

Cassandra Barnett:

Welcome to season two of SMACtalk for Educators, and we're happy to have you join us. And today, we're just going to talk a little bit about where we've been and where we'd like to go in this next season coming up. But before we really get started, I'd like to introduce our team. I'm Cassandra Barnett. I am the program advisor for school libraries for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and I'm really happy to welcome our team as we talk about social media and what we can do with it and what we shouldn't do with it. So I'm going to start with Robin Finley. Why don't you introduce yourself?

Robin Finley:

I'm Robin Finley and I have a new title this year, so I'm now working as a digital learning specialist for the Digital Learning Unit for DESE. And I'm super excited, still continuing the work that we did last year, which was wonderful, and Cassandra is a rock star, and all that she did last year, and interviewing all of our people, and then super excited about what we're going to be doing this year. And I'm going to pass that over to Shawn.

Shawn Ellis:

Well, hello, everybody. I'm Shawn Ellis. I am from the Huntsville School District and I'm the system administrator for the IT department. I'm very well versed in the world of internet. We know kids are out there in the real world. I'm new to the podcast. I was not here last year, but I am happy to be here this year, and looks like I've got a great team with Cassandra, Robin, Donnie, and I'm just excited to get the information out to the students, the parents, the teachers, whoever needs it, so they can be safer with the World Wide Web.

Cassandra Barnett:

Thanks, Shawn. We're happy to have you on our team this year. So Donnie, take it away.

Donnie Lee:

Thank you, Cassandra. Yeah, I'm Donnie Lee. I also work with DESE in research and technology. What I do in that role is online media production and podcast production, and I produce this podcast as well, along with a few others. And man, I'm super happy to have a great team to work with on this project, and I think we've already covered a lot of great ground. I think we've put a lot of great information out already that, like Shawn was saying, not just that educators can use, but even students and parents and anyone involved in a student's education and how that relates to social media can use this information to the betterment of their life, so I'm super excited about starting season two.

Donnie Lee:

One person that's not with us today, that couldn't be here, is Anne Canada. She's a really great asset to the team as well. And look forward to working with everybody in season two.

Cassandra Barnett:

I've really enjoyed the podcasts that we did last year, and I know our emphasis was on helping educators as they worked with students to help those students keep safe as they maneuvered through the internet. And one of the things I was really proud of was the fact that we were able to provide educators with so many different resources that they could use, lesson plans, ideas about how to talk with their students

about being safe as they got on the internet and used social media. And I enjoyed, so much, those interviews with the various experts that we were able to connect with and the wisdom that they had, that we could share with our educators. So Robin, what was something that you really liked best about what we did last year?

Robin Finley:

I think I loved that we got more and more people involved with each time that we did a podcast, and it seemed like we kind of upped our game each time that we did a new one. We started off the year where you were interviewing me to talk about schools, and then before we ended the year, we had some pretty stellar interview people that were going on. And I loved the fact that we provided so many resources for teachers, and because I was still connected within the schools, but not just those schools, and through the counselors, I would get so much feedback about, "Hey, this resource was really great. I use this with my advisory class. I use this with..." And anything that we're doing to help provide information to teachers that's then going to help students, that's what we're all about.

Donnie Lee:

The resources that y'all mentioned in the podcast can all be found on www.smac, S-M-A-C, talk, T-A-L-K dot I-N-F-O. That's www.smac-talk.info. There's a player right there on the site, and all of the aforementioned resources are listed there as well.

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah, and we had companion teams too because we had a team that was doing work for parents and another team that was speaking straight to kids, and so I think those are great resources too, that we ought to continue to push. And I'm hoping that in the future podcasts, that we keep coming back to some of those resources because that's not a one and done. Those are resources that we want to keep pushing out, and we don't want people to forget about them.

Donnie Lee:

Yeah, for sure. Well, talk about what we have planned for this next year, Cassandra.

