CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Schools and Facebook: Moving Too Fast or Not Fast Enough?
Contributed by Matt Levinson, Nueva School, Hillsborough, CA

Last year, when I purchased my iPhone, I braced myself for the 4-hour online tutorial to learn how to navigate the device. However, just as I was sitting down to begin the tutorial, my 8 year-old son told me not to waste my time. He could teach me in 20 minutes, he stated boldly. All he needed was a little time to "play" with the phone. Sure enough, he proved to be a better and more entertaining teacher than the online tutorial and I fast learned the basics of iPhone use. He continues to be my iPhone navigator, updating the phone, looking for "cool" apps to add and explaining the phone to me in clear, easy to understand language.

Technology has flipped our roles. It used to be that parents and teachers taught children. Now, the reverse is true and the quicker we can grasp this concept, the better equipped we will all be to live in the 21st century. President Obama knows this. He has retooled government's approach to communication. Each week, he uploads his weekly address to YouTube, the White House web site invites viewer interaction and he even found a way to hold onto his BlackBerry. And, the President has enlisted a chief technology officer to rewire the government's whole technology apparatus.

Schools need to do the same. Students are fast growing disenchanted with the snail's pace of change going on in classrooms regarding teaching with technology. Thankfully, some teachers have grabbed the mantle and are taking steps to meet students where they are in the online world. One talented teacher cooked up an entire 20th century China project on Facebook. Students adopted the personalities of Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong and Chang Kai-shek and created and updated Facebook pages and profiles, replete with photos and wall postings. In the words of the teacher: "This project changed the classroom. Students were so motivated and put far more hours into their research than they would have done with a traditional project." The best part about this project was the organic way it developed in the hands of a teacher who listens to her students. As the class brainstormed the beginning stages of the unit, one of the students simply suggested that the class create Facebook pages for the three leaders and be required to chat, post and debate online. Instead of balking at this potentially outlandish idea, this teacher jumped at the opportunity. This is exactly the kind of collaborative learning that the 21st century demands, but it does mean surrendering a bit of curricular control to the students. For many teachers, letting students "run" the show poses a challenge to the traditional "sage on the stage" model, even in the most progressive of teaching environments. The time has come to turn the reins over to the students.

What if there was a school where every teacher was required to run their courses on Facebook? Many schools have pushed teachers to have their own websites, with syllabi, unit samples and topical web links. But the missing piece with this type of design is the lack of interaction for the user. Facebook forces interaction and active learning. It has speed and multi-tasking wrapped into one page. One teacher with whom I have spoken says just this: "Students multi-task and we need to create classrooms that multi-task." This particular teacher has given her classroom a facelift and she teaches the class essentially online. YouTube, Google images, and iTunes songs plaster her Power Point lectures and she daily posts to a class blog and includes interactive features in her homework assignments. Students love her class and they rarely get sidetracked, as they take notes on their laptops and input data during hands-on labs. This teacher's premise is to make the classroom mirror the online lives of the students so that students will not be distracted from educational goals. She has never had a

technology related discipline issue in her class. Imagine this teacher with a school sanctioned Facebook page. Her already innovative approach would increase exponentially.

Another teacher designed a mock trial simulation to facilitate the use of technology and dialogue around the issue of cyberstalking. The topic was timely, given the tragic suicide of Megan Meier, the thirteen-year-old girl who fell prey to an appalling hoax on My Space. Megan's story acted as a backdrop to the trial. One of the written assessments asked students to compare Megan's story to that of the victim in the cyberstalking mock trial. This activity captivated the students and they soared with a deep, meaningful learning experience and authentic uses of technology. Each legal team created a blog to share legal strategy. Students posted late into the night. Jury members took careful notes on their laptops during trial proceedings. Using the video camera on the laptop, students videotaped opening and closing statements and assessed their performance. Instead of technology as a distraction to learning, in this situation, technology enhanced teaching and learning. Where earlier in the semester this teacher had battled students over appropriate use of technology in the classroom and staying on task when writing, she now had success in harnessing their collective energy around a genuine learning experience. Again, though, visualize this assignment on Facebook. The number of viewers increases, the potential for collaboration across schools heightens and the power of audience surges.

