# **Social Media in Education**

# Twitter, Instagram & WhatsApp







ETEC510 Section 65B - Diane Janes

Final Design Project Curriculum Guide <a href="http://etec510smineducation.weebly.com/">http://etec510smineducation.weebly.com/</a>

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Curriculum Guide: Social Media In Education (ETEC510 65B)

**Introduction & Goals** 

Introduction:

The focus of this online resource is to explore the benefits and challenges of implementing specific social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp) into the classroom to help augment learning for students. The ubiquity of social media is undeniable, as is the challenge of recruiting and sustaining engagement from the modern learner. This resource seeks to explore a theoretical rationale and framework for the implementation of various social media platforms in the classroom.

Given that the general acceptance and role of Social Network Sites (SNSs) is in its relative infancy (barely a decade old), it is not surprising to find that while there is ample research and practice of such implementation, there is no generally accepted approach or specific framework that is widely practiced across the education field.

The research carried out in various academic settings looking at the effects of social media on learning have revealed mixed results. However, the benefits of SNSs in producing positive learning outcomes and becoming advantageous for both teachers and students cannot be ignored. SNSs have been credited with getting students more engaged in their subject matter, easing the communication gap between students and teachers, helping shy or intimidated students get involved in class discussions as well as fostering collaboration amongst students (Faizi et al, 2013, p. 53). Other studies have shown that the use of social media has led to the creation of online support networks managed by students themselves, which have resulted in higher morale amongst those students. These networks have been found to give learners an outlet to express their anxieties and worries while receiving empathy from their fellow classmates (Hennessy et al., 2016, p.514).

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There are several academic theories that we will address to situate the rationale behind using SNSs as an effective tool for teenage learning. These theories all encompass the contemporary ways in which pedagogical theory has been evolving to accommodate the new realities of teaching and learning in the digital age.

#### Goals:

This resource intends to illuminate the benefits of social media in the classroom, and outline possible strategies for its safe and ethical inclusion. Through this process, we must also acknowledge the drawbacks and pitfalls associated with relying on SNSs for the dissemination of information and facilitation of communication, with different way that these sites can be used as effective tools in the classroom.

Our goals with this resource are simply to help the user develop both a rationale and a framework for implementation of the three social media tools. In each section, the user will explore the broad educational potential of the platform, review the pertinent academic research, and develop specific skills and strategies to "get going" in both using and implementing the tools in their educational setting.

# **Key Frameworks**

There are several academic theories that we will address to situate the rationale behind using SNSs as an effective tool for teenage learning. These theories all encompass the contemporary ways in which pedagogical theory has been evolving to accommodate the new realities of teaching and learning in the digital age.

#### i) Electronic Learning (e-learning)

The term 'e-learning' came to be formally defined in the late 1990s as "electronically mediated asynchronous and synchronous communication for the purpose of constructing and confirming knowledge" (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p. 108). This theory of learning arose with the introduction of the World Wide Web to the public and was underpinned by the

internet along with its associated communication technologies (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p. 108).

#### ii) Mobile Learning (m-learning)

'M-Learning', defined as "using mobile technologies to facilitate learning" (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p.109), is directly tied to the development of mobile technologies that have led to mobile devices becoming integrated into daily life. Using these mobile devices, students can learn both inside and outside of the classroom, with place and time becoming less of a constraint. This has led to the expansion of educational spaces and times, taking student learning outside of the traditional buildings housing formal educational institutions and away from the hours of formal timetables. This has in turn led to the integration of learning with non-learning activities (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p. 188).

# iii) Ubiquitous Learning (u-learning)

'U-learning' is the "emphasis on the learning context where learning can happen anywhere and anytime with ubiquitous tools" (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p.109). Ubiquitous education systems are characterized by technologies utilizing ubiquitous computing, mobile devices, wireless communication, and context-aware technologies situated in an educational context. With ubiquitous learning, the emphasis is on the contextualized and situated learning that can be achieved using mobile devices as opposed to solely focussing on mobility and contextual independence (Kee and Samsudin, 2014, p. 109).

## iv) Activity Systems and Collaborative Learning

Greeno (2006) identified an activity system as a "complex social organization that contains learners, teachers, curricula and technologies" (Mouza and Lavigne, 2013, p. 5). This learning approach puts an emphasis on social interaction and students' involvement in a "community of practice that embodies desired beliefs and behaviours" (Mouza and Lavigne, 2013, p. 5-6). It also emphasises the situated view of learning where learners come together through technology to socially construct knowledge in a group. In this context, SNSs provide

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the tools for this interactivity and provide learners the opportunities to engage in creative thinking, reflection, interaction, collaboration as well as coaching and feedback (Mouza and Lavigne, 2013, p. 6).

This design project will seek to incorporate these educational approaches by demonstrating how SNSs can be effectively integrated into a high school classroom setting by utilizing mobile, digital devices, while taking advantage of the ubiquity of this mobile technology as well as the use of SNSs amongst many teenagers today. By integrating SNSs into teaching practice, we will demonstrate how students can become more situated in their learning, thereby providing more opportunities for collaboration, communication, peer assessment and critical thinking.

#### Benefits of social media in the classroom:

- The ongoing engagement (i.e. the thinking continues after the book is closed).
  Social media allows students to continue learning online, much of what they instigate it offline. By embedding social media into the routines of classroom learning, students are able to continue the engagement, with each other, and with content at home through the evening.
- Participation with a real audience: the practice of creating learning artifacts for an
  audience of one (teacher) is no longer acceptable, or particularly motivating for
  students. Production for a global audience creates an authenticity to learning
  activities.
- Greater ownership of communication and tasks. No longer is the teacher the initiator of topic-centred activities, through SNSs, students are able to initiate conversations and inquiry away from the teacher-mentor.
- Fostering of identity. Students who may be reticent to share thoughts and opinions verbally, may well experience a freedom to do so through social media.

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- Inter-dependence amongst learners. Through SNSs, students are able to help those needing alternative viewpoints and methodologies.
- Fostering positive online footprints. Education needs to reclaim the online environment in students. Too often, we simply hand over control of social networking to our children without a structured approach to teaching HOW to use it, WHEN to use it, and even WHY to use it. By structuring activities within a SNS, students are given the opportunity to practice making positive contributions that are both helpful to themselves, and helpful to the community of learners.

#### Pitfalls to consider:

- Abuse of the media cyberbullying, Facebook depression, internet addiction. If we bring SNSs into the class routine, are we feeding into negative patterns, behaviours and addictions?
- Distractibility as Abe and Jordan (2013) point out, "one may argue that students
  have historically found ways to become distracted in the classroom, students' fixation
  on social media proves to be a more powerful distraction than most". If we are using
  social media as a point of connection and instruction, the tendency to "veer off path"
  and be distracted by the digital noise of social media is significant.
- Equity of access Ribble (2011) regards "Equity of Access" as the primary
  consideration for a digital citizenship program. If we implement a social media
  component to a group of students, how do we accommodate those that do not have
  regular access at home? Any lack of accommodation would further disenfranchise
  those individuals or groups without access.
- Privacy issues Few SNSs would comply with Canadian privacy laws, especially
  when it comes to sharing information. Even those with the ability to create private
  groups or closed networks are still based in countries other than Canada and

therefore do not meet the privacy protection standards set forth by the Canadian government.

- Outside influence We must acknowledge that nothing is free, and so sites that operate without a financial outlay to the user must generate revenue elsewhere. This is accomplished through direct advertising within the site, or simply through collecting personal information which can then be sold to would-be advertisers. As educators we have an ethical responsibility which may be compromised through advertising and outside influences beyond our control.
- School, district, and governing body policies and ethics in regards to teacher-student communication outside of the classroom. This can be a significant stumbling block to teachers being involved in the same social-media circles as their students. There is an ethical line that is blurred in the realm of SNSs, and the teacher and participants must be aware of their roles and responsibilities through the participatory cycle.

# **Welcome to Social Media for Education**

Resource Link: <a href="http://etec510smineducation.weebly.com/">http://etec510smineducation.weebly.com/</a>

This website is designed as a resource for educators who wish to explore the implementation of one or all of three of these popular social media platforms in their professional practice. While not an exhaustive guide, the user should be able to



obtain both a working rationale and the basic skills necessary to create accounts and begin the navigation and implementation of these tools. This site can be navigated linearly by selecting the buttons on the bottom of each page, or users can navigate to specific pages by hovering over the drop down title menus at the top of each page.

# **Twitter for Education**

This section of the resource looks at the micro-blogging site, Twitter. Twitter's unique feature lies in it's brevity of message. Users are limited to postings that contain no more than 140 characters of text. While this provides a significant limitation of content, this limitation is also

the platform's strength, in that all "Tweets" are digestible, and where more information is needed or desired, users can post links to articles, blogs, and external sites.

As users navigate this section of the resource, they will explore the following four content areas, followed by a fifth section for a user activity:



## (1) Twitter For Education

This page leads the user through the basics of Twitter, which include a <u>Common</u>

<u>Sense Media</u> video, as well as a guide to basic Twitter terminology. As with so many platforms, Twitter users utilize a lingo that can leave the beginner user confused when someone asks, "Can I get a RT?" This primer page lays the groundwork to understanding some history, functionality, as well as the scale of Twitter.