Cassandra Barnett:

Well, I'm excited about it because while our main audience is going to be educators, I'm really excited this year because we're going to try to involve students and get that student voice and perspective that we can give to our educators, because we know there's a generation gap and they look at social media totally differently from how we do. And so, I'm hoping that the perspectives that we can get from students will educate educators, that will inform educators on how they can have conversations with students and meet them on their level and their perspective, because I think that's going to be a really important voice that we missed last year, but I got so excited about interviewing that team of kids at the end about the video that they had produced. And that just made me think that our educators need to hear from our students more, and this is a great opportunity for us to do that.

Shawn Ellis:

Cassandra, I agree with you on that. Working with the IT field and working with the younger generation versus the older generation, there is a distinct gap between the teachers and the students because the

language is different. The student language that they're using today is different than something we grew up using. I see that when I'm in the classrooms, that there's a small disconnect there between the teachers and the students. And I think if the teachers had that information, they would be more understanding to be able to talk to the students, the students to talk to the teachers, and the students wouldn't feel like that, "Oh, they're just the older people that don't understand this."

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah. I've been reading a book. It's a fiction book, but it's about a blogger, and there's all this jargon that's been thrown in there. I've had to pull out that Urban Dictionary to try to figure out what some of that stuff means, so even though I feel like I'm fairly savvy when it comes to technology because I've been doing it for so long, I still have a lot to learn, so I think there's a lot of educators out there that can benefit from hearing from our students.

Robin Finley:

I think, absolutely, hearing from our students, and some of it is about the perception of things, not really even the reality of it. And so, sometimes we think that students think a certain way, and that's totally different. It's their perception of things, and so I think we have to be very mindful of that. And that's one wonderful thing of the feedback that we got last year, was, "I hadn't really thought about it that way. I hadn't really thought about how to do this." And so, I'm excited about that for this year, I really am, at that next level.

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah, and-

Shawn Ellis:

And I think giving the students a voice, that a lot of them were afraid to talk to the teacher because they were afraid of offending the teacher or saying something wrong, to where the student feels like they should be able to have that bridged gap to where they can have the conversation with the teacher and say, "Hey, this is what we're talking about when we're talking about technology," because every teacher out here is using classwork or a classroom where they're trying to assign assignments to it. And sometimes the students get frustrated and lost in all the work that they don't understand how to talk to the teacher and the teacher doesn't understand what the student's going through.

Cassandra Barnett:

I mean, I'm open to the idea of learning a lot from the kids about this, and so I'm hoping that's what our educators that listen to the podcast get out of it, because even something as simple as the idea of privacy, how I look at privacy and my privacy and how students, at least, my observations of students, and how they look at privacy, they're a lot more willing to share stuff that I wouldn't. I'm not even sure I'd get it out of my living room, much less, put it out on the internet. So I think that's going to be a real eye-opener for us as educators when we talk with our students.

Robin Finley:

Well, and I believe we're giving the teachers the tools to talk about that, you know what I mean, because privacy is such a huge thing now that I think the perspective now that teachers are beginning to mold

too, is that privacy is as essential as having a pencil in your... I mean, it really is, because of all of the things that we're doing online. And so, who best teaches that to the students than their own teacher, and who best can receive that communication than the students who are going to go, "Oh, well, how about on Instagram, I could do this, or how about..."? And if a teacher has that full knowledge of the data privacy and what that means, I just think it's very impactful for what we're doing and the message that we're giving or sending.

Shawn Ellis:

Yep, I agree. A lot of the teachers are afraid of the platforms that are out there, like Instagram and Pinterest and other platforms that the students are using at a high rate of speed, and that's how they're communicating to each other. And here, I know, as a technology guy, that sometimes you're like, "Ah, I wouldn't want to click on that or click on this," and teachers are somewhat leery of doing the same thing because it's the fear of the unknown. And the students, I watch them all the time, they just start clicking on stuff, and if it's... Oh, well, I back up or I just delete it and go start somewhere else. But it's crazy to watch how easy they are about privacy and that it's nothing to them.

