with friends and family, etc.)? If so, please describe, including your level of participation and the value you find in these sites.

JarredN Tuesday, February 23, 2010 6:47:55 AM
Jay,

FaceBook is my primary source. Besides using it for professional communication, I also use it sveral days a week for communication with family and friends. This is primarily done on weekends.

CarlY Monday, February 22, 2010 8:32:23 AM
My social network participation is varied. I belong to facebook, twitter, second life, and have a local district ning that I helped to create. The purpose and use of these is varied in type and frequency:
Facebook - used daily primarily for personal use - friends and family
Twitter - used daily for a mix of uses. Follow some friends but mostly have professional contacts that post frequently about blog or news posts related to education. This has become the collector spot for me to the education blogosphere.
Second Life - signed up, used a couple of times but have not been active user in several months.
Local Ning - We created this and used it at first but use has slowly waned.

My activity has been fairly balanced as both a consumer and contributer.

GrantZ Monday, February 22, 2010 8:35:40 AM
I have tended to be more passive than some in my use of social networking sites. While I subscribe to several and often read the comments, I hesitate to become too active in some of the jabber that I find on some of the sites. Like most people, the time spent online is time that is vying with other things and I don't feel that I want to merely get into an "opinion war" with someone. Only a few times have I found a topic so important that I felt I wanted to add my two cents. The sites I hace joined and follow are ASCD, NAESSP and What Works!

Jay Monday, February 22, 2010 4:28:23 PM
GrantZ,
A couple of follow-ups:
- Of the sites you've joined, which have been most valuable, and why?
- Can you give some examples of topics where you felt you needed to add your two cents?
- In addition to these professionally oriented sites, are you involved in other types of social networking (e.g., for personal purposes, communicating with friends and family, etc.)? If so, please describe, including your level of participation and the value you find in these sites.

GrantZ Monday, February 22, 2010 6:55:26 PM
I have participated in topics concerning education where I felt another perspective would alter the conversation. For example, I have made several comments concerning teacher observations and what to look for in classrooms. I have also made observations concerning NCLB and our state assessments (PSSAs).

I have not really participated in Myspace, Facebook, ning or other social networking sites. I know about them and I visited the sites in occasion but I have never found a real use for them.

I would participate if I found a site that I was really interested in but so far that has not been the case.

VitaT Monday, February 22, 2010 9:33:18 AM
I have participated in Facebook for about a year, and it has been a wonderful way to connect with old friends and keep track of what is going on at the colleges that I am an alumni. I also am a member of Linked in which is a site for professional levels and for that one I keep track of the questions more than anything else.

I had looked in to an educational network but last year I was going through Certification for National Principal Center Mentoring and there was a network built into that one with the cohort I was invovled in and in addition I was a member of the National School Leadership network which was more about face to face networking but we also communicated by e-mail and I didn't feel I could keep up with more.

I find each site useful for the things I signed up for, Facebook is sometimes a lot of silly things but it can be fun. Linked in has had some really good questions coming up for professionalism as well.
I check both sites at least weekly and Facebook usually every two days.

Jay Monday, February 22, 2010 4:33:02 PM
VitaT,
When you say that you "check both sites at least weekly and Facebook usually every two days," do you usually post each time you check in? If not, how often do you post?

Also: Can you go into more detail about your the Certification for National Principle Center Mentoring network and the National School Leadership network? Are you still involved with them? If so, how often do you check in and/or contribute? What's the value of these networks to you?

VitaT Monday, February 22, 2010 4:45:52 PM

Jay,
I don't always post to Linked in, it depends on the topic so for that site it is more of an average that I would post there. It depends on who I'm talking to and what my interest is in what is being discussed. On Facebook I probably post most of the time when I check it so I would say every two days I put something on it, comment on something, for example my undergraduate college just posted invitations to something so I responded to them as well as posting a comment. Because Facebook is far easier for me, I use my cell phone sometimes to either comment or post.

I spent last year working on certification for National Principal Center Mentoring from NAESP and we had a cohort group that met once a month on line as a chat and then in between if there were topics we could choose to answer or have an online discussion about them. I still maintain e-mail contact with one of the particpants and feel confident I could easily e-mail the other participants with a question or discussion about how they are handling something so I think the value was allowing me to create relationships which went beyond the formalized process.
As for the National School Leadership network I am not still invovled because our network dissolved but it was such a strong process and presence for most of the group that recently we had a question coincedently about Facebook and staff that came up in person at a Board meeting that several of us are invovled in that resulted in some e-mail discussion amongst several members. I think again the value of this is the relationships that were created because we were able to voice our opinions without fear of reprecussions and know that the people on the other end were putting some thought into the answers.
I think it's different than a social network type thing like Facebook, because then I would want my questions to be more vague so that it couldn't be directly connected back to me, but by having a cohort that I've come to know because we chat more frequently I think there is a level of trust built in, we've all shared ideas and concerns and bounced them back and forth. When I do Facebook I typically never put anything on there that I would care if anyone saw including family, friends and colleagues because it is such a spider web of connections. Anything that I want to be specific I send directly to the person and only them.

JennyQ Monday, February 22, 2010 12:20:16 PM
I am a part of socila networking sites at work, and also with colleagues from graduate school. I like the Wikki sites. I check in weekly. I tend to read most peoples postings and comment if I need to,

> **Jay** Monday, February 22, 2010 4:34:31 PM
> JennyQ,
> - Can you name the specific social networking sites you're involved with?
> - On average, about how often do you post comments?
> - Which sites are most valuable to you, and why?

RheaI Monday, February 22, 2010 12:32:01 PM
I belong to Facebook, LinkedIn, and another one related to a Technology Academy I am currently participating in over the next 2 years.
Each of the three sites are interesting and useful in their own way. Facebook is more personal and fun to catch up with people. The other two are more "necessary" because of my job. I do like the wisdom of other professionals as well.
I check in weekly. I do browse other people's postings but not if they are too lengthly or not if they don't really pertain to my interests. I will post things sporadically as I have time and feel that

it is necessary.

DelilahC Monday, February 22, 2010 12:46:26 PM
I currently belong to Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends across the country, although I have several professional colleagues in my network. I check the site daily, but do not do a lot of posting. I also set up a Twitter account, but rarely use that-I am nervous about posting tweets that are not of interest to others.
I also belong to a network of school principals in my state and use that site to ask questions of the group or share information about my school with others. I am on that site about once a week and do more "listening" than talking and get really useful information from this site.

I do belong to a very active network used by my school administrtative unit to connect 9 schools spread over 5 towns. I use the site to post information for teachers, students, and parents. We have a forum for administrators to share ideas and post links to professional articles. Teachers also use this site to conduct on-line elements of their instruction, so I end up being part of lots of classes. I post info every week and am on the site every day to stay informed about the latest happenings.

> **Jay** Monday, February 22, 2010 4:43:32 PM
> DelilahC,
> A couple of follow-ups:
> - You mentioned that you do more listening than talking on the network of school principals in your state. About how often would you estimate that you post comments on that network, on average?
> - You mentioned a "very active network used by my school administrative unit." Is that a network that has been created locally, or is it an external network that just happens to be used heavily by local educators?
>
> > **DelilahC** Monday, February 22, 2010 5:59:53 PM
> > I post to the school principal's network when there is a discussion to which I can contribute-perhaps every other month or so. Our SAU website is affilliated with the Sakai Collaborative, but I believe it would be considered a local network since people outside of the district are not able to join it.
>
> **CarlY** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 9:26:10 AM
>
> What is the platform of your local network? Is it a rich use of a learning managment system or some other product? I would love to hear about the things your staff is doing for online learing activities. -- **Carl**
>
> > **DelilahC** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 5:43:08 PM
> > I am far from a tech person, but if I understand your question, we use Windows XP. If you Google "SAKAI" you will get information about the system we use. Our staff use our Sakai site with their classes to hold secure forums, give quizzes and tests, post their syllabus, assign projects or homework, students can submit their work from school or home through the site, teachers can be on-line from home on snow days or evenings to host real-time Q and A sessions, parents can access resources or links to helpful search sites for specific assignments, you name it and we have tried it. We have been using this for about 18 months with great success.

LuanneN Monday, February 22, 2010 4:07:13 PM
I have limited experience with social networking sites. Facebook is used several times weekly to connect with family and friends. My school system uses an intranet social networking system for technology meetings and planning. This was very effective. I'm looking forward to learning more about professional uses for social networking.

Jay Monday, February 22, 2010 4:44:44 PM
LuanneN,
You said that you use Facebook several times a week. About how often do you post on Facebook, as opposed to just "checking in"?

LuanneN Tuesday, February 23, 2010 5:39:37 PM
I post every 7-10 days, but comment on others' postings a couple of times per week.

EvanY Monday, February 22, 2010 4:22:42 PM
My primary social networking site is Face Book. It has been a wonderful way to keep track of family, friends and former students. My charter school emphasizes technology. We have several nings generated by students and teachers as well as web sites created for connecting people in the school community socially, via a variety of activities. Embracing technology has been a slow but rewarding process for me. Educators talk a great deal about digital natives and digital immigrants. Neither category fits me because I began teaching in 1978. Therefore, I consider myself a digital dinosaur Were it not for my grown children who dragged me along, somewhat impatiently throughout the years, I would still be clinging to my Apple iiE.

Jay Monday, February 22, 2010 4:47:53 PM
EvanY,
- About how often do you (a) check in with Facebook, and (b) post something on Facebook? Do you tend mostly to read other people's postings, or do you contribute often?
- You said that Facebook was your "primary" social networking site. Are there others you use regularly? If so, please let us know what they are and how you use them, including how often you check in and post.

EvanY Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:16:46 PM
I check my facebook about 2 or 3 times each week and always post if I find a thread worth relpying to or if someone contacts me. The other social networking sites are two student generated Nings and the links on our school website. It is important for me to stay abreast of what is happening at my school. I would like to say I scan them once each week but that rarely happens as I seem to be burried in federal and state mandated paperwork these days.

EvanY Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:21:40 PM
Jay,
I forgot to mention. I am enrolled in a doctoral program that relies heavily on WebCT. Since I am using it for scholarly work, I forgot is really is a social networking tool. We have weekly postings and are required to reply to at least three of the postings in our cohort. Every week I read all 16 postings and reply to the ones that are of particular

interest.

DarylT Monday, February 22, 2010 5:03:59 PM
I have both a Facebook Site and a MySpace site. Both are primarily used for non-professional reasons, especially Myspace. I use that more for music connections. However Facebook has become more of a connection to people I work with. So far most postings have to do with good things that happen and then others from the school chime in to encourage or offer support. I see great potential but there are also security/privacy issues. Our district has recently warned us about staff/student electronic communication on outside venues because of some problems so it really is uncharted waters right now. I used to check both everyday but now I rarely check on Myspace. I do check Facebook everyday.

> **Jay** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 3:37:39 PM
> DarylT,
> - You said that you check Facebook every day. About how often would you say that you post something?
> - Do you tend mostly to read other people's postings, or do you contribute often?
>
> > **DarylT** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 4:03:50 PM
> > I post something once or twice a week. I comment on other peoples posting much more frequently than I generate my own. I read other people's posting much more than I contribute or initiate. I am a bit shy so I tend to encourage others much more than I write about myself.

FelipeQ Monday, February 22, 2010 6:00:04 PM
I belong to a work-related social network dealing with counseling that introduces new things to do each month. This also provides ideals and places to get specific services to meet the needs of our students. Also the science expo center at our state capital sends new ideas to introduce to my science teachers to present information that meet our PASS objectives on our state testing.
I check the site twice monthly to get any new information that might be helpful to my staff or students.

The best site is the science expo site that offers new methods in presenting ideas about teaching science objectives with hands on experiences for our students. I mostly tend to read other people posting.
Away from work I use twitter a little. I feel that a professional site can be very valuable to teachers, principals, and supertindents in that they can share ideas and suggestions that have worked for them and ideas that has not worked for as well. By doing this we do not have to reinvent the wheel every time a problem arises and by working together the solution can be found easier and quicker.

> **Jay** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 3:41:32 PM
> FelipeQ,
> - You mentioned that you check "the site" twice monthly. It sounded like you were talking about the science expo center. Is that correct? If not, please clarify.
> - How often do you check the work-related social network dealing with counseling? How often do you use twitter?
> - About how often do you contribute to these various networks?

FelipeQ Tuesday, February 23, 2010 6:13:19 PM
The Science Museum Oklahoma "The Wonder Wavelength" is a science expo center they send info and I forward it to my entire teaching staff via e-mail.
The counseling network I check once or twice a month, unless I have a question I need an answer to. I just started tweeting, my wife is the one that has gotten me into it. I just obtain information from these sources or seek an answer to a question that may arise. Every week I comunicate to my entire staff by sending my weekly bulletin to them via e-mail. I also e-mail different principals for ideas or opinion of different topics.

BarbieC Tuesday, February 23, 2010 6:48:11 PM
I have joined two social networks in the last two years. My Space and Facebook.

The reason I joined My Space is to search for posted film clips of student fights. Some of our students would come and tell me how upset they were to find a video clip of their peers fighting off campus. I joined My Space to investigate the claims and to develop a school policy on cyber bullying and what the consequences would be. There were other types of cyber bullying that were going on besides filming fights, such as inappropriate pictures. I did not use My Space very often, only when I received information that there was some sort of bullying going on.

The reason I joined Facebook was to stay in touch with students, especially those that had graduated from our high school and were accepted into four year universities. Our school mission was to prepare students for college, yet we did not have access to a data base that would measure their success at college and to determine if they were still enrolled in college. Facebook became a place to stay in touch with students to provide on-going support and to find out information about their success and or challenges. I use Facebook about once every two weeks. It has become a rewarding experience to stay in touch with our students, both ones that are currently enrolled and those that have graduated.

I also use Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family. I check my person Facebook page several times per week. I don't contribute a lot on either Facebook page because of a lack of time. It is much faster to skim and read what is going on. I do respond to some comments and I sometimes post something on my wall so that students, friends, and family members can stay in touch with me.

BarbieC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 12:50:56 AM
After reading some of the uses of networks I became interested in some that are used to have online professional discussions. I have not participated in any social network to have online discussions with other principals about their school practice. I do belong to a couple of professional groups where we meet once per month to talk and learn about school leadership issues, but this is face-to-face time. While reading other's comments I think a social professional network may be an easy way to share best practices with other principals. The challenge is always finding the time and of choosing and/or finding a social network that fits your needs.

Follow-up

After you've answered the question, please check back sometime before 12 midnight Eastern Time (ET) on Tuesday, February 23.

Review the responses of the other participants and spend some time commenting on their responses--as if you were having a conversation with the group. You're welcome to come back as often as you'd like to see how the discussion is progressing and to add your thoughts.

As of 7 AM on Wednesday, February 24, I'll post Topic 2 with more questions for you to answer. You'll have until Thursday, February 25 at midnight ET to respond to Topic 2.

Thanks for your input!

Topic 2
Read First

This second phase of the discussion focuses on use of social networking in education.

- In Question 1, you'll explain how you are using social networking in education.

- In Question 2, you'll assess the overall interest and comfort level of various members of the education community in adopting social networking in education.

Please complete your answers to these questions by Thursday, February 25, midnight Eastern time. (Please adjust for your time zone.)

Also, after completing your answers, return to the EDRoom before Thursday at midnight to read the comments of other participants and to write your reactions to them.

- To read a question, click the tab with its question number above.
*- When you've answered the question, click the **Follow-up** tab above.*

Question 1

How are you using social networking in education? Please address any of the following ways you may be using social networking?

a. To communicate and collaborate with colleagues inside your district?

b. To communicate and collaborate with colleagues outside your district?

c. To improve communication within your school or district?

d. To provide professional development for your teachers?

e. To engage with students?

f. To connect with parents and/or the local community?

Are there any other ways you are using social networking in education?

How does using social networking compare to other ways you communicate? What are the advantages/disadvantages of using social networking?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

BellaC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 9:20:20 AM
I am involved through professional networking with colleagues outside my distrirct. With the networking I am able to post and respond in a timely fashion and yet not interrupt anyone else's schedule. It is very helpful to monitor others conversations over topics of interest/need.
Our teachers are beginning to find the benefits of attaining professional development through networking.
As yet, we do not use it with our elementary students.

> **Jay** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:06:13 PM
> BellaC,
> You mentioned that teachers are beginning to use networking for professional development. Is that professional development offered by your school or district, or available in other ways? Please explain.
>
> > **BellaC** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 4:55:42 PM
> > The PD is offered by our state service center as a method of introducing the concept.

Then the teachers feel more comfortable branching out on their own when opportunities avail themselves.

JarredN Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:08:45 AM
I think that social networking is underutilized in our building, district, and amongst all educational professionals. In too many cases, there is a wealth of information to share or tap into, and this does not happen enough. I have thought about starting one for my teachin staff as a way to communicate or just share ideas, but like everything else, it sits on that "To Do" list.

I have also played with the idea of creating a FaceBook page where students and parents could be "Fans" in which they could receive updates. It would be a great way for me to remind them of events, news, and approaching deadlines. The one issue is that our ISD blocks FaceBook and I would have to do all of that from home.

Technology is great, but we must be careful in that all parents are not savy in the use of the internet or sites and it would be easy to forget the typical ways of communication that those individuals probably rely on for school information.

Jay Wednesday, February 24, 2010 2:54:50 PM
JarredN,
Are there any of the ways listed above (in the original question) that you or your school/district are currently using social networking, even in a minor way? If so, please explain.

JarredN Thursday, February 25, 2010 7:36:13 AM
Unfortunately, we are not.

BarbieC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:21:14 AM
I am currently using Facebook as a way to communicate with some of my colleagues. It is not used for professional development because not everyone has a Facebook page. Facebook is primarily being used to communicate socially and to keep in touch with our students. As I stated earlier the engagement with students is a way to support them and to determine if they are still attending college. The population we serve is 100% minority, 80% free and reduced lunch, and 80% second language learners. Because of this there is high mobility and gathering data about their success and/or challenges with college is a challenge for us. Facebook has become a tool to gather information about them and to provide support.

We did start an online course for some of our teachers, a total of nine, that needed to earn their certificate to teach second language learners. The course provided some reading online, lots of video lectures and classroom observations, and an online discussion on certain topics. I observed the course and was able to read and respond to the teachers comments about the reading material and the discussion questions. It provided me valuable perspective on what our teachers knew and did not know about teaching second language learners. I then worked with this group to prepare staff development for the whole staff. Because they were learning together and it was grounded in the context of their classroom, I felt the staff development was more successful.

I also belong to a Principal Fellowship. The fellowship mission is to strengthen exceptional leaders as they gain the knowledge, skills and vision to lead 21st century schools. The program seeks to nurture a growing
cohort of principals whose leadership is entrepreneurial and strategic, who achieve sustainable gains in student learning and equity, contribute to our knowledge of leadership practice, and provide an example and resource for others. We meet once per month. There has been talk about

starting an online social network, but this idea has not gone beyond talking about it. Most of the principals in the group feel they would not participate in an online collaboration/discussion as most prefer to meet and discuss issues face to face.

Jay Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:00:08 PM
BarbieC,
- You said that Facebook is being used to keep in touch with students. Based on your description, I assume that you mean former students, and that Facebook isn't being used with current students. Is that correct? If not, please explain.
- In your second paragraph, you said you thought the staff development was more successful. I assume that you mean the in-person staff development was more successful than the online course. Is that correct? If not, please explain.

BarbieC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 6:17:30 PM
Hi Jay,

Facebook is used for both current students and former students, but mostly former students. The current students do not all have a Facebook page and nor do they have the need to use Facebook to stay in contact. The former students are the ones that want to stay in contact.

The in person staff development was much better than the online one. The importance of the online discussion connected with the on-line course, was the information that was provided to custom fit the staff development.

DarylT Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:27:09 AM
Right now it is very minimal. I can think of one example where a school therapist had a disadvantaged child and she posted that she wanted to buy him a guitar and did anyone know of a good deal. I had an old one that I was no longer using so I posted that she could have it for him. That is the sort of thing that seems to be happening. That type of communication does happen for both inside and outside the district. Also, when we serve on committees at the State level, we will often post what we are involved in and ask for input. Within the district we have just begun to use Webinars and Podcasts. -Especially Webinars for professional development. After participating, we have breakout sessions in person to discuss the implications. Engagement with students on non-district platforms is discouraged.

Jay Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:25:31 PM
DarylT,
- With respect to the example you gave about the school therapist: Did that happen in a social networking platform/environment provided within your district, or elsewhere (e.g., Facebook)?
- You mentioned posting about involvement with committees on the state level. Do you mean that you post locally in order to get input from educators in your district on topics that will be discussed in state committees? Or do you mean that the state committees use social networking to communicate? Or both?
- You mentioned webinars and podcasts. Is there an online social networking element to your use of these resources (e.g., audience feedback/questions)? If so, please describe.

DarylT Wednesday, February 24, 2010 4:26:24 PM
The school therapist example was from Facebook.

The state level issues were also on Facebook- no state communities.

The webinars and podcast are throught the Successful Practices Network, a subscription professional organization

GrantZ Wednesday, February 24, 2010 11:05:46 AM
I have personally communicated with colleagues both in my own district and in my immediate area (Intermediate Area) regarding programs they are using or implementing. For example, our school has recently undertaken an examination of IB programs and it was a natural to ask other districts about their IB programs: if they have one, what their experience has been, etc.

The local principal's networking site has also served as a good tool to conduct quick suveys about such things as cell phone policies, grading policies, staff development programs, etc.

Many of our teachers use social networking sites as a follow-up to staff development training - an effective way to extend training from the session and into the classroom.

Jay Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:05:10 PM
GrantZ,
You mentioned communication with colleagues within the district and in the immediate area, and also communication via a local principal's networking site. Can you elaborate some on these specific networks and/or how this communication took place?