## (2) Educational Potential of Twitter

How can a platform that only allows posts of 140-characters or less have significant educational potential? This is a valid question, and this resource page will guide users through four major possibilities for Twitter's potential in the connected classroom. It is at this point in the user's journey that they will be introduced to the themes that run through this resource, which are:

- Twitter for Student Engagement
- Twitter for Learning / Outcomes
- Twitter for Communication

These three focus areas form the three-legged-stool of this resource when it comes to educational implementation.

#### (3) Implementation Examples of Twitter in The Classroom

This six part section guides the user through progressive implementation of Twitter in the classroom. It acknowledges that not all users will be comfortable (or able) with immediate implementation of a digital tool, knowing that each school, and teacher will have different access to technologies, and bring a different level of comfort and expertise to navigating a digital environment.

Paper Tweets: This example looks at implementing Twitter-like communication without actually using Twitter. Teachers can have students create character-limited (see downloadable template) "Tweets" as students learn about hashtags, mentions, re-Tweets, and appropriate content. These



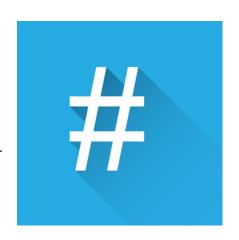
paper-Tweets can be posted on a classroom wall or window for public viewing, just as real Tweets can be viewed by the public. This baby-step into the "Twitterverse" allows for gradual teaching of good online citizenship in a risk-free, controlled environment.

The Classroom Account: While Twitter is not intended (by its own policy statement) for users under the age of 13, it can still be a valuable tool for elementary level classrooms. This section of the resource discusses the implementation of a classroom account (citing @mslsclass as an example). With classroom accounts, students can make supervised posts and connect with content area specialists, other classrooms, and so on. Teachers can also use these accounts to keep parents informed of calendar reminders and classroom announcements.

The Connected Class - When students are able to sign-up for their own Twitter accounts (dependent on school policy and other legal and ethical matters), classrooms are able to use Twitter for regular interaction both in class (backchannel communication) and out of class (post-school discussions). This scenario unleashes the real power of Twitter and can "even the playing field" for students who may be less likely to contribute ideas in class.

**Twitter Polls -** A relatively new feature to Twitter is the ability to poll users. Users can create polls with up to 4 response options; that stay "live" for as little as 5 minutes prompting immediate feedback, or for up to 7 days. User responses remain anonymous, and they can only vote once per poll. As a spontaneous formative assessment tool, or simple student (or parent) feedback tool, this extends the usability of Twitter to a new level.

Hashtags - The (#) hashtag has become Twitter's signature. The ability to search hashtagged words or concepts, and in turn hashtag your own content is where Twitter's connectivity comes alive. When we consider the power of such hashtags as #fakenews or #superbowl we can start to see not only how searchability works, but how trending topics can take



over the news. In this section, we look at how to harness the power of the hashtag, and recommend topic-specific hashtags for education connections.

Going Further With Twitter - To make any attempt to provide an exhaustive list of implementation strategies and idea would be fruitless. As technology implementation programs such as BYOD take hold in schools around the world, the ideas for how to best use mobile devices, and harness the power of social media platforms will continue to grow exponentially. This final section in implementation strategies links

the user with a number of websites' lists of ideas and innovations when it comes to implementing Twitter in the classroom.

#### (4) Scholarly Research

This page looks at what current scholarly research has to say about Twitter in education across the three domains referenced above.

- a) Twitter as a Tool for Student Engagement. In the same sense that teachers have much vying for their attention, so do students. It is valuable to know whether using Twitter in the classroom is a distraction or can actually lead to greater levels of student engagement. This section reviews a number of studies that report that both students and teachers indicate higher levels of student engagement when Twitter is utilized, but also acknowledge that those who are likely to be engaged may be the ones who are more apt to be using Twitter. Causation may be difficult to determine.
- b) Twitter as a Tool to Enhance Learning and Outcomes. This perhaps is the big question. Does using Twitter (regardless of the findings surrounding engagement and communication) actually lead to enhanced learning and improved outcomes? We look at several studies that suggest that the interconnectedness afforded by Twitter can lead to improved outcomes as a technology enhancement. Again, definitive causality can be difficult to determine, however, as instructors who use Twitter may also have a tendency to be more engaging and use various tools for differentiation and student engagement.
- c) Twitter as a Tool for School-Related Communication. This may be the most conclusive of findings when it comes to the effectiveness of Twitter in education. As a communication tool, researches discuss various domains in

which Twitter is effective in enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of school communication.