Cassandra Barnett:

I think what's important for us to realize is that the cat is out of the bag, so it's not like we can say, "Oh, we're not going to deal with that," or, "We're just going to shield our kids from those things." What we really have to do is teach them how to use it appropriately and effectively, and so that's a whole different approach than, "We're just going to save our children by not exposing them to it," because we know that they are going to be exposed to it, so we want them to be able to handle it appropriately and not get themselves into trouble.

Shawn Ellis:

Use smart choices.

Cassandra Barnett:

That's exactly right.

Robin Finley:

And there's another tool that Ray Girdler and Daniel Collier from research and technology, they put together this student privacy... It's in Pear Deck, and it is awesome for teachers to use, to be able to go through this whole thing. And so, an initial resource, if a teacher's just getting into that this year, that would be the very first thing that I would send them to because it's incredible. It's on the DESE website under research and technology, under districts, and it's the very first thing. It's talking about student privacy. But there's so much to that, that I believe that teachers want to embrace. They just may not have the knowledge of that data privacy side. And we started that conversation last year, and so looking forward to continuing that this year.

Cassandra Barnett:

Now, one idea that we might want to consider is actually using that Pear Deck in front of a group of students here on this podcast and just get their impressions and their thoughts about that.

Robin Finley:

Oh, that's-

Cassandra Barnett:

I-

Robin Finley:

... a good idea.

Shawn Ellis:

Yeah, that's excellent.

Donnie Lee:

Let's talk about that, right quick, on how we can... or what we are wanting to do with students and how they can get involved in this podcast, as far as what our outreach is going to look like and how folks can get in contact with us, because we would love nothing more than to feature kids from all around the state that are into all kinds of different things on the podcast.

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah. I don't know if we can do something like a commissioner's memo, but we can certainly use DESE's social media to push out there and do some recruiting of students and a teacher that works with those students. I would hope that we push this, at least this season, out to parents because I think parents would benefit from hearing their kids talking about this. And we know that the conversations that our children had with us are going to be different than the conversations that our children had with other adults, so it could be very enlightening, so I would hope that we'd even push it out to parents.

Donnie Lee:

I bet we can get with the parents' committee and do a little cross-pollination there [crosstalk 00:15:08].

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah. And I'm wondering if we might want to try to also push out to the homeschool people because I think that kids that are homeschooled might have an interesting perspective that we would want to hear.

Robin Finley:

I agree with you. And we're about educating all kids and helping all educators educate kids, so I think that's... We need to encompass everyone. And as far as the social media goes, we can easily push a lot of that information out on the Digital Learning Unit's social media page. I think every avenue that we can hit is excellent.

Robin Finley:

And our side of allowing the students to come in and speak is going to be so that the teachers are going to have feedback of the perspective of the students, because data privacy is not something that we need

to just put to the side. Everybody needs to be involved in it, the teachers and the students, and so we need to hear what the kids have to say, what's your perception of this, how do you perceive data privacy, so that it's not one of those things that they set to the side and think they can interact without it, because you can't interact without it anymore. You can't.

Cassandra Barnett:

That's exactly right, exactly. Pushing out to school librarians is going to be another way that we can connect because school librarians tend to have pretty good relationships with certain groups of kids, and one of them are those geeky kids that are going to be all about social media, so I think that they'll help us identify some students as well, that we can-

Donnie Lee:

That's my kids-

Cassandra Barnett:

... interview.

Donnie Lee:

That's my kids right there.

Shawn Ellis:

We have EAST programs. I know everybody in the school should have EAST programs as well. And you talking about kids that are out there on the web, they're already working on networks and [crosstalk 00:17:05]-

Cassandra Barnett:

Oh, yeah, they're creating all kinds of content on their own.

Donnie Lee:

Another good group of kids that would be a very interesting interview would be student athletes and how they use social media to contact potential colleges, or how they frame their social media in order to look more attractive to college recruiters.

Robin Finley:

And-

Donnie Lee:

That's also true for academics as well.