GrantZ Friday, February 26, 2010 6:43:50 PM
Through our local Intermediate Unit, we have networking sites for various groups. One of the ones I have used is our principals' network that enables all the principals in the immediate area to be in touch with each other any all issues small and large. For example, we have had questions and calls for input on such issues as graduation requirements, attendance policies, alternative schools, etc. These exchanges have enabled us to get valuable information in a short period of time. While we physically meet about four times during the school year, the meetings do not provide the forum or the time for these types of questions.

I am aware that various departments - our math department, for example - has a site where they communicate regularly with each other on math matters. When the school day does not provide the opportunity to get together, the site provides a place to exchange ideas as the department works on writing common assessments and other matters.

DelilahC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 8:44:33 PM
I currently converse with many colleagues inside of my district through our Sakai network. We share ideas for school improvement, pose questions about curriculum, and plan upcoming meetings. Because time is always in short supply, using the network to post our ideas is easier

than sifting through a bunch of emails since you can open one place and run through the entire discussion and add your ideas in just a few minutes. I also use the network to check in on teacher's class assignments for students and the students absolutely LOVE using this site. I have even heard complaints from a few parents that their kids are spending evenings and weekends hogging the family computer in the name of completing assignments in the form of forum discussions or posing questions to their teachers.

Our state principals' association has a network for administrators and as an example, we are currently discussing ideas for competency based report cards for middle schools. Is this a hot button issue in other states?

I publish daily announcements for parents and students and there is a running calendar for teachers. I have talked about establishing a facebook page for the school as a few others have also mentioned. Since the demographics for
facebook users is about the right agegroup for our parents, I think this could be a good way to communicate with many more people (middle school students are notoriously unreliable at bringing home announcements). That is on my "to do" list this summer.

We have not used the network for professional development yet, but we have developed a "resources" page where I can post links to articles, video interviews, or the like. Teachers get regular reminders to check the site at our faculty meetings and it is slowly catching on.

We developed this whole network as a result of what we determined was needed to keep students engaged in learning. We wanted to allow students to have a safe place to communicate and our tech director did not want to drop our filter. After much prodding and lots of research, she found this system that is used by mostly colleges and has adapted it for our schools. Students are very enthusiastic about being able to "talk" to each other whether in school or home.

BellaC Thursday, February 25, 2010 7:02:01 AM
Hi Delilah. Your comment about Sakai interested me.... from their website it says it's similar to Blackboard. Have you found that true? I'm looking for something (cheap) that will give us the ability to upload daily teacher lessons from whiteboards or video so that absent students can get the full benefit of the class. Do you have any experience with such?
Thanks,
BellaC

DelilahC Thursday, February 25, 2010 8:14:04 AM
Hi Brilla, We just installed our first interactive whiteboard last month, so we are not utilizing that technology to its full extent yet. We have talked with staff about their ability to create their sub lessons on video so when they are absent, their instruction can still take place (they were a bit skeptical about it). A few teachers have created podcasts on Sakai as part of their instruction. The whole system must be inexpensive (or free) since a number of school districts in our state have followed our lead and implemented a Sakai network at a time when budgets are really tight.

LuanneN Saturday, February 27, 2010 11:04:51 AM
Please explain Sakai.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:06:16 AM
DelilahC,
You mentioned possibly establishing a school Facebook page. What would that accomplish that would be different from your existing Sakai network, or how would that integrated with

your Sakai network?

DelilahC Thursday, February 25, 2010 10:52:22 AM
Hi Jay, I think parents might log in to their Facebook account more regularly since it links them to lots of friends. If they became "fans" of my school, I could post information about upcoming events that they would automatically see as a status update. To see the information on Sakai, they need to log on and then open the announcements section and maybe there will be something new there that pertains to them. While there are daily announcements, it is a multi-step process to view it, so less likely that parents will check.

RheaI Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:58:24 AM
I am involved with social networking outside my district. Being a non-public school and there is no one at that level really in charge of technology etc. The use of social networking for professional develoment for teachers is non-existent at this time and we do not use it to engage students. We do use Facebook for our Alumni efforts and that has been successful. Recently a parent came to me to set up a school Facebook page where parents can access and be involved....not sure what the legal procautions are so we are still holding on that.

I use social networking very little compared to other was of communication. The advantage of course is to see everyone's reply and string of conversations...that can be the disadvantage too - I either don't have the time or I don't care to see everyone's opinion on something.

VitaT Thursday, February 25, 2010 2:24:09 PM
I don't really use it that much with colleagues in the district, we use our blackberry messengers to create a group informally and discuss topics of interest. We also have an e-mail group that our Superintendent and several other administrators are part of that we can talk to each other, as well as face to face meetings once a month. Although I guess in a way that is a social network since it is comprised only of elementary principals when we use the blackberry.

We limit the contact that we have with students on the computer and don't really use it as a tool.

We have informal networks set up for the teachers in groups but don't really use it as social networking.

I use it more for colleagues outside the district in groups that I have been a part of with face to face and then creating small networks of people to help answer questions.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:40:35 PM
Vita,
- Can you go into more detail about the informal networks set up for teachers in groups? For example, how are those set up? How are they used?
- Can you give some examples of topics you discuss using the BlackBerry messengers and how a typical discussion might go (e.g., how long it would run, how many people would contribute, how often)?
- Do you see potential advantages in moving BlackBerry discussions to a social networking-style format? If not, why not?

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 9:53:53 AM

Jay,

The teachers are in grade level groups and they can access the grade level, as a building they are also in a school group where we can have discussions about particular topics. They might have a discussion about our book study which is Marzano's Classroom Instruction that Works. There are some discussion groups that happen around our science unit. Typically for the building I might introduce the topic then ask a question and sometimes we use GoogleDocs to get a specific answer to a question.

The last topic we used Blackberrry messenger for was on use of Data to develop our building plans which are required by the Central Administration. We were talking about what Data to use and how to use it. That discussion went on off and on all afternoon, usually it's a short discussion maybe a half hour or so.someone brings up a topic and we continue talking about it. This group has 6 administrators on it because we just got trained in how to use it, eventually it will have 15 administrators in it.

The thing we all like about the Messenger use is that it does not go through any connection to Central Administration so we can actually talk about concerns etc... If there were a way to do it without that we consider it, we tried setting up a Google group but then found out that it was going through the district server so people stopped using it. I think the biggest draw back would be to find a way to discuss things without it going through the server.

LuanneN Saturday, February 27, 2010 9:23:01 AM

a. The Technology department guides the development of each school's yearly technology plan via Eluminate training. The live training sessions allow questions, written and spoken, from tech team members at the 27 schools. The sessions are recorded and may be replayed to answer questions as we develop our yearly plan. To develop the System technology plan, an intranet document is developed for those of us on the committee to input suggestions, recommend wording, and ask questions as the yearly system technology plan is developed.

b. Training outside our district conducted by the State Education Department has also been by eluminate sessions for media center teachers, the new teacher evaluation system, and the new requirements for administrators to renew certificates.. All training sessions are recorded for those who miss the initial training.

c. Communication within the school and district have not been impacted by social networking although the district has provided training and support. It seems to take more time to post weekly and daily information on a networking site than to send it via email or as part of daily intercom announcements. Teachers do not take the time to access the intranet site provided by the system for our school or to access a blog that I developed first semester.

d. Professional development webinars have been used with small groups of teachers this year for math, bullying, and special education topics. These are free or paid webinars.

e. Teachers use response systems(clickers) for lessons they prepare through Moodle, virtual field trips, and video presentations from Digital Curriculum, teachertube and youtube.

f. A blog was attempted to connect with parents, community, and school personnel, but was discontinued after one semester due to low participation.

DarylT Sunday, February 28, 2010 10:27:18 AM

The parental participation part being so low is always frustrating. -and then disgruntled parents try to use the technology against us in so many ways. That's frustrating too! For example when we went with online gradebooks, parents were constantly complaining that they were not up to date. The assumption from the parents was that at the point a child turned in work, it should show up on the online gradebook that night. Things like that make teachers gunshy of new technology.

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:30:58 PM

My main use is personal growtha nd communication both internal and external to my school/district. I have chosen to not interact with students in this realm. especially on more open platforms like Facebook. Twitter has been a huge wealth for me in gaining information about other sites and ideas. I have also started tweeting my blog posts.

Question 2

How would you describe the overall interest and comfort level of other members of the education community in adopting social networking in education:

- – Your colleagues
- – Your teachers
- – Your school library media specialist(s)
- – Your students

For the groups above that are less interested or less comfortable adopting social networking in education, please explain why you think that is.

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

BellaC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 9:26:11 AM
I have a small contigency of teachers and colleagues who are working toward including social networking into their teaching. I believe others will follow as we gain more training and procure more hardware.
Our library specialist and some of our student body are very involved in networking. At some point in time, our school board will need to address the perimeters now imposed on our district.

> **Jay** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:09:28 PM
> BellaC,
> Why do you think some of your colleagues and teachers are currently less interested in social networking?
>
> > **BellaC** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 5:14:49 PM
> > The main reason I don't, and I've heard others use the same excuse, is time. What with all the mandates and paperwork and other things, one must prioritize how one spends his/her time. Another reason is availability. I happen to live in one of those areas not covered by anything but dial-up. The wait can be very frustrating.
> >
> > **DarylT** Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:10:31 PM

Technology limitations like Dial-Up and system crashes have been an issue for years! It seems like whenever we really start to rely on technology, there a glitches. We've gotten into the habit of always having a backup plan and that of course double the work load and then the efficiency advantages go out the window.

DarylT Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:32:20 AM
The younger teachers are much more comfortable with it. They are of course bringing along those of us who are more long of tooth. The games that Facebook offers like Farmtown etc... seem to be sucking in those who were a bit reluctant to go to the sites. The media specialist is in the forefront of technology usage on our campus but as of yet, Social Networking involving students is limited.

The comfort issues are two-fold. First of all, privacy. Teachers don't yet fully understand how to limit what outsiders see. Secondly, as I've stated before, student-teacher involvement on non district platforms. Our district blocks most social networking sites so there is a message that is underlying that it is not appropriate. Once in-house opportunities are more available, I think usage will increase.

> **Jay** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 3:34:52 PM
> DarylT,
> You said that so far, social networking involving students has been limited in your school/district. How comfortable do you feel students would be with adopting social networking in education?
>
> > **DarylT** Wednesday, February 24, 2010 4:32:23 PM
> > I think the students would love it and would flourish using it. We need the infrastructure to make it work well but that is a technological hold-up, not a human capacity issue.

BarbieC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:37:35 AM
There seems to be more of an interest between colleagues this year than there was last year. I think this comes as a result of experience with using a social network. Ning and Wiki have been introduced to my staff via the Information Technology Director, but no-one has found the time nor has the desire to use them. From my perspective this is a typical learning pattern; the knowledge awareness comes first, then a few people actual use it successful and share the results with others. If the shared knowledge is presented successfully and provides a vision of a better place or a better tool that would simplify or improve the teaching practice, then others will join. Our teachers have not seen or experienced enough of social networking examples that pertain to teaching and learning to pique their interest. They have begun using YouTube in the classroom. YouTube provides the just right needed short movie clips that provide good information about the Unit of Study they are teaching.