The virtue of the online classroom is that it does not require classroom walls. Learning goes on 24/7 and with the right design students will want to spend their time outside of school collaborating and adding content to class Facebook pages, for example. The teacher who created the 20th century China assignment shared that her students added to their class created Facebook pages at every hour of the day and night. **Motivation skyrocketed and learning grew more authentic with a real time audience.**

Dale Dougherty, editor and publisher of Make Magazine, has likened schools of the future to a wild ecosystem. Students are growing up in a jungle, he argues, and schools need to figure out how to make sense of the "wild." One productive way to do this is to develop a giant smart grid to disseminate information and facilitate communication through student developed Facebook pages, where key educational interests and accomplishments are posted and shared. Current project work can then grow more quickly and deeply with collaboration across states, countries, and continents, Dale explains. One key question schools need to begin to ask is what is the enrollment at school beyond school walls?

We live in a "flat" world as Thomas Friedman has argued. This "flatness" must extend into the field of education. The old hierarchical model of education needs to be dismantled in favor of cross platform teaching and learning. President Obama has rewired government and schools need to seize the moment. We can't wait and more importantly, kids can't wait. Now is the time for full-scale reconsideration of instructional delivery with the latest technology tools. As the recently released MacArthur Foundation study on digital youth stated: "they (kids) are often more motivated to learn from peers than from adults […] to stay relevant in the 21st century, education institutions need to keep pace with the rapid changes introduced by digital media."

Of course, social networking and Facebook do not come without certain caveats. Schools are increasingly trapped in a Gordian knot with the onslaught of the Facebook age. The boundaries between home and school are so twisted that school administrators, parents, and students find themselves caught in the crosshairs. To untangle this knot, all three groups need to come together and communicate about fair use. The recent news of Katherine Evans and her lawsuit against Pembroke Pines Charter High School (New York Times, February 8, 2009) highlight the challenges of untying this knot. Suspended from school for creating a Facebook page aimed at venting frustration at the actions of her high school English teacher,

the student, along with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), has sounded the clarion call of first amendment violations. The school, on the other hand, crouches under the desk of its legal counsel. This problem will only grow worse, unless all parties can create an agreement for fair play at home and in school. Kids will not cease posting on Facebook and the faster schools and parents can grasp that reality, the healthier the lives of students will be.

The question centers on how to build a bridge for students, parents, and schools. The Common Sense Media schools program can serve as a starting point. Founded five years ago as a non-partisan organization committed to media safety for kids and families, CSM has recently launched its schools program, with over 1000 participating schools. Endorsed by President Obama, CSM has national reach and is one of the few organizations committed to wrestling online living to the ground for kids, families, and now schools. CSM offers practical resources and lesson ideas for educators and conducts workshops, presentations, and focus groups with students and teachers for schools. They even have a family media agreement, but have not yet crafted a more encompassing agreement to connect home and school.

Parent education evenings can serve as a starting point and can underscore for parents the need to reach out for guidance and support from a community. Oftentimes, parents feel they are alone as they figure out how to create boundaries at home. One parent wrote: "When my son has "homework time," unless I am actually looking at his computer screen to make sure he is working on homework, he is either IM-ing or playing an internet war game. This is a very frustrating and concerning situation for me as a parent. I need the tools to monitor his use effectively. At home, much of his computer time for schoolwork is spent off task." Schools can bring together parents to develop mutually beneficial and reinforcing terms of use and brainstorm strategies for effective monitoring at home. Some schools have even gone so far as to create a list of acceptable behaviors on Facebook and on the Internet in general. Parents do not want to feel alone, and they should not have to if schools can figure out with them how to balance the exciting features of social networking with the need for safe structures for teens.

My sister offers an excellent case in point. She asked me to open a Facebook account last year because she was worried about what her sixteen-year old son was doing on Facebook. She figured, correctly, that her son would be more inclined to "friend" his uncle than his own mother. Sure enough, I became one of my nephew's friends and I periodically check his page to make sure his postings do not sink into the pit of locker room language. On occasion, I have had to call my nephew to ask him to take down certain posts that could be perceived as offensive. Of course, what a sixteen year old deems inappropriate is quite different from my own sensibilities as a school administrator. However, I did teach high school students for seven years, so I have a pretty good idea of the line between cool and out of bounds.