Robin Finley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). Having a nephew that we went through that process last year as he was trying to get recruited, there's just a whole lot to that, Donnie, that the kids need to know because I think athletes sometimes just try to hashtag everybody in there, and that didn't work if they

don't have a connection with that coach already. And so, there's a whole process to that too, that athletes might not know. Hey, here's the ins and outs of doing this and not doing this as far as what you do and how you do that, so I think you're right. That's a good crew to talk to.

Donnie Lee:

Oh, yeah. They would have very specific insight, I think, for better and for worse, maybe, on how they approach social media, or how they use that or incorporate digital online media into what it is they do and what apps they're using to do that. That's a dense topic, but I would love to hear from somebody that's really a five-star kid, that's looking to get into division one college somewhere, and what they're doing, and what their social media life is like, and maybe who has been mentoring them in order to do all the right things, right?

Robin Finley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I bet Coach Neighbors, the University of Arkansas girls' coach, he had two five stars, and one of them was out of Fort Smith, this last year, and I bet we could get connected with that, kind of like what we did [inaudible 00:19:18] stuff, only do it from the students' perspective of that. You know what I mean? Of course, I mean, I realize we're teacher, but we're using the students to give us feedback from that to help them educate the teachers.

Donnie Lee:

Well, coaches are teachers too, and I think that they could benefit... I think they get stereotyped sometimes as being fairly much pointed in one direction, the win-loss column, and do whatever it takes and all that. There's more to it than that. There's a lot of psychology that goes along with being a student-athlete and managing the social demands. Their social demand is a little bit different than just your average school kid's sometimes.

Shawn Ellis:

The thing about this is, we can utilize those students who have done that and utilize that platform to gain their perspective into the college realm, to teach the younger students coming up what to do and what not to do on social media.

Donnie Lee:

The students then become the teachers.

Shawn Ellis:

Students, I found, listen to other students a lot faster than they do teachers.

Cassandra Barnett:

Sure they do. I think another group of kids that I'd like to tap into are gamers because there's a whole social media platform that goes along with online gaming that's... It's a little different from when we plugged into the Xbox or whatever and we were pretty much by ourselves. There's this whole social aspect to gaming that I think would be interesting for us to contemplate with our students.

Donnie Lee:

Here's the thing with gamers too, is that it's not just about their interaction in the social platform of a video game and how that, either chat or live chat, livestream situation with the game, works out. Most of those guys are also content creators and running a YouTube channel, so there's a whole nother layer of social media aspects, from how they create the channel, how they utilize even the language, of how they mitigate that, how they mitigate the comment section. There's a litany of things going on there.

Cassandra Barnett:

And there are gamers that actually have thousands of followers who, every time they're about to get online to play a game, everybody knows about it because they've announced it and everything. So I think that would be another interesting perspective that we don't really think about in school, but golly, think about all the-

Shawn Ellis:

[inaudible 00:22:09].

Cassandra Barnett:

... problem-solving and critical thinking that goes on with kids that are gamers in that way. And we need to tap into it and be aware of it.

Shawn Ellis:

Donnie, you're right. We've got a gentleman who, or a young kid, who just graduated high school last year and is in college, and he has his own platform out there and is a gamer. And they also police their own gaming friends. I was listening to them the other day and they were talking about one of the guys was coming in and stealing their treasures amongst each other, and they actually made a little jail and a trap, and trapped him in the jail. And then he had to own up to stealing their, what do they call it, experience points, or XPs, and stuff like that. And then he had to actually apologize and give it all back, but they created a way to stop him from doing this online and they policed their own, and to-

Robin Finley:

Well-

Shawn Ellis:

... do that was really cool.

Robin Finley:

I was going to say this, and I'm glad you said that, Shawn, because I think they know more about real-life data privacy than we could probably ever teach because they do police their own and they have encountered that. I mean, I don't know too many that haven't been in the gaming world, that there hadn't been somebody that's gotten... They know somebody that's gotten their credit card stolen, all of those kinds of things, aspects of that, so it's real-life data privacy with that group of kids.