Students are moving faster with social networks than the teachers. They have not moved beyond socializing, but I believe that they are learning valuable tools by playing with the technology. If they are exposed to applications on a social network that pertain to learning or provide access to education that benefits them, then they would be ready with the technology skills to make use of it. We have taught them how to use the Google tools, such as shared documents, calendar, and the google sites. For example the AP Statistics class has created a Google site where the students exchange ideas and projects that relate to their assigned homework. All of our students use the Google shared documents to submit their homework to their teachers.

GrantZ Wednesday, February 24, 2010 11:16:31 AM
I can honestly say that many of the teachers, library specialists and especially the students are far more adept than I at using social networking sites than I am. It seems that the younger the person, the more comfortable.

I still attach a lot of importance to face-to-face communications or phone communications so that I can see or hear the expressions/voices of the speaker.

For quick, easy and anonymous forms of communication, I don't mind the electronic methods but for others I can't remove the need to see a face or hear a voice.

I have heard social networking described as an intimate form of communication but I certainly am not of that opinion - at least based on my experiences.

DelilahC Wednesday, February 24, 2010 8:57:50 PM
I have a fairly young staff so they seem perfectly comfortable using the networking sites. I am the dinosaur in the group, but I have 3 children in their late 20's, early 30's and they got me involved as they went off to college and traveled the world as a way to stay in touch, so even I am reasonably adept at navigating my way through the LOLs and ttyls etc. It is impossible to keep students away from the social connections, so we are always looking for ways to take advantage of that interest. Our library media specialist is a bit old fashioned even though she is relatively young, but she is not leading the charge. Now that I think about it, I see the greatest interest in our staff in their 20's and our staff who have kids in their 20's. Hmmm.....

CarlY Thursday, February 25, 2010 8:21:30 AM
I am really unclear about where various groups are on this topic. I known that several of my administrative peers do belong and use social networks professionally. the strangeness is that there either isn't or I am unaware of my usage and theirs overlapping.
I have several teachers that belong to Classroom 2.0 but again am unsure of their level of activity. My feeling is that if they are active they are on the comsuming side and not the contribution side of the discussion. The execption to this is with my Advanced Placement and IB teachers. They are active in dialog and sharing questions and ideas with nationwide peers.

I have not had occasion to discuss this topic with my media specialist so I am again unsure of interest or use.

For students there is clearly an interest in social networking. Facebook is the number one blocked search in my school. this tool has been used by students for school purposes. I know of student groups that have formed around educational or schoolwide topics. I know that my journalism and business classes have used facebook for polling and market research among their peers. I think my students have a better grip of the reach and power of social networking. I am not sure how willing they are to give this space over to school. Their interest in the space is social and I think they may want to keep it that way. That being said, if they were asked to make a contact with someone in a foriegn country or different region of the country I would think their first space to look would be the social network world.

RheaI Thursday, February 25, 2010 10:01:32 AM
I would say the interest is at a medium to low level and the comfort level is probably pretty low for my teachers. My colleagues a bit higher use and comfort and my library media specialist is higher yet - although the time constraints limit things. For students...I believe they are VERY interested and comfortable in using this...but not necessarily for educational purposes...most of theirs is

social of course.

The main reason for less interested and less comfortable people is the exposure to it, the time to do it, and they don't see value it in yet.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:44:23 PM
RheaI,
- When you say the main reason for low interest and comfort level is "the exposure to it," I assume you mean that teachers in particular have mostly NOT been exposed to social networking very much. Is that correct?
- Do you think the problem is that teachers haven't been exposed to social networking in general, or that they haven't been exposed to use of it within an educational context? Please explain.

RheaI Thursday, February 25, 2010 5:54:52 PM
Yes, you are right...they have not been exposed to social networking very much. The average of my staff is 40+. The younger teachers have exposure to Facebook and other social ones I am sure....overall though not much for the entire staff for education context. Unfortunetly not many of them belong to professional organizations which would be one avenue for them to experience this.

FelipeQ Thursday, February 25, 2010 12:26:28 PM
I have some of my colleagues that keep informed by e-mailing me and me them. We share ideas and methods that have worked for them. I have older colleagues that are not comfortable using the computer so they call or meet me at professional meeting to discuss different issues that arise in their school and we share information. It is so much easier to use a network by e-mailing colleagues to obtain information. We can answer questions when check our e-mail and do not have to play phone tag.

My teachers use different web site to get new methods or ways to present information to their students. They obtain lesson plans from these sites and several have posted their plans on these site as well. I have two teachers that have received there National Boards and three other are in the process of getting theirs and bly using these site it helps them to develop new ideas and approaches to applying new methods to teach new concepts. Each week I send out the weekly bulletin to all of my teachers and other office personel to keep them inform school events. I also send information that I receive fron the Science Museum Oklahoma, "The Wonder Wavelength" involing new methods in teaching sciencee.

Our library media specialist is very involved with the use of new technology and is in the process of helping a team in writing a grant to receive SmartBoard for each classroom in the elementary school. The teachers now have computers and LCD's and the last piece of technology that we feel would help our students and teacher is the SmartBoards. The teachers are currently using the technology to help them teach their students.

Since students are motivated by the use of technology they can be taught to use this equipment to obtain information and also exchange ideas with other students or professional. Our students use this information tools to do research, of course they are experts in texting each others on their cell phones.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:47:34 PM
Observer Note: This participant has not posted in response to Topic 2, Question 1. However, much of the information he gives here appears to relate to that question. This answer should

be used to tabulate answers to Topic 2, Question 1 for this respondent if he does not post a response to that question.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:50:06 PM
FelipeQ,
It sounds like you're describing a generally high interest and comfort level among teachers, students, and library media specialist, and varying degrees of interest and comfort level among your colleagues. Is that correct, or is the situation more complex than that? For example, is there a similar variation among teachers in their degree of interest and comfort level with social networking in information? Please describe.

FelipeQ Thursday, February 25, 2010 4:02:20 PM
Most of my staff are really into social networking and using technology. Several teachers check MySpace and communicate with text or e-mails. My more senior employees have rolled up their sleves and learned how to use the technology and have found that by using it they have fewer problems holding their students interest while presenting their lessons to their classes. I feel that my staff is very eager to learn how to use the new technologies when we can find the funds to obtain them. Our next goal is to obtain the OETT OK-ACTS Phase II Grant and purchases SmartBoards for each classroom and the staff development in getting the most use of this technology. It is an exciting time here.

EvanY Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:58:04 PM
Felipe,
You are obiously an exelllent lead manager for your teachers and staff. Are you in a public school? I am intersted in the OETT OK-ACTS grant. Having just returned to the US after ten years in the international school, I am WAY behind in grant availability. Could you please post the deatils?

VitaT Thursday, February 25, 2010 2:31:57 PM
My colleagues and I have had this discussion we are very cautious about using Facebook and other sites that talk about our personal lives with teachers because although I have some great young teachers they are not good about limiting who they are invovled with on the site and have had to be cautioned about including parents on the sites.

We have had some students using myspace and they're parents were unaware that they were using it and it caused some serious situations.

I would say we could use a good education networking site with children and with staff, but I would want it to be monitored for appropriate language and discussions such as we do with students and e-mail.

I think an elementary school could be a great teaching site if the site were appropriate for children. My librarian blogs but does not use social networking in the school.

Some of my children use Webkinz which allows them to sort of talk but has messages that they have to choose to send messages to other children and that seems to be a great way to start.

DarylT Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:14:03 PM
I am having a meeting with my staff on just what you describe this afternoon. All the old standards that help keep our staff safe from accusations of improper behavior no longer cover

the current situation. Texting, cell phones, Facebook privacy are all ways that teachers have recently lost their jobs because of doors being opened... in an innocent manner or otherwise and that is a concern.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:52:43 PM
DarylT,
When you say "Texting, cell phones, Facebook privacy are all ways that teachers have recently lost their jobs..." are you talking about events within your district or local area? If so, could you please give some more detail about what the problems were (without violating privacy concerns)?

DarylT Thursday, February 25, 2010 6:22:29 PM
This is now a nationwide issue. Of course I have to deal with it at a local level. I can give some generic examples... A picture of a teacher on their own Facebook at the beach... in a bikini... kids get access to that easily. Or a picture of a teacher drinking a beer at a party. It goes on and on and we have to be very careful. Obviously teachers don't lose their jobs over the examples above but it is just the tip of the iceberg.

Jay Thursday, February 25, 2010 3:57:30 PM
VitaT,
- It sounds like among your colleagues, there's some degree of interest in using social networking, but a great deal of wariness as well. Is that correct? If not, please explain.
- How much interest and comfort level do you think there is among your teachers for adopting social networking in education, particularly if privacy and appropriateness issues could be adequately addressed?
- You mentioned that some of the students in your school are using social networking. In your opinion, does that translate into an interest and comfort level in using social networking as part of their education? How much variation do you think there is among students in their interest and comfort level? Please explain.

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:00:32 AM
I think my colleagues would be interested in using it but as I've mentioned previously it's the security. I also think we're just touching the boundaries of what is acceptable. I recently had to remind my staff that we have moral and ethical code that we are expected to operate under and that Face book can violate it if they are talking about a particular person. I think we're only touching how the First Amendment affects this situation.

If we could somehow secure it so that the only topics discussed were of an educational network I do think most of the teachers would be interested in it, I think the topics have to be monitored.

I am certain students are comfortable with social networking, I think they would easily get into using it as part of their education. I think we need to have people begin to develop some guidelines around the use and what it would be used for exactly. I think most students even little ones could use it, I mentioned the Webkinz because my own nephew who is 6 is able to send me a message thanking me for a virtual gift that I sent him. It allows him to have a conversation with his friends and with me.

EvanY Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:50:47 PM
The interest of my colleagues is all over the board. The people my age (late 50's) seem not to have

embraced technology in the same way my younger colleagues have. Certainly that is due to familiarity and lack of willingness to take risks and learn new things. Having said that, a colleague and friend in another state who is my age has been one of my mentors, regarding technology applications, over the past twenty years. Personally, I believe it is important to model life long learning rather than just doing it lip service. As I mentioned in the 1st post, I am in a doctoral program that relies heavily on WebCT which requires us to post weekly and respond to three colleagues in the cohort. This has been a fascinating way to interact and see how different people interpret things. My career began in speech/debate so the transition to a venue that does not allow one to get nonverbal cues, inflection, intonation, or volume has been interesting and very educational.
I am fortunate to have a staff who are mostly young (late 20's to late 30's) and digital natives. They gobble up opportunities for technology faster than the school can keep pace. We are currently in the process of getting fiber optic installed so all our students could concievably stream video simultaneously. We also have a few "older" teachers who resist technology as a teaching or communication tool. Our charter school is technology-focused so it is essential for us to "walk our talk" so-to-speak. This is my first year as Director and, through my emphasis on the importance of technology as an invaluable tool, nearly all the resistors will retire or relocate at the end of this year.

We are a small school with 350 students and do not have a library or a media specialist. We do have a technology specialist whose job it is to train teachers to incorporate technology meaningfully into their pedagogy as well as to help our students push the envelope.