School administrators struggle with transgressions after school hours and outside of school networks. While unhealthy online activity takes place in homes and on weekends, the after effects often ripple through schools and affect peer relationships on a daily basis. Schools can raise parental awareness through conversations and information sharing, but the trickier issue is whether to impose discipline on students for inappropriate and unsafe cyber actions outside of school. Now, with the Evans lawsuit looming, even more schools will cower at the prospect of disciplining student actions on Facebook and other social networking sites, for fear of reprisal.

Schools can put their heads in the sand and ignore the problem. They can draw a line in the sand, with zero tolerance rules written into school handbooks, or they can shift with the changing sands of social networking and seek solutions to incorporate social networking and

utilize it as part of the educational program for students. **We have reached the tipping point here and schools must address and embrace the prolific energy surrounding the Facebook age.**

If schools block Facebook use on campus, students have no opportunity to integrate social networking into their learning environment, and are instead left to swim alone in what can be treacherous waters. When problems arise, often after hours and even late into the night, schools face the fallout in the hallways. Students carry the burdens of unhealthy Facebook exchanges with them throughout the school day.

It is time to unravel the knot of conflict between students and schools and disentangle the web of lawsuits that could easily overtake the better measure of capitalizing on the cooperation and communication that the Facebook age brings to educational settings.

Parents are aching for guidance and the more home and school can partner, the better off communities will be.

A recent article in The New York Times asks "Is Facebook Growing Up Too Fast?" (New York Times, 3/29/09). The more appropriate question to ask is whether schools are evolving too slowly with Facebook and social networking. The pedagogical possibilities are profound, and the opportunity to provide social and emotional guidance to students (and their families) in their use of Facebook must be broached. There exists a unique moment to better align students and adults, especially with the mushrooming of Facebook use by the "older" generation. Facebook has just eclipsed the 200 million-user mark and the longer we all wait to engage, and not spurn, Facebook in school communities, the worse off students, families, and educators will be.

Matt Levinson is the Assistant Director and Head of the Middle School at the Nueva School in Hillsborough, California. A graduate of Columbia University Teachers' College, Matt taught middle and upper school history for 14 years at Princeton Day School, prior to moving into his current role at Nueva. The Nueva School has a one to one laptop program and Matt oversees all aspects of that program.

Research Highlights

Trends in Teen Social Media Use

From 2006 to 2008, two large American non-profit organizations, the MacArthur Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts, undertook major research projects on teen use of new media. The Pew Internet & American Life Project conducted a detailed survey of the frequency with which youth use electronic media, while the MacArthur Foundation conducted qualitative and quantitative investigations of the nature of teen media use in a broad array of genres, from participation in multiplayer role-playing games to use of social networking sites (such as MySpace and Facebook) to Hip Hop music production online.

The results often challenge popular images of teens fecklessly chatting with strangers and leaving face-to-face social ties far behind. Instead, according to the MacArthur study, teens tend to use communications and social media--whether social networking sites, cell phones, text messaging, instant messaging, or e-mail--to keep in constant contact with a close group of friends. In the Pew survey, 31% of teens aged 12 to 17 reported that they spent time with friends in social activities outside of school every day, and the percentage actually increased among social network users (to 38%). According to the MacArthur study, teens occasionally use social media to keep in touch with peers who are geographically distant (e.g. a friend met at summer camp), and use social media relatively infrequently as a point of introduction, though they may occasionally use social sites to flirt with potential romantic interests.

The Pew survey also upends common assumptions regarding teen and adult use of privacy controls on social networking sites. For example, 39% of teens surveyed who use social networking sites restrict access to uploaded photos "most of the time," and 21% "never" restrict access to images they upload. Drawing from previous studies, the survey reports that 34% of adults restrict access to uploaded photos "most of the time," while 39% "never" restrict access to online photos.

In a MacArthur forum held six months before the release of the full study, UC Berkeley doctoral student danah boyd presented some of the research which the foundation relied on for its findings on teen use of social networking sites. Drawing on 2 ½ years of interviews and online research, boyd argues that the primary reason that teens use social media is that they do not have as much access to physical public space as they once did. Parents discourage or disallow their children from going out at night for fear of abduction, gangs and violence. Increasing suburbanization leads teens to rely heavily on cars or parents if they wish to have face-to-face meetings with friends outside of their neighborhoods. Many public spaces require money for entry, and teens may be "shooed" from malls, parks and cafes. Faced with these challenges, boyd argues, teens turn to social media as a less problematic means of maintaining relationships with friends.