Shawn Ellis:

Yeah. Cassandra, that was a good idea, because if you-

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah, I just had it. Occasionally, I do have little moments of brilliance, and that just popped into my head. I mean, a lot of what we've talked about have been high school kids and post-high school, but I think it would be a good idea for us to have conversations with our middle school students and elementary students. I think it would be difficult to interview a first grader for a podcast about social media, but I bet we could talk to a fifth grader about it.

Donnie Lee:

You could've talked to my boy in fifth grade about it because there was no way I could keep him off of it, right? And after a while, it was one of those things. In fifth grade, he didn't have his own Facebook account and all this other jazz, right, none of that, but my ignorance was his open door. So I mean, he's got a Discord account and playing all these video games and stuff with people, livestreaming, and it's kind of like... I can't keep this kid in a box. If this is what he's going to do, it's what he's going to do.

Donnie Lee:

And the best thing that I can do is to give him pointers on what's socially acceptable, not just in real life, but also within the social media realm, and it's done pretty good. I ain't saying that I'm parent of the year by any stretch of the imagination, but he does fairly well about like what Shawn was saying, sort of policing their own and really being responsible about how he goes about his business online.

Shawn Ellis:

They actually get offended when somebody does something wrong or lewd or something on their site, and they get upset. I've seen them even kick them off the server.

Donnie Lee:

Oh, yeah. Especially if you're recording a livestream that you want to put out on YouTube or something like that and you're trying to run a clean channel and somebody is using some pretty blue language, they'll be like, "You're out of here, Jack. I don't want to spend that much time in post, trying to filter you out."

Shawn Ellis:

And these are friends in school that are classmates, and they look at him, flat out, say, "Hey, you're not going to do that on my site," and I'm proud of them that way because they stand up for themselves.

Donnie Lee:

And maybe have a little bit easier time doing it, because it's harder to stand up for yourself face to face than it would be if... Whenever you're behind the keyboard, you can be like, "Hey, I don't have to tolerate this. You're out of here."

Shawn Ellis:

See, I've always told in internet safety, when I was teaching that as a school resource officer, is that, "You can be anything you want on the internet. You can be any avatar you want. You can be 10 foot tall and bulletproof, if you'd like." That's their mentality. On the internet, I can do what I want and say what I

want, but then in real life, you may not want to stand up to another person or be as vocal. They feel empowered.

Donnie Lee:

And to understand that the flip side of that is true as well, and you don't necessarily always know who you're talking to, and I think they understand that very, very well. I think they understand the fact that, just because I see the 10 foot tall someone that... their avatar is a gorilla, doesn't necessarily mean... It might be a girl in fifth grade. It could be anything, or the thing that you think might be a girl in fifth grade could be a predator, and I think they're very much acutely aware of that.

Donnie Lee:

Going back to my boy, he would sometimes... He's wearing headphones a lot, he's wearing cans, but I can hear. When their voices started changing, right, I'd be like, "Who are you talking to on there?" He's like, "Oh, that's my buddy from math class," or whatever. I'm like, "My goodness, I thought that was a 30-year-old man." He's like, "Man, everybody's voice is changing," so that was a eye-opening moment for me. But you got to do that as a parent, monitor that, but they know it too. They, to a degree, know when they're playing with adults and playing with children.

Cassandra Barnett:

Yeah, yeah. Well, we hope they do, anyway.

Donnie Lee:

But-

Shawn Ellis:

But I think they learn to police themselves and they know right and wrong, and what's good and bad, and I think we need to give him a little more credit. I've always been one of those, I guess, umbrella daddies, that as a law enforcement officer, you want to protect everybody from all bad. But sometimes you forget that they do have their own little minds and they do have a common sense enough to realize that, "Hey, that's a bad guy, that's a good guy." And even by listening to them on the internet, when they start doing, like you said, the blue language and stuff like that, they pull away and say, "No, not on my watch." They'll disconnect them.

Donnie Lee:

Especially if they're running a YouTube channel because you'll get flagged for dirty content on there. You'll lose subs. That's a big deal then. They want to be recognized. And when you start detracting from their stats, they get a little edgy.