Our students, like most young people, are WAY ahead of us in their use of technology. We have wireless access in every classroom and encourage our students to use their G3 phones and loptops whenever appropriate. They are so networked that is is dizzying. Texting each other to meet in the bathroom at X time is just one example. Rather than wasting our time playing policeman, we try to stress the importance of making good decisions and respecting themselves and each other regarding rules of behavior and apporpriatenss. So far, it has worked very well expecpt with the teachers who need lots of control in their classes. Our philosphy is a "student centered" approach to learning, thereby making relationships with students a primary ingredient

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JarredN Friday, February 26, 2010 12:11:52 PM
I think it is in the beginning stages. I ahve a number of teachers who use BlackBoard and students are reguarly engaged in discussions and providing feedback to feelow students on their work through these sites. Students seem to be very engaged in these activities.

As Principals, we do this to an extent on our MASSP site, but we can do more even at the county and distirct level.

My media specialist is spread very thin as she is the only media specialist for the entire district. She has six buildings to cover and unfortunately, down further ont he list of important items that need to be completed each day.

Our students are veyr knowledgebale about FaceBook, but I would like to get them to a point where they are on educational sites and not just for social reasons.

Jay Friday, February 26, 2010 12:23:55 PM
JarredN,
- You indicated that use of the technology is in the beginning stages with your teachers. How open do you think most of them are to the idea of using the technology, going forward? What's their interest and comfort level?
- What's the interest and comfort level among your colleagues with respect to using social

networking in education?

JarredN Friday, February 26, 2010 6:06:36 PM
Jay,

Like anything, you have some that take every advantage of it, if possible. Some of my better teachers realize that students will respond to items online, but may not do so if they have to respond on paper. It is a slow process, but we are slowly getting buy-in from more and more staff members.

We haven't really discussed more possibilities at the administrative level. Everything right now usually goes out in an email and it is usually looking for other districts' policies or looking for recommendations for long-terms subs.

LuanneN Friday, February 26, 2010 12:56:44 PM
My colleagues and I do not participate in any social networking activities as a group. After reading entries this week, I'm going to work with Computer Services to guide us to develop a site for discussions.
This year we were introduced to Moodle, which has a social networking aspect with the chat messages and also components that allow members of a Moodle group to exchange information. This is a Pre-K to 8th grade school. All teachers developed a Moodle page with emergency closing lessons for students. However, the Moodle lessons, assignments, and quizzes are only used by the 6-8 teachers. These teachers are mostly under 35 and are very eager to use technology. After the students discovered the chat feature, Computer Services pulled a few conversations to make sure that they were appropriate. We shared with students that we could access these chats at any time. This increased my comfort level of allowing students to communicate in a format that the parents cannot access without student passwords. The library media specialist does not participate in any social networking other than a Moodle page with information about the school library.

Our students do have Facebook pages and MySpace accounts even though they are under age. Recently, our system has monitored a number of student pages due to a middle school shooting and a university mass shooting in our are within the past month. Middle and high school students began posting information about weapons or rumors about threats on these pages, which other students reported to administrators. Working with law enforcement, Facebook and MySpace student pages were viewed to determine if there was real cause for concern or just student attempts to avoid school.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 12:58:17 PM
LuanneN,
You said, "Our students do have Facebook pages and MySpace accounts even though they are under age." How widespread would you say this is? E.g., can you estimate a percentage of students in the different grade ranges who have their own Facebook pages and/or MySpace accounts?

DarylT Sunday, February 28, 2010 10:30:33 AM

Most junior high students whose parents can afford internet access have some sort of Facebook/Myspace page in our area. Others go to their friends houses to access or have internet on their cell phones. It seems strange but those who really can't afford much other technology always seem to have really nice cell phones and good access plans.

LuanneN Monday, March 01, 2010 1:33:39 PM

Jay,
Through discussions with teachers and students, I estimate that about 30% of our 7th and 8th grade students have FaceBook pages. Another 10-20% access FaceBook through a relative or friend's page. We do not hear much about MySpace this year and do not have a good estimate of the number with MySpace pages.

Less than 10% of 5th-6th grade students say they have FaceBook pages and none claimed to have a MySpace account.. We did not find any students in the elementary grades with pages.

Follow-up

After you've answered Questions 1 and 2, please check back sometime before 12 midnight Eastern time on Thursday, February 25. (Please adjust for your time zone.)

Review the responses of the other participants and spend some time commenting on their responses to the new questions -- as if you were having a conversation with the group. You're welcome to come back as often as you'd like to see how the discussion is progressing, to interact with the group, and to add your thoughts.

As of 7 AM Eastern on Friday, February 26, I'll post questions for Topics 3 & 4, which will begin concurrently. You'll have until Sunday, February 28 at 12 midnight Eastern to respond to the questions and spend some time interacting with the group.

Thanks for your contributions!

Topic 3
Read First

This third discussion topic focuses on use of social networking in your school and district.

- In Question 1, you'll share whether you are using social networking in your school or district, and provide your perspective about the experience.

- Question 2 focuses more specifically on use or non-use of social networking *with students* in your school.

- Question 3 focuses on your school/district policies on using social networking.

Please complete your answers to these questions by Sunday, February 28, midnight Eastern time. (Please adjust for your time zone.) When you're done, go on to Topic 4, which is also open for your participation.

Also, after completing your answers to the Topic 3 questions, return to the EDRoom before Sunday at midnight to read the comments of other participants and to write your reactions to them.

- To read a question, click the tab with its question number above.
*- When you've answered the question, click the **Follow-up** tab above.*

Question 1

Are you using social networking in your school or district?

If so:

- – What systems are you using?
- – How well are they working?
- – How has it impacted communications?
- – How has it impacted the school culture?

If you are *not* using social networking in your school or district, why not?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:08:22 AM
We are not using Social networking in the district. We have a discussion board that parents and community members can comment but because we have had several serious issues that became media issues as a school district and it became a place where a few people constantly complained. I just checked as I was answering this question and there are 12 topics and one person is the one who has commented on every one of them. I just checked a few an every comment is negative.

I think it goes to what I said earlier, we just don't know enough yet on how to govern it and use it.

> **Jay** Friday, February 26, 2010 12:27:17 PM
> VitaT,
> What kinds of information do you think might help your district to move toward increased use of social networking?

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 11:28:12 AM
We are not using social networking in the district. Like previous question, the reason we are not is a lack of knowledge/exposure as to how it will be beneficial

Jay Friday, February 26, 2010 12:28:02 PM
RheaI,
What kinds of information or exposure do you think might help your district to move toward increased use of social networking?

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 1:37:44 PM
Teachers need to have a workshop re: social networking and some sites that would benefit them professionally. Once they begin using it, I believe they will discover how to implement it for student use as well.

LuanneN Friday, February 26, 2010 1:10:26 PM
Our district has introduced teachers and admininistrators to Moodle, Sharepoint, Wiki, Eluminate, and Google Docs and Intranet documents. The Information Technology department has posted many "how to" lessons using Sharepoint, created wiki sites with information, supported staff development via Eluminate, created Intranet documents for individual schools and introduced GoogleDocs as a method of planning.

The most effective of these is Elumniate for staff development. The Alabama State Department has used a combination of Eluminate sessions and Moodle lessons to train administrators on the new state teacher evaluation system. Instead of leaving my school for a week long training, I have accessed 5 Moodle modules for Educate Alabama from my home. All lessons and tests were on Moodle. This required me to leave my school for only 1/2 day for a required face-to-face presentation. There has been very little communication within this program with only 2 messages through Moodle from the evaluator.

I do believe that SharePoint, Intrantet Docs and GoogleDocs will be used more within the next 2 years for planning and committee meetings as the administrator and teacher populations are younger and more comfortable with technology.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:02:49 PM
LuanneN,
It sounds like you're saying that your district has provided resources related to social networking, but that so far they aren't being used widely by educators in your district. Is that correct?
- If not, please explain.
- If so, what do you think would encourage additional use of these systems?

LuanneN Monday, March 01, 2010 1:42:32 PM
Jay,
The Computer Services Department has conducted a number of trainings for Moodle, Sharepoint, and Wiki with training for selected groups for Eluminate, Google Docs and Intranet documents. Although the trainings are excellent, when teachers, administrators, and support staff return to the classroom there is not any human follow-up support. Online documents give clear directions and reminders, but this is not always enough. Moodle has been successful at my school, because I set up specific follow-up trainings for the identified Moodle trainers who are successfully using this program. We plan to do the same next year with SharePoint so that teachers can and will keep classroom web

pages updated.

So, the answer to what would encourage additional use is: time, money, and real life need for the program.

JarredN Friday, February 26, 2010 5:44:56 PM
We are not as a district. As a concern, we would not want to create a site where it could be used to complain or take shots at our district, our school, or our staff. As stated in an earlier response, I think it would be good if I created a FaceBook page that listed reminders of upcoming deadlines, or just news like we place on the PowerPoint that runs in our building or on our sign outside. This would be good to keep people int he now and serve as reminders. Parents and/or students would not be able to post comments, but simply be notified of the updates.

GrantZ Friday, February 26, 2010 5:50:00 PM
Our school actively uses Moodle and a couple buildings using Ning. Some departments and several individual teachers are a part of social network site through their course work or through their professional organization associations.

As mentioned previously, I have used ones that have been more job-related with local principals and educators.

I believe the tools work for those who use them actively. That is the reaction I get from two of the elementary principals who use them and swear by them.

I have found in my limited experience with them that they are quick and convenient ways to communicate with people but I'm not entirely sold on their usefulness enough to want to use them as much as some others. I have not incorporated them into my daily practice for this reason.

For the above reason, social networking has not the impact on our school culture that it may have had on other schools.

There may come a day that that will change but that day will not be today.

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 3:15:45 AM
Our school district blocks outside social networking sites and the school sponsored sites have gone away because of budget cuts, bandwidth issues and lack of infrastructure. Examples of what has been blocked include Facebook, Myspace, all email sites, all blog sites, youtube etc... The district is quite restrictive for fear of any negative implications. Teachers are discouraged from having outside electronic contact with students. The district is very conservative.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:10:39 PM
DarylT,
- What do you think is the source of your district's negative attitude toward electronic contacts? For example, is it concerns about possible legal problems? Concerns about distractions from core educational priorities? Other?
- If it weren't for budget and infrastructure problems, do you feel that your district would be open to using social networking systems that were internal to the school or district (i.e., under local control)?

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 2:46:56 PM
There have been a few lawsuits and employee discipline situations involving inappropriate use of school sponsored technology. If our district had the funds and could retain control of the platform, they would be much more open to this type of technology. -No question about it.

DelilahC Saturday, February 27, 2010 12:55:44 PM

We have been using Sakai for the last few years as our internal networking system. It has grown exponentially this last year as more and more people participate. It has simplified communication in some ways and complicated it in others at least for me-everything is centralized in one place(nice), but that place has become so big, that it now taking more time to sift through all the information. There are many more groups/conversations to join and as an administrator, I have so many groups keeping me informed about their ideas and activities. I think it is now an accepted part of what we do. Once the students feel comfortable with the networking when they get to our school in 5th grade, they almost demand that all of their teachers incorpoate this into their teaching. The system is pretty tightly controlled and students have to use complete sentences, correct grammar, and proper spelling in their forums. I think it has improved our school culture when students enjoy academic discussions online.

FelipeQ Saturday, February 27, 2010 8:34:38 PM
The main use is e-mails, networks with other professional to exchange lesson plans, and school news such as bulletins, school site. As far as using social networks some of my staff use it personally at home.

Jay Sunday, February 28, 2010 7:41:28 PM
Observer note: For more information see FelipeQ's response to Topic 2, Question 2.

BellaC Monday, March 01, 2010 7:10:04 AM
We are not currently using any social networking systems. We are beginning to review systems like Moodle, Blackboard, and others to see if they would have an 'educational impact'. In the past we too, have had issues with individuals who misused or didn't understand the concept and therefore voiced concerns the loudest. Refocusing on educational positives is our challenge.

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:35:43 PM
Inside my district we have used ning to build a social network for the leadership team; central office, principals, asst principals. When we participate the system has worked very well. It is simple and has all of the elements we need - blogs, discussions, photos. We have been able to place long in-depth issues on this platforma that we can stew on a bit longer. Email is such a fastpaced "get it done" task that it doesn't facilitate bigger issues. We have not really jumped across into full everyday use with this and so we are not in the culture impact zone.

BarbieC Monday, March 01, 2010 9:43:08 PM
We are not using any social networking in our school on a formal basis. Many of the teachers and students are using Facebook as an informal method to stay in touch with each other. Teachers are using Google documents and Google sites with their students. Google documents have proven to be very effective for the teaching and learning process because they are shared documents, thus students are able to write and get feedback fairly quick from their teacher. This also provides a tool

for an ongoing editing process.

I believe the reason why social networking is not being used as a formal tool is because so far there has not been enough useful examples presented to our staff.

Question 2

Social networking is an integral part of many students' lives, but most students engage in this entirely outside of school. What do you think are the implications of this?

If you *are* using social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies *with students* in your school, how has it impacted their engagement levels and attitudes--regarding:

- – Specific school subjects?
- – School in general?

If you are *not* using social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies *with students* in your school, why not?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:11:33 AM
The district is not using Social Networking, and I know it is something the technology department is looking into but at the moment it does conflict with our district computer policy.

Jay Friday, February 26, 2010 12:29:29 PM
VitaT,
You said that your district isn't using social networking with students. What about other Web 2.0 technologies?

VitaT Sunday, February 28, 2010 5:57:16 PM
Jay,
Now that I looked up Web 2.0 technology, we are using quite a bit, we video stream in the primary classrooms, we have used video conferencing for a number of years and our Librarians blog. Many of the teachers maintain websites as a way to communicate with parents replacing traditional newsletters. There are any number of links on our district website which is quite extensive and useful to both staff and families.

Jay Sunday, February 28, 2010 7:43:22 PM
VitaT,
How are these uses of Web 2.0 technology affecting engagement levels and

attitudes toward (a) specific school subjects, and (b) school in general?

VitaT Monday, March 01, 2010 8:58:43 AM
We are a magnet school so the Video streaming and conferencing increases our ability to connect with major areas like the Metropolitian Art Musuem in New York City which we could never afford to visit on a field trip or Frist grade students can connect with a specific author. I think whenever we use technology we increase the children's interest in education. I think we have to find ways to offer more PD to staff because some of them are a little reluctant to use some aspects of technology. I have one teacher who uses it in some form every day and for most of the day and another teacher who only uses it when she has to do so. It would be great if we had more IT people in the building so they could support the staff with more of them.

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 11:29:16 AM
We are not using social networking or other Web 2.0 technologies with students in our district for the same reason the adults are not using them - a lack of knowledge and exposure to the benefits of it.

LuanneN Friday, February 26, 2010 1:48:36 PM
Okay, I'm going to confess that I had to Google Web 2.0 technologies. Computer Services frequently mentions Web 2.0 in meetings, but no one has ever given me a clear explanation or a list of Web 2.0 technologies.

Now that I understand, I see that we're using a number of things as educators and with students. 6th-8th grade teachers have posted Moodle lessons and quizzes and answered student questions via Moodle. Elementary teachers host virtual and interactive field trips to address course of study objectives. Teachers at all levels here do use TeacherTube, YouTube, and Digital Curriculum in lessons.

This year the initial Inservice meeting was conducted in a virtual field trip format. The superintendent, directors and Boar were at one school site and teachers from the other 26 schools met in one of 4 schools around the county. Each location had an opportunity to interact with the superintendent and the other locations. This was very successful and will be utilized again next year.

I had a blog first semester this year on the recommendation of a parent and teacher committee. It was intimidating at first and then just time consuming with very little readership. I am not blogging this semester. To my knowledge, only 2 of the 27 principals in the system have a blog. I communicate with parents and community through monthly newsletters posted on the website, through email and via the list serv.

JarredN Friday, February 26, 2010 5:47:12 PM
We have just not taken that step as of yet. It will be good when we do because we have had a lot of success in students providing feedback to teacher questions online or in providing feedback to writings posted by other students. Other than it being used for the appropriate purposes, my other concern is who would manage it. Like everyone else, we have fewer people to do more jobs. Very difficult to add to someone's plate.

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 3:18:20 AM

As I wrote earlier, the district blocks it, discourages it, can't fund what it could control and doesn't want to rely on outside platforms and give up control. The level of blocked sites literally comes down to the level of anything with music or video files being blocked for fear of exposure to items beyond the conservative norms within the community.

DelilahC Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:32:19 PM
We try to incorporate technology into all of our subjects as we see this as a way to keep students engaged in their learning. We have an tech integration specialist who works with staff and students to make sure the technology is not an add-on, but an authentic part of the lessons. Our district still blocks many outside sites such as facebook, myspace, games, sites specifically devoted to entertainment, and most streaming sites, so we have to point our students to educationally oriented sites. A few students occassionally find sites that work around the firewall, but we have provided so many opportunities for appropriate use of networking and alternative sites, that we rarely have issues. I have taken computer priviledges away from only 3 students this year-less than 1% of our population. Access is generally taken away for 2 weeks and I have never had any repeat offenders. The students know that technology is a huge part of their program and don't want to jeopardize their opportunities to use it.

BellaC Monday, March 01, 2010 7:21:16 AM
We are beginning to use Web 2.0 technologies as current budgets will allow. The main stumbling blocks are time and money... time to train educators, time to practice; money to train educators, etc....
I just returned from a conference on Response to Intervention, with a behavior emphasis, that dealt in part with schools having to educate students on how to behave responsibly. It seems that knowing when it is appropriate to socially interact is a hot topic.

FelipeQ Monday, March 01, 2010 10:46:04 AM
Currently our school does not have a policy on the uses of social networking, but may in the future it would be interesting in setting up a policy. Before this can take place I feel that our teachers would need some very GOOD staff development on this. Also, what legal issues are at stake with our teachers and students. As I have already stated in the state of OK if a student receives a threat at home or at school and the administator is informed them someone at the school has to investgate this issue.

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:40:28 PM
We are faced with the issues of safety and appropriateness within our technology usage. This causes many of our IT folks to be very edgy about opening up to many open social networking sites. There is also a fear among some teachers about the loss of control when outside expertise is allowed into the classroom. We have instituted ANGEL learning management system within our school. This system allows for many of the Web 2.0 tools - wiki, discussion, etc - to be available in a more controlled area. I would much rather see us be wider open in this realm.

BarbieC Monday, March 01, 2010 10:03:13 PM
I had to Google the term Web 2.0 technologies as well before I could answer this question. I am still not very clear on what Web 2.0 technology means as compared to Web 1.0 or is there a Web 3.0? The definition provided on line was fuzzy. From some examples provided, Wikipedia, blogs, Google documents, calendars, and sites, I would say we are using Web 2.0 technology with our students. We do not have the resources to maintain a formal library, yet we do require students to do research papers and exhibitions. The teaching staff spends a considerable amount of time teaching students how to use the web for research information and how to use the web to search for various pictures, video clips, and documents to incorporate into their exhibition presentation. Some of the implications we discovered along the way is students plagiarizing some papers and

they were also struggling with choosing and siting reliable sources.

The use of the technology has definitely piqued the interest and attitude of students. They are exposed to a wide range of material on any specific subject. The material they are exposed to is more dynamic than what they would get just from a textbook or from one teacher's lecture. The exposure to more ideas and information has prompted the students to ask more questions.

Question 3

What are your school/district policies on using social networking websites:

- – For teachers and staff?
- – For students?

Do you think the policies in place are good ones?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:16:20 AM
Our district policy does not really address the Social Networking issue except for the fact that unless you are an admistrator you are not allowed access to any Social Networking sites. The Firewall automatically blocks you from being able to access any of those sites. There is some discussion of Cyberbullying but it is written under the Bullying website. It maybe discussed more at the high school and middle school level, but at the elementary level, the only time it is discussed is if an issue comes up with it specifically.

> **Jay** Friday, February 26, 2010 12:31:15 PM
> VitaT,
> What additional enhancements or changes do you think would be useful for your district's social networking policy?
>
> > **VitaT** Sunday, February 28, 2010 6:00:21 PM
> > I think in order for social networking to take place we would need a comprehensive policy that has defined areas about cyberbullying as well as freedom of speech discussion in the realm of education. I think there have to be some limits to the defamation of character of other staff and students as well as the school. I think the type of topics have to be defined as within the educational realm not as much as who did something within the last five minutes like I just went to school.

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 11:30:51 AM
We are in the process of developming policies now on this - things that involved social networking - especially outside of the school day and how it may or may not impact the learning environment.

I just went to "Legal Day" and learned more and we are encouraged to be proactive in putting a policy into place and having it our handbooks.

Jay Friday, February 26, 2010 12:32:34 PM
RheaI,
- Based on your discussions so far, what topics do you think will be covered in the new policies?
- Can you predict what some of the specific policies are likely to be? If so, please share.

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 1:50:55 PM
At the seminar we reviewed social media lawsuits that include inappropriate posting by students on social networking sites and YouTube, creating Imposter websites (mostly it's the Principal being targeted) :), sexting, overzealous discipline by schools and then teacher/staff social networking and blogging.

We were encouraged to review and update our Acceptable Use Policy - there is a differenece between "on campus" speech - which has some fairly well defined rules on what schools may restrict...but the "off campus" speech is the quandary. Cyber bullying is another issue. I have listed below the cases she went over - don't know if this helps...also she said that XXXX School District here in MN has some good policies (outside of school policies) that we should check out their website...which I have not done yet.
Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 US 503 (1969)....this is the base line case for free speech issues.
J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District (Nov. 16, 2009, C.D. Calif.)
A good book by this person....not sure exact title But something like Electronic Media and the Schools by Aimee M. Bissonette, JD. Available through www.corwinpress.com

RheaI Friday, February 26, 2010 1:52:04 PM
Oh, another note...they really encouraged no staff/teacher social networking with students and probably not with parents either.

