



Teens & Social Networking in the School & Public Library

Social networking technologies have many positive uses in schools and libraries. They are an ideal environment for teens to share what they are learning or to build something together online. The nature of the medium allows students to receive feedback from teachers, peers, parents, and others. Social networking technologies create a sense of community (as do the physical library and school) and in this way are already aligned with the services and programs at the library/school

Schools and libraries are working to integrate positive uses of social networking into their classrooms, programs, and services. By integrating social networking technologies into educational environments, teens have the opportunity to learn from adults how to be safe and smart when participating in online social networks. For example:

- A math teacher has students serve as scribes on his class blogs. Students post notes, visuals, formulas, activities and comments related to each day's lesson. They also post reflections about where they are in their learning at least once before each test. Using the technology in this way gives students the chance to process learning and as a result better understand the content.

See <http://pc4sw06.blogspot.com/>

- A school uses blogging software to publish its newspaper. The blog format allows for timely publication and the ability to make updates easily. This format also allows for comments from readers and easy navigation to archived stories. Publication costs are minimal (no color print costs!) and there is no limit to the length of the paper, allowing for more student participation.

- An author creates a blog as a way to reflect on the reading and writing experience. Teens who enjoy the author's work keep up on what the author is writing and thinking through the blog. The author blog is used as a research source and as a way to communicate with the author about books, reading, and writing.

See <http://www.sparksflyup.com/weblog.php>

- Two biology teachers in different parts of the country are working with students on the topic of water quality and ecology. The teachers create a joint wiki for the unit of study. As students find information on the topic, they post to the water quality wiki findings, observations, and useful resources. Together students build an online resource (their own encyclopedia) on the topic.

Literacy & Social Networking

Social networking tools give teens meaningful ways to use and improve reading and writing skills. All social networking software requires teens to read and write. When a teen:

- Creates a profile on a social networking site,
- Posts or comments on a blog
- Adds or edits content on a wiki
- Searches for social content
- Consults peers online as a part of research

Reading and writing skills are required. This is why these technologies are often referred to as the read/write web.

YALSA is the fastest growing division of the American Library Association (ALA). For nearly 50 years, YALSA has been the world leader in selecting books, videos, and audio books for teens. Visit the YALSA blog at <http://blogs.ala.org/yalsa.php>. For more information visit <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/> or call 800-545-2433, ext. 4390

- A public library creates a My Space site as a way to connect with teens in the community. The space includes quick and easy access to the library catalog and other research tools. It also includes information on programs and services at the library in which teens can take part. Teens who are not traditional library users learn about and use the library through My Space because they are familiar and comfortable with the technology. Teens make the library one of their My Space friends and then are reminded of the library whenever they log onto their space.

See ImaginOn Library Loft, <http://www.myspace.com/libraryloft>

Hennepin County Library, <http://www.myspace.com/hennepincountylibrary>

Developmental Assets & Social Networking

When schools and libraries help teens use social networking tools safely and smartly, they also help teens meet their developmental assets as defined by the Search Institute.

(<http://www.search-institute.org>) For example when teens:

- Learn how to use blogs, wikis, and My Space sites within an educational context they learn about **boundaries and expectations**.
- Are able to use social networking tools in learning they have a **commitment to learning**.
- Have the opportunity to communicate with peers, experts, authors, etc. via online social networking they develop **social & cultural competence**.
- Work with adults and peers on developing social network sites and teaching how to use these sites they are **empowered**.
- Have a voice in the future of the school or the library they gain a sense of **personal identity** and value.
- See how librarians and teachers use social networks they are presented with **role models**.

- A high school student creates a My Space site for a British poet she needs to study. As she gathers information, she enters it into the poet's My Space profile. She uses the blog function to post the poems she analyzes. Before long, other MySpace authors and poets (some real, some not) befriend her poet. They comment on what is written and lead the student to more resources. The student has to adopt the persona of her poet and imagine what the poet's responses might actually be.

- An author creates a My Space account as a way to keep in touch with teen readers. The author's space includes biographical information, book information, and reflections on reading and writing. Teens interested in the author can communicate with him or her via My Space and are able to perform primary source research via the author's My Space site. See Rachel Cohn, http://www.myspace.com/rachel_cohn

- A public library invites parents and teens to a meeting about My Space and other social networking tools. Librarians and teachers talk about how My Space is being used in the classroom and library. Law enforcement officials are on hand to talk about how to help teens stay safe while participating in social networking online. Parents and teens leave the meeting with knowledge of what the tools are and how to use them smartly and safely.

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More Information on Social Networking & Teens in Schools & Libraries

Farnham, Kevin and Dale. **My Space Safety: 51 Tips for Parents and Teens**. How To Primers.com, 2006.

Two parents discuss how other parents can help guarantee their teens are safe when using social networking technologies.

Prensky, Marc. **Adopt and Adapt**. Edutopia, 2005. Available at:

http://www.edutopia.org/magazine/ed1article.php?id=Art_1423&issue=dec_05#

Prensky covers why it's important for schools to integrate new technologies into the classroom.

Prensky, Marc. **Engage Me or Enrage Me: What Today's Learners Demand**. Educause, September/October 2005. Available at: <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/erm0553.pdf>

A look at why using technologies that are of interest to students improves learning and engagement.

Richardson, Will. **Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for the Classroom**. Corwin Press, 2006.

Richardson explains how and why social networking technologies can be used in the library and classroom.

Social Networking Sites: Safety Tips for Tweens and Teens

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec14.htm>

A short and useful list of reminders for staying safe on social networking sites (and online in general.) Includes a list of resources for finding out more.

Teens Content Creators and Consumers

http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/166/report_display.asp

This Pew Internet in American Life report how and why teens use technology to communicate and develop content.

Weblogg-ed

<http://www.weblogg-ed.com/>

Educator and technology specialist Will Richardson discusses how and why new technologies should be integrated into the classroom and library on his frequently updated blog.

Wired Safety.org: Blog Sites, Profile Sites, Diary Sites or Social Networking Sites

<http://www.wiredsafety.org/internet101/blogs.html>

Information on what parents need to do in order to help their children stay safe when using social networking technologies.

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