Cassandra Barnett:

We had one topic on here that I'd like to make sure we cover, which is, what are the topics that you think we need to cover over this next season? Do we repeat the same ones, but get just the students' perspective, or do we come up with a whole new list of things? I mean, I think we've got some that we didn't tackle last year, like gaming, but I think there's some topics we may want to revisit. What do you all think?

Donnie Lee:

I agree. I think we didn't really discuss things in depth, like Discord, real-time group chat, that's hugely popular. I mean, that's how my kids hang out. We used to go down to the mall and hang out with a skateboard and go to the pizza joint and maybe the CD... None of that exists anymore.

Shawn Ellis:

You mentioned the word-

Donnie Lee:

It's all gone.

Shawn Ellis:

... mall, and how many people even know what a mall is anymore?

Donnie Lee:

Right. I probably sounded like I was speaking a foreign language right there to anyone under the age of 20, but that's how they hang out. They hang out online. I would like to get into a conversation with kids about, not just their feelings about it, but how they actually use that, to what benefit, and what that whole social structure feels like for them, because I sure don't know.

Shawn Ellis:

Right. On our platform, have we asked the teachers what they want to know about what the students were thinking? I didn't watch last year's.

Donnie Lee:

That's a poll that we really didn't take. We just assumed it. In retrospect, that's probably a great question.

Robin Finley:

It really is.

Cassandra Barnett:

Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea for us to put out a Google form, or something, and push it out to see what kind of feedback we get.

Donnie Lee:

I have a few teacher friends that we communicate, and of course, with the challenges that we faced last year with COVID and remote learning and all that kind of stuff, we've had a few conversations about some of the growing pains involved in that.

Donnie Lee:

And I think that we're striking pretty close to the iron with some of the concerns that I've heard with, not just kids maybe overusing social media and what can be done to help them wean off internet abuse, I don't even know what you would call that, addiction-level internet abuse, all the way to, how can I better implement these types of things that they're actually using to my advantage in the classroom without sacrificing student privacy, or overstepping my bounds, or breaking some sort of district protocol in doing that?

Robin Finley:

Well, and I think the GUIDE for Life resources that we had last year, maybe even bringing them in to talk again because... And I know they have their own podcast, but I feel like anything we can do, crossover, and maybe this year, we can get Chelsea Moore involved with the parent and family engagement, because anything that we're doing to involve the teacher side of how to interact more with the parents and how to interact more with the students, I mean, any resource that we give to that is excellent.

Shawn Ellis:

You see, something we need to explain to the teachers and the students that we're not prying into your personal life and your business. We want to know how we can help you, as educators, to get over the hump of asking a teacher for help and if you don't know the questions or the answers. We're not trying to pry into what you're doing. We just want to know how we can help you, as educators, to get over the hump. I think we're heading in the right direction just by our conversations today. I think we have a good understanding, devoid of misunderstanding, and heading the right way.

Donnie Lee:

Yeah, this is a good group. This is a good group of diverse minds that will... What we'll have the biggest problem with is recording three-hour podcasts that I have to narrow down to 20-minute chunks.

Cassandra Barnett:

But you know what, that this could be our-

Donnie Lee:

That's a good problem.

Cassandra Barnett:

... first three... That could be our first three podcasts instead.

Donnie Lee:

That's right. That's a good problem to have. It's never a problem to have too much raw footage, so-

Shawn Ellis:

[crosstalk 00:34:04].

Donnie Lee:

... it's always good to have.

This transcript was exported on Aug 27, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Robin Finley:

Guys, I got to leave. It's been great seeing you all today.

Donnie Lee:

Thanks, Robin.

Robin Finley:

I got a meeting in a few minutes.

Cassandra Barnett:

Well, I want to thank all of my guests who have joined me today to talk about the future of our podcasts for educators, and we look forward to the next season and all of the interviews that we're going to have with students, getting their perspective. And hopefully, we're going to benefit educators as they work with students to be effective users of social media, so thank you all for joining us today.