The Pew survey http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Teens-and-Social-Media.aspx

"Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project," http://www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQKrH/b.4773437/k.3CE6/New_Study_Shows_Time_Spent_Online_Important_for_Teen_Development.htm
The full MacArthur study will be released as a book from MIT Press under the title *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out: Living and Learning with New Media.*

danah boyd's presentation is available at her professional website, http://www.zephoria.org

Teens' Social Lives Go Mobile

A father is shuttling his 14-year-old daughter and a couple of her friends to a play in Los Angeles. The group is excitedly chatting about "Pirates of the Caribbean," and then suddenly the chatter stops. The father looks into his rearview mirror to find his daughter sending a cell phone text message. "Katie, you shouldn't be texting all the time! Your friends are there. It's rude." His daughter rolls her eyes: "But Dad, we're texting each other. I don't want you to hear what I'm saying." (Holson, New York Times, "Text Generation Gap," March 9, 2008).

Apparently, many teens are moving their social lives from social networking sites to cell phones, particularly cell phone text messaging. A September 2008 Harris Interactive survey of 2,000 teens 13 to 19 reports that 45% of respondents felt that cell phones were key to their social lives. In addition, the report revealed that the teens surveyed spent as much time texting on their mobile devices as they did talking on them.

A third of the respondents listed "privacy/stealth" as one of the top reasons they used text messaging. In her April 2008 presentation before the MacArthur Foundation, danah boyd notes that, towards the end of her fieldwork, many interview subjects had been pulling back from social networking sites, which she partly attributes to an increase in searches by third parties whom her interview subjects expressly wished to avoid, including parents, teachers and college admissions officers.

While text messages are not readily searchable, they can be easily forwarded, and the increase in teen text message traffic has created a new set of problems, including "sexting." Sexting refers to nude or semi-nude photos and/or sexually suggestive messages sent via text message. The death of Ohio teen Jesse Logan in May 2008 drew widespread public attention to the problems caused by sexting. Logan had sent a nude photo of herself to her boyfriend via text message a year earlier. When the two broke up, Logan's boyfriend distributed the photo to his personal communications networks. Distraught by the disparaging personal remarks she endured at her high school after the photo surfaced, Logan committed suicide. Recent news stories, in which parents have sued school districts, and state officials have charged teens with child pornography, illustrate the social and legal complexity of the problem.

Recently, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy released a report titled "Sex and Tech" which published the results of a survey of 1,280 teens (13-19) and young adults (20-26) conducted by TRU Research in late 2008. Respondents were asked a variety of questions about sexually suggestive messages sent via electronic communications networks. Perhaps the most interesting finding of the survey was an apparent conflict between knowledge and attitudes. 75% of teens and 71% of young adults said that sending sexually suggestive content "can have serious negative consequences." Yet 39% of teens and 59% of young adults continued to do so anyway, with 20% of teens and 33% of young adults sending nude or semi-nude images of themselves.

 While teens have become more or less fully adept with privacy controls on social networking sites, the evidence shows they may not have developed the same sophistication with regard to text messages. To start a conversation about mobile messaging with the teens in your life, you may wish to visit the following sites:

Commonsense Media.org has a good, brief advice section on sexting, along with a link to ThatsNotCool.com, a site which gives teens the language and support to take texting and cell phone decisions back into their own hands.

NetSmartz 411 is operated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and allows you to communicate directly with analysts at the Center on all aspects of online safety at no charge.

For the full "Sex and Tech" report visit http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org/sextech .

Med!aLit moments

Introducing MediaLit Moments
MediaLit Moments are classroom activities that provide teachable 'AHA' moments to illustrate one of the *Five Key Questions* for media literacy. Designed for ease of use, lessons require limited preparation and are easily downloadable.

This month's MediaLit Moment: *To Be or Not to Be? That is the Social Networking Question (see page 10).*

http://www.house.gov/writerep

Express Yourself
We invite you to write your Congressional representative to express the need for media literacy education in our schools.

CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

Uniting for Development

About Us
The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org
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Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: Do your students know the difference between **describing** what they see, hear and experience in deconstructing a media message and **interpreting** what they see, hear and experience? The difference between describing and interpreting is an important skill in doing close analysis of media texts, and providing students with feedback and frequent practice is essential.

