

Social networking and school: can schools benefit from a social media presence?

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If one thing has been made clear by the internet over the past generation, it is that the social networking phenomenon is here to stay. The interconnectivity of people online might have seemed like a farfetched science fiction idea thirty years ago, but there is no getting away from the fact that the majority of school aged individuals in 2018 do more networking via a screen than they do face to face.

Rather than take an old fashioned and reserved approach to this modern era, it could be argued that focus now needs to be put towards trying to find ways to make social networking platforms a beneficial aid for schools and students, rather than something that is mainly used as a procrastination tool to escape studies. Let me assess a few key ways that schools can learn to use and embrace social media. Whereas once school was seen by students as some sort of daytime prison to grin and bear until the final bell of the day, new generations of teachers are now starting to understand the benefits of making the academic environment one that is much more appealing and 'fun' for the pupils. Cultivating a strong social media presence on behalf a school can lead to much more engagement and enthusiasm on the part of those who attend. Having a Facebook page, Instagram account or Twitter account provides a creative outlet where posts can be shared that show a much more interesting and innovative stream of activity than an old, traditional newsletter used to evoke. Giving a school an online identity also opens its up to stronger connections with outside figures and the wider community, and this includes giving the parents of students a more intimate feeling of association with their children's academic lives. Parental communities have always been a strong and positive factor in schooling, and

it seems to make perfect sense that these kinds of communities be given the chance to flourish online in this modern era of social networking. Having a strong social network presence is an effective way for a school to keep both students and parents abreast of the everyday goings on and events. It would be fair to say that not all students are outgoing enough to seek out every single opportunity at school, and not all parents like to badger their children enough to discover what is going on every single day.

Being accessible in a social networking capacity can help to bring these kinds of individuals into the academic fold in a way that they feel comfortable with. One final thought on the impact that social networking can have in a school environment is that it allows the institution to keep its finger on the pulse when it comes to current world trends that could be applied to an academic setting. At any one time there are hundreds of hashtags surfacing online that allude to a classical author's national day, an annual school sports day, or even an equality or inclusion-based event that certain teachers may not have even been aware of. Being connected online to so many other academic sources and establishments can help individual schools to have much better relationship with the wider learning community, and this will in turn help them to provide a more positive and fulfilling educational experience for their students. In conclusion, it is clear to see that striving to keep social media/networking and a school environment separate is not only a bad idea, but also potentially a missed opportunity to being learning into the twenty first century for so many students who would benefit from a more modern approach.