## (5) Joining the Conversation - Twitter Activity

This culminating page for investigating Twitter in education guides users through four steps to "join the conversation", and get involved in the Twitterverse, but also provide feedback of their learning experience in this module. The steps are as follows:

- a) Signing up for Twitter. Users will create a Twitter account if they don't already have one.
- b) Learning to Follow. Users will follow three identified Twitter users (two educational leaders, and this module's creator, @shua73. This will allow users to not only connect with content experts, but also provide this module's moderator to track user progress and answer any questions pertaining to user experience and learning.
- c) In Search of Hashtags. Users will explore three powerful education hashtags and view the conversation streams.
- d) Posting. Users will consider the following three questions: What are the valuable "nuggets" that have stood out to you through this module? What are your questions about Twitter and classroom implementation? What are your next steps? Users are then prompted to respond to one or all of the questions on Twitter with the hashtag, #etec51065b and their responses will appear on a Twitter stream embedded on the activity page. A padlet is also included at the bottom of the page in case users prefer to leave their comments directly on the site.

# **Instagram for Education**

# (1) Instagram For Education



This page describes some of Instagram's history and how it became a popular social media network focused on picture sharing. This page highlights its rise in popularity and its ubiquity in the teenage market.

#### (2) What does Instagram look like?

This section provides users with a preview of a few Instagram feeds to give the users a sampler of what they can expect to find on Instagram.

Three different feeds chosen are: National Geographic: @natgeo, Aaron Nimmo

@aaron\_nimmo, and #food. The purpose of including these three feeds is to show the use of Instagram across three very different domains.



#### (3) Educational Potential of Instagram

This section promotes different ways in which Instagram can be used in various subject areas. The primary use for Instagram will involve users sharing a photo, or a post of sorts, which will consist of a picture, and a written post. Some ideas are presented in this section as to how the picture sharing and the written posts can be used to share ideas and to facilitate discussion. Project ideas include creating a

fictional social media profile for a character of study, creating an Instagram post to facilitate discussion on different topics, and using the picture/video sharing functionality to model techniques taught in class.

# (4) Interactivity: Creating our own Instagram feed



In this last page, we encourage users to join Instagram and try it for themselves. We briefly outline how Instagram can be downloaded and installed, and invite users to create their own post and contribute to our Instagram feed #etec510sm.

This activity will give our users hands on experience with the app and give them a chance to explore the media platform using their own devices, the goal being to promote Instagram as being a worthy tool in the classroom.

# WhatsApp For Education

# (1) What's Up with WhatsApp?

In this section we take a look at the instant messaging application called WhatsApp. First of all you can watch a video briefly detailing what WhatsApp is and some of the ways it can be used. The rest of this section will give you



a brief description of the app and outline its growing user base worldwide. By reading this section you will get an idea of how pervasive this social media application has become around the world.

## (2) Why use WhatsApp with your class?

The second page concerning WhatsApp will outline some of the benefits identified in academic materials that have studied the use of WhatsApp in an educational setting. This is not an exhaustive list, but has been synthesised into eight points to highlight the clear advantages to integrating WhatsApp into the classroom. At the bottom of

the page there are two videos showing how teachers have successfully integrated WhatsApp into their teaching routines and the benefits they have found from doing so.



#### (3) WhatsApp Academic Studies and Lesson Plans

This third page pertaining to WhatsApp briefly looks

at some of the limited studies that have been done to evaluate the effectiveness of using WhatsApp to focus on specific learning goals. Each study comes from a peer reviewed journal and highlights ways in which WhatsApp has been found to improve learning. The research focusses on the following topics:

- WhatsApp for Meaningful Peer Assessment
- Electronic Journaling Using WhatsApp to Improve Wiring

- Using WhatsApp to Create a Flipped Classroom
- Using WhatsApp to Improve Oral Language in an ESL Context



## **Lesson Plan Activities**

Accompanying each study synopsis is a sample lesson plan activity that can be downloaded and utilized in a classroom or modified based on a the needs of the teacher. The lesson plans are meant to demonstrate specific ways in which WhatsApp can be meaningfully incorporated into various subject areas

based on the learning benefits
gleamed from the related academic
studies. They also provide examples of
assessment tools that can be utilized
for WhatsApp based activities.



#### **Extra Tools and Ideas for Teachers**

The bottom of this page includes a set of links to other websites where educators discuss ways in which they have integrated WhatsApp into their classrooms as well as benefits that they have found from doing so.

## (4) WhatsApp Interactivities

On the final WhatsApp page, users are invited to try out WhatsApp for themselves, and leave feedback and comments in a WhatsApp chat. Users will be directed through a four-step process which will include:

- 1. Downloading WhatsApp
- Launching WhatsApp on Their Devices
- 3. Personalizing Their Accounts
- Sending Messages Through Whatsapp.



All comments and questions will be greatly appreciated and responded to using the WhatsApp platform. Users will also be asked to think about the following questions when sending their comments:

- How can I see myself using WhatsApp in my teaching routine?
- What are future potential uses of WhatsApp as technology evolves and the platform continues to grow?
- What are some of the drawbacks to using WhatsApp and how can these be overcome?

A padlet is also included at the bottom of the page in case users prefer to leave their comments directly on the site.



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