New Media Health Resources for Teens

In the last three years, teen health service providers have been making increasingly bold sorties into cyberspace to reach potential clients. Last year, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) established an anonymous, instant-messaging-based hotline. In 2007, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) launched pages on MySpace and Facebook. In the same year, the Austin-based National Domestic Violence Hotline launched combined phone and internet hotlines for teen dating violence.

In 2005, the San Francisco Department of Public Health commissioned Oakland-based Internet Sexuality Information Services (ISIS) to create a teen sexual health information campaign to be delivered via cell phone text messaging. In focus groups organized by ISIS and DPH, young men and women became interested in the program, but were insistent that they initiate contact rather than receive unsolicited messages from the Health Department. When the new SexInfo service was ready for launch, Public Health staff carried out a promotional campaign in a wide variety of media, from palm cards to TV advertising. Users were instructed to text the word "SexInfo" to a five digit number. When contacted, SexInfo generated a menu of options such as "Txt '1' if u think ur condom broke" and "Txt '3' if s/he's cheating on u." When it was first introduced in 2006, SexInfo received 4500 inquiries in its first 25 weeks of service, and 2500 of those led to requests for more information and referrals.

Research published last year also suggests that recent steps into cyberspace are steps in the right direction. This online survey of 1,628 youth aged 13-24 was conducted by Ypulse, an independent media platform for youth media and marketing professionals; YouthNoise, an organization which offers technological tools, content, and support for youth involvement in social issues; and by ISIS, which had helped develop the SexInfo campaign. Over half of respondents stated they used the internet for information about mental health, sexual or general wellness issues. But the sites they most frequently turned to were common search engines or aggregator sites such as Google and Web MD. These results suggest that the online health services offered by organizations like RAINN and NSPL are meeting a need.

For further information and resources, contact these organizations directly:
ISIS   http://www.isis-inc.org
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline http://www.ndvh.org
Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network   http://www.rainn.org
SexInfoSF http://www.sextextsf.org
YouthNoise   http://www.youthnoise.org
Ypulse   http://www.ypulse.com

Additional sites featured in this issue:
http://www.CommonSenseMedia.org
http://www.ThatsNotCool.com
http://www.NetSmartz411.com

Med!aLit Moments

To Be or Not to Be? That is the Social Networking Question

According to a recent MacArthur Foundation study, teens typically use social networking sites to "hang out" with friends. Teens also put together personal pages as an expression of their style, creating something to make an impression on other teens who "hit" their site out of curiosity. In this MediaLit Moment, your students will explore the difference between personal pages they use primarily to communicate with friends and pages they design primarily to make an impression on people they don't know. In the process, your students are likely to discover that they create different personas for themselves from page to page.

Have your students create a personal home page designed to impress someone they would like to meet.

AHA! The "me" I show to my friends is different from the "me" I show to somebody I don't know!

Key Question #1 for Producers: What am I authoring?

Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.

Grade Level: 9+

Materials: Computer, data projector, screen, high speed internet connection OR printed screen shots of students' home pages and the new pages they've created.

HOMEWORK: Ask your students to start a home page which they would use to introduce themselves to someone they would like to meet. See the suggestions below for possible scenarios.

If they wish, students can create this as a subsection of their home page. If students do not yet have an account with a social networking site provider, this may be an opportunity for them to get started, though they could draw a plan of their new site as well.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS/TOPICS: You've been asked to host a foreign exchange student in your home. Put together a page which tells the student about the US, the city you live in, and about yourself. Or, let's say you would like to be a foreign exchange student in another country. Create a page in which you introduce yourself to a potential host family.

What's your dream job? What would your dream company be like? Now imagine that this company is looking for entry-level employees. Put together a page that might impress the people at this company.

Create a page or profile to send to a group (offline or online) that you might like to join.

Is there a college or school you hope to attend in the future? Start working on a page that you

would like to send to that school.

IN CLASS: When students return to class, ask them to compare old and new pages. Ask them to complete the following fill-in-the-blank response: The _____ (student's name) I see in my new page is _____ (personal qualities--for example, organized, scary, serious, laid-back, knowledgeable, etc.)

In small groups, or as a class, discuss the differences between students' pages, (especially the different personas they project in the two pages).

Extended Discussion:

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

In small groups, students talk about their design process as well. What kinds/categories of items did they place in the new page that they did not have "up" on their old page? Why?