FelipeQ Friday, February 26, 2010 4:23:52 PM
RheaI, Where did you go to the "Legal Day"? I would be very interested in attending a workshop on this issue.

FelipeQ Friday, February 26, 2010 4:19:36 PM
At the present we have no policy on social networking here at school. Our school filter blocks most of the networking, but I know that my staff uses Facebook and other SN's site at home because of the comments they make here at school about checking with their site before coming to school.

Students only use the computers to do research and word processing here at school. I know that most of them text, tweet, and use SN sites at home and on their i-phones.

The state of OK passed a law last year that if a student is a victim of cyber bulleying at home and the school is informed then school must investigate the incident even if it did not happen here at school or during school hours.

JarredN Friday, February 26, 2010 5:53:08 PM

Sites such as FaceBook and MySpace are blocked for all staff members including building administrators. All of our sites being blocked are controlled by our ISD.We have not hit the time where we have placed rules or expectations on being "friends" with stduents or students' parents on social networking site. On my FaceBook page, I do not accept current students as friends or even former students from my current school. However, I do have former students as friends from my two previous schools, but I am also very selective of whom I accept.

It was funny that at last year's Senior Brucnh I spoke about cherishing their time together as other than one friend from high school, I do not stay in contact with many former high school friends. I also commented about how FaceBook has changed that and allowed me to reconnect with former high school friends. That night, I received eight requests from graduating seniors to be their friends.

I think there needs to be a fine line between school personnel and students and families in the community. I am comfortable with the former students from other schools, but primarily because they live in a different community.

LuanneN Saturday, February 27, 2010 10:58:11 AM
Within the 4 pages of Acceptable Use Policy for students and employees, the only mention of social networking is that accessing chatrooms is not permitted. This is item "q" in a list of not permitted items.

I do know that the director and instructors of the technology department post to Facebook during school hours. I do not and have instructed personnel at my school not to access Facebook, MySpace, etc. during on school hours. I also recommended not using school desktops or laptops at any time to access personal sites as a protection for them.

I believe that the policies need clarification.

DelilahC Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:57:34 PM
Everyone is blocked from using non-school networking sites on school equipment except for the principal. Our written acceptable use policy does not address social networking specifically, but definitely needs to be updated. It was written about 15 years ago and much has changed in that time. In the meantime, I have spoken staff about the perils of the social scene on the network and strongly suggested that they not friend any students, particularly those who are still in the district at any level. Some have heeded my words while others have been less prudent. I know one staff member from the high school who was terminated over something to do with Facebook, but I was not privy to the details. I also know of a teacher who had an inappropriate picture posted to a site of one of her outside-of-school "friends". A status update went out to all of her other "friends" and ended up being seen by some former students, who then forwarded it to current students. She was quite devastated, particularly when she had no control over the content of other people's pages. I use this experience when I speak with staff to ensure they are very careful of their privacy settings. We have dealt with cyberbullying and sexting through our discipline policy for students. We have fortunately had cooperative parents, but I worry that legally we have limited "teeth" to go up against parents who buck our authority.

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 2:50:58 PM
The policy is that the sites are blocked and we can't get to them on the district servers. -Teachers, administrators students. Posting socially with students on outside platforms, though not directly prohibited, teachers who have crossed the line have gotten into trouble. The advise from our leadership regarding teacher/student social networking has been to not do it.

I think we need policies in place that support the appropriate use of this technology.

Jay Sunday, February 28, 2010 10:41:39 PM
DarylT,
Can you go into more detail about what you would want to see in terms of policies that would support appropriate use of this technology?

DarylT Monday, March 01, 2010 5:08:05 AM
Right now the attitude is that "Better safe than sorry" and that leads many good sites to being blocked. Chat is blocked, outside email blocked, pretty much anything with video or music... all blocked. Before we remove a library book from our district shelves, it has to go through a committee for review. The committee measures the benefits vs. the concern and humans make a determination on whether or not the book should remain in our library. With the internet, it is just a blanket block done by some software. It is next to impossible to get a block removed in certain categories. A system the looks at the benefits as well as the drawbacks should be implemented. Site principals are usually the ones who have to deal with the complaints so they are a group who could quickly review sites that are currently blocked and make a human decision.

EvanY Sunday, February 28, 2010 10:47:18 AM

We are a charter school of students in grades 7-12. We purposely have no written policy regarding the use of cell phones, Ipods and other electronic devices. Our philosophy is to encourage the responsible and innovative use of technological devices, thereby better preparing students for the world they currently live in.

Restrictive and punitive policies regarding cell phone use have been mostly unsuccessful. Recent court cases seem to be siding in favor of students citing the right to free of speech. The school I was in before my present posting had very strict policies prohibiting cell phone and Ipod use. When I observed a teacher I could nearly always see students secretively texting. The same holds true for laptop use in class. We have wireless internet access in all our classrooms. Teachers are expected to establish and enforce their own rules about technology use in their classes. As would be expected, the rules vary from teacher to teacher. Also, as one might expect, the only problems that have been brought to my attention come from teachers who feel they need to exercise a great deal of control over student behavior. Teachers who have excellent rapport with students use situations when students abuse technology as a teachable moment.

We have had two incidents this year where a student bullied or threatened another student with a text message. We used those opportunities to engage in discussions about how individuals and the school as a whole are impacted by such actions. Apologies were made, counseling sessions scheduled and there have been no other incidents to date. Had we simply expelled or suspended the guilty parties, more anger and frustration would have been the result. The notion that students can be controlled with written policies, or adult behavior guided by laws and litigation is laughable. Given the percentage of our population in jails, one would hope we could have learned that lesson by now.

DarylT Monday, March 01, 2010 5:13:54 AM
Bravo!!! It is good to see a school looking at using personal responsiblity as part of control of behavior. Our kids go to the movies and they turn their cell phones off... it is now a societal expectation. Can't they do the same in the classroom? Just turn them off so as not to

interrupt the class... it is at least as important as not disturbing a movie. Those who choose not to have some consequences. Those who abide get better access to technology. These are logical consequences. It is a great lesson for a youngster to see that their actions have direct consequences. With rights come responsibilities and you can lose your rights in our society if you don't respect others.

EvanY Monday, March 01, 2010 3:58:19 PM
Daryl,

I feel terrible that someone with your obvious vision is in a district implementing such punitive approaches!

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:43:48 PM
We have opened a few teacher social netwoarks. Primarily Classroom 2.0. I am unsure how many or much my staff is using this tool but it is a start. Students have no access to thses resources. I don't care for this policy. We are cutting students off from the world and the rich resourses we and they know are out there.

BarbieC Monday, March 01, 2010 10:09:16 PM
Our policies have been a work in progress. We found that we had to include explicit expectations and consequences for cyber-bullying. This meant that we needed to talk to students about what cyber bullying is and is not and then tell them why it is not appropriate and not allowed in a school setting. The discussions focused on the socially responsibility that is required by all to sustain an open system of information. We also started a computer technology course that taught the following units;

1) Collaboration -- use of email and calendaring to collaborate with teacher
2) Research -- application search features, email, file system, googleDocs organization
3) Citizenship -- appropriate internet access, account and password management, responsible use of shared resources, personal and professional identity
4) Technology -- understanding internet and local applications, hierarchical filesystems, digital photography

I think our policies are a good start, but also know that we need to continue to perfect them to the needs of our rapidly growing use of Web 2.0 technology.

Follow-up

After you've completed Topic 3, please continue on to Topic 4.

Also, please check back sometime before 12 midnight Eastern Time on Sunday, February 28 to read the responses of the other participants and to write your comments to them.

Thanks again for your valuable input!

Topic 4
Read First

This final discussion topic is a chance to look ahead.

- In Question 1, you'll share your perspective about your role in helping your school staff become better able to use social networking and other online collaboration technologies.

- In Question 2, you'll look to the future and share your thoughts about how social networking and online collaboration tools might change the education experience.

Please complete your answers to these questions by Sunday, February 28, midnight Eastern time. (Please adjust for your time zone.)

Also, after completing your answers to these questions, return to the EDRoom before Sunday at midnight to read the comments of other participants and to write your reactions to them.

- To read a question, click the tab with its question number above.
*- When you've answered the question, click the **Follow-up** tab above.*

Question 1

As the head of your school, how do you see your role in helping your teachers and staff become more knowledgeable about using social networking and other online collaboration technologies?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:19:45 AM
I actually have in recent weeks been talking to an attorney about how involved I should be with social networking because we had a situation occur between staff members on Facebook and one of the particpants actually consulted her lawyer because it got quite ugly. I constantly look for ways to bring my staff into this century in technology but we are such a large district that the red tape to just looking at sites can be overwhelming at times with everything else there is to manage. I wish there were more information available in the summer when I have more time.

Jay Friday, February 26, 2010 12:34:37 PM
VitaT,
You mentioned helping to bring your staff into this century in technology. How do you try to do that? E.g., staff development, coaching, modeling, pointing staff to resources, facilitating discussions and sharing?

VitaT Sunday, February 28, 2010 6:04:41 PM
We try to purchase things like ELMO's , laptop carts, notebooks so they have the latest technology. I have a staff IT person and this year he has provided a Professional Development on Google Documents and not only did I promote attendance but I attended and then used it with staff. I try to model the use of technology at all of our faculty meetings and have my IT person always available. He will be starting a junior IT team next year which will do some basics like set up and simple problem solving. We tried that once before and it was successful, but it depends on the person you have working on it, this time I think we have a strong person.

EvanY Monday, March 01, 2010 4:10:49 PM
I know exactly what you mean, Vita, about red tape in large districts! That is why I am now in a charter school where we can set our own policy and act on it quickly rather than waiting

for the Titanic to change course

FelipeQ Friday, February 26, 2010 4:33:28 PM
Here at school the SN should be only for professional assistants, such as new ideas for teaching methods, searching for information in helping students with problems they have. I feel that its my job first do a survey to obtain what staff development is needed to help my teachers make use of the sites out there. Also, as the adminstrator I feel that it is part of my job to sit down with teachers and develop policy for the use of social networking and present these to the school board for their approval. After this is all in place I might ask my teachers that have a working knowledge of the use of social networking to colloborate with their colleagues and help them to get started using this new information highway.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:20:56 PM
FelipeQ,
- It sounds like what you're saying is that you think social networking can be a valuable tool for educators to use within a professional context, but that you don't think the district should be supporting more purely "social" uses of social networking. Is that correct?
- What are your thoughts about potential uses of social networking as an educational tool for teachers to use with their students (e.g., for online discussions of instructional topics)?

FelipeQ Saturday, February 27, 2010 8:25:27 PM

I guess it all depends on the maturity of the teacher. This would have to be on a purely instructional topics, but teachers would have to be extremly careful and keep it just for educational uses.

RheaI Monday, March 01, 2010 11:57:57 AM
I agree with Felipe here. If it doesn't enhance the educational experience for kids then it's just technology "stuff" for the sake of something that's popular.

GrantZ Friday, February 26, 2010 6:04:59 PM
As a school leader, I would see my role as that of modeling the same that I would want from my faculty. At the same time, I would want to consider the parameters that come with this form of communication: legal, ethical, etc.

I would hope that the staff would use the tool as intended with all the good that comes from keep everyting on a professional level but as we have found out with e-mail - not everyone acts professionally and some folks still commit to writing e-mails that should not be sent (poorly written, written in anger, poor word choice).

As with e-mail protocol, I would want some knowledge and information on social networking protocol - not to censor - but to ensure that everyone is aware of the etiquette that goes with this medium.

LuanneN Saturday, February 27, 2010 10:48:20 AM
My role is to model and use technolgy that I require the teachers to learn and use. Social

networking has not seemed effective or easy for me, but I'm determined to begin using social networking with committees and teacher groups instead of emailing back and forth. In the past, I've used Survey Monkey to get input for the next year's planning and scheduling. This year, I'll try a networking format that will allow teachers to respond in more detail.

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 2:55:59 PM
I think is should be used in a professional manner as a part of staff development. Discussions, ideas online book studies, etc... can be handled in a great way by a social networking site.

For students I think it could also be a great tool to assist with homework directions, homebound students etc...

The standard of using it in a professional manner is crucial and everyone using it needs to understand what professional is.

My role would be the implementation of the above and to monitor use of it educationally. I would have to make it an efficient tool for the teacher and make sure it was not more work than just having meetings in the first place.

EvanY Sunday, February 28, 2010 11:35:17 AM

I see my role as that of facilitator in the process. We have agreed to use a decision making model which engages stakeholders in discussions about how we wish to proceed toward the future. There are no "sacred cows" when discussions begin and decisions are made only when an overwhelming majority of stakeholders agree. It is essential for our school to stay focused on ways to incorporate technology into the learning process.

We know students will automatically embrace new developments in technology as they arrive in the marketplace. Keeping an eye toward the future in our strategic plan so we will not be caught unaware regarding purchasing decisions is also a high priority. The school has purchased 75 networked HP mini laptop computers for students who cannot afford their own. At $235 each, we consider this a much smarter investment than desktop computers. Our research tells us that handheld G3 and G4 devices will eventually replace laptops. We have decided not to make any more major technology purchases until we see how that trend develops. We have placed a moratorium on purchasing library and text books so more of our scarce resources can be devoted to on-line data bases. These tools allow students to access, process, and present real-time information in ways that are not possible using textbooks that are already years out of date and thoroughly "sanitized" so as not to offend anyone's sensibilities.

It is a given that technology will continue to rapidly change and have a major influence on how we learn and communicate.

BellaC Monday, March 01, 2010 7:30:42 AM
I try to be the facilitator on campus. I send faculty to conferences and workshops that review new and innovative items, I offer weekly classes (short, thirty minute bursts) on technology of the day, ranging from new software to how to creatively use our district website to items of interest found on the web. Faculty are encouraged to bring ideas to the staff about what they would like to see happening on campus. We have a committee that reviews in house grants for technology. That way faculty do not have to worry about small items not being in the budget until next year. This winds up being a proving ground where others watch to see how things work and then decide if they too want the technology.

RheaI Monday, March 01, 2010 11:53:04 AM
For starters it's about budgeting more money for PD so they can go to some Tech. meetings that are offered. And then by modeling it and talking about the benefits, etc. If a few people get excited and find it useful..it will spread.

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:46:23 PM
I mainly have tried to inform and demonstrate the power of social netwoorks to staff. Of course with limited access within the school this can be a hard thing to achieve. We have started using more shared Google Docs and some other collabrative tools but not nearly to the level we could.

BarbieC Monday, March 01, 2010 10:19:25 PM
I see my role as one of a supporter and resource provider. Our staff and students are moving very fast in finding dynamic ways to use the real-time information that is available on the web. What I feel responsible for is to provide creative space for them to explore the uses, be responsible for the incredible access that is provided, set policy and parameters of socially responsible behavior in using the technology. I also feel that I need to stay active by listening to what the uses and needs are, observe, and encourage discussion about what resources are needed to encourage teaching and learning to be the best it can.

Question 2

Looking ahead, how do you see social networking and online collaboration tools changing the education experience:

- – For teachers?
- – For students?
- – For your entire school community?

When you're ready to answer the question:
*1. Click the **Reply** button above.*
2. Type your response using the built-in word processing tool.
*3. Click the **Save** button (at the top right of the word processing tool) to post your response.*

Make sure that you see your response posted!

VitaT Friday, February 26, 2010 10:24:05 AM

I see us as needing to embrace the technology both as professionals amongst ourselves and for our students. Hopefully we will start to see more discussion of how it can successfully be used in large school district. I think as our students become more tech savy if we are not part of this process then we will make ourselves more of the dinosaurs that students already consider us to be. I think they already consider us a part of the negative part of the process when it comes to technology because we keep so much from them. We have to find a way to safely embrace it for them.

FelipeQ Friday, February 26, 2010 4:39:52 PM
We as educators must embrace the new technologies that is being offered to ourselves, students, and the entire community. If we do not we will become stagnant and will be short changing our students. It is also our responsibility to teach our students the proper way of using this technology and warn them of any dangers that may be out their in using all the new technologies. This will not be an easy task, because the speed in which technology changes today and it is our jobs as educators to keep as current as possible with this every growing way in obtaining new knowledge.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:23:53 PM

FelipeQ,
What changes do you anticipate to the educational experience of teachers, students, and others as a result of incorporating this new technology? In short, how will education change because of these technologies?

FelipeQ Saturday, February 27, 2010 8:30:47 PM
This would make teachers available to their students more often than the hours at school. This will be a great tool for students that are homebound for certain illness or maybe when students are away with parents for an emergency trips. The educator would still have to be very careful in the way they conduct themselves with this method of exchanging infromation with their students.

LuanneN Saturday, February 27, 2010 11:03:55 AM
I see social networking between teachers and students as cause for concern unless it is within the context of teaching and learning activities. I believe that teachers should not "friend" students on sites such as Facebook for their own protection. I do communicate with past students who have graduated high school and/or college through Facebook.

Online collaboration and networking tools can create a positive learning environment for today's students. I have witnessed the success of lessons through Moodle lessons and a wiki that teachers have used.

I'm not sure that I want to engage in social networking with the entire school community...particulary parents. While most parents are supportive and work with teachers and administrators for the good of their student, others would view this as an opportunity to share their current rant with a new audience.

Jay Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:24:35 PM
LuanneN,
Ideally, what changes do you anticipate to the educational experience of teachers, students, and others as a result of incorporating these new technologies?

LuanneN Monday, March 01, 2010 2:02:22 PM
Jay,
Since our students are very technology aware and experienced, we need to tap into this interest. I hope that using new technologies in the classroom and for home assignments will engage their interest, motivate them to complete assignments, and provide real life learning experiences. Once teachers become comfortable with a new technology and find benefits, they will continue to use and experiement with the application to learning. As an administrator, I somehow must find the time and money for teachers to attend trainings, have follow-up support, and observe peers who are successfully incorporating the technology.

RheaI Monday, March 01, 2010 12:00:01 PM
Point well taken on doing social networking with the entire school community. The more we allow folks to sit at home and not talk face to face on some issues raises concerns for me. People are very bold via emails, networking sites, etc.

LuanneN Monday, March 01, 2010 2:04:34 PM
RheaI,

I agree with you. My low income school struggles with low parent involvement. More are resorting to emails instead of phone calls or face-to-face conferences. They like the quick turn-around of email, but this is often and easily misinterpreted.

DarylT Saturday, February 27, 2010 2:58:10 PM
I think it can change it for all of the above stakeholders. I see it incorporated into online courses, having online PTSO meetings, as a way to connect with the community through sponsorships and advertisments. I see students completing their homework online and posting questions when they stuck on something and getting a timely answer from peers. It could be an incredible tool if we implement it correctly.

BellaC Monday, March 01, 2010 7:41:27 AM
As far a social networking, I do not believe teachers will or should socially network with students. I do believe the networking sites can benefit the system as a tool for more immediate feedback. One of the topics out now is how quickly our students change from interaction to interaction. No longer is the 50 minute lecture the way students learn. Using technology and short bites of data could be the way of the future. As a school community, we need to decide how we are going to face this new way of educating our children.

RheaI Monday, March 01, 2010 11:55:23 AM
Yes I do see both social networking and online collaboration tools as changing some educational experiences, especially for the students. They are already so engaged in it! I believe that the teachers will find it beneficial too - we currently are using Goggle Docs to collaborate on documents but it's really not that much different than putting it on our shared drive. So we'll see where that goes. The entire school community will benefit too - our Alumni Facebook page has already connected many people back to our school.

Jay Monday, March 01, 2010 1:08:58 PM
RheaI,
It sounds like the changes you foresee have to do with increased engagement and connections. Could you expand on those ideas somewhat, and/or describe any other changes to the education experience that you think social networking and online collaboration tools might foster?

RheaI Monday, March 01, 2010 5:42:14 PM
Even if I don't always think social networking is truly "engaging people"...I think the younger parents do think it is engaging them...and if they feel like they are engaged that is a step in a positive direction. We need to reach people where they are at to some extent...even with my own kids (age 25 and 23)...in order to be more engaged I have resorted to their mode of operation - by texting more instead of emailing and being on Facebook, etc.

Over the past couple of years we have had less teacher meetings because of email, because of a shared facilities calendar, etc. This helps in time...but it also lessens the human contact, actually reading people's faces/emotions, and that human touch! Balance, balance, balance.

CarlY Monday, March 01, 2010 2:48:17 PM
these collbrative tools should become the sources for learning that textbooks currently have. We need for knowledge creation and learning to be a collabrative and social experience. The ability to

question, reason, and create are vital and if schools do not do this they will be replaced by institutions that do.

DarylT Monday, March 01, 2010 4:13:13 PM
I agree that technology can be a great substitute for items like textbooks. The amount of money we spend on textbooks could easily bolster our technology to a point where we could fund technology appropriatetly.

BarbieC Monday, March 01, 2010 11:15:08 PM
I think social networking and online collaboration tools will change the education experience for many of our stakeholders and we only need to look at how the access to information is transforming traditional business and government. Companies and governments are collecting more data than ever before, allowing more opportunities for analysis of finance, human resources, or customer management. The downside is collecting more data is not useful if it is not used in efficient ways to make sense. I see this to also be true with social networking and online collaboration tools, producing more access without quality professional development on how to make meaning of a topic is not useful. Two technology trends such as cloud computing and open source software are two concrete examples of how the education experience can change. In cloud computing the internet is used as a platform to collect, store, and process data--allowing education institutions to lease computing power as and when they need it, rather than buying expensive software. As the data is managed over a network, schools can see patterns across the whole of education and share their lessons or best practices more easily. From my perspective the more access students and teachers have to meaningful data, the more transparency in government and business, the more opportunities there are to not only expose the world, but to change the world. Students and teachers have the opportunity to be change agents. The point of open information is not just to increase exposure but to actually use the exposure for some important changes in our world to improve it. Our ideas about the world are challenged with data analysis.