



I used to be the administrator who blocked every social-media site, and now I'm the biggest champion. I'm just someone who is passionate about engaging students and growing professionally, and I'm using these free tools to do it. | **ERIC C. SHENINGER**, PRINCIPAL, NEW MILFORD (N.J.)
HIGH SCHOOL IN EDUCATION WEEK

Policy

regarding social media in the classroom

BY MATTHEW SCHOTT, CJE

Each day when I wake up, before pouring a bowl of cereal and cup of coffee, the first thing I do is grab my phone to check texts, email and, most eagerly, Twitter.

I'm 36. I love Twitter, am friends with Facebook and am crushing pretty heavily on Google+. Did I say I'm 36?

High school students, who at their oldest are half my age, have grown up with these technologies. They have embraced them with vigor and passion. They have learned all the childish basics of social media, such as how to post ridiculous photos of themselves, post ridiculous/funny/mean/ironic/vicious/angry statuses and will "Like" pretty much anything that scrolls across their news feeds.

What they have struggled to learn during the incubatory period of social media is how to avoid the perils of social media and how to develop skills they will need to function in the job market they will enter in the future. The need is where educators, particularly journalism advisers, come in.

In his keynote at the fall JEA/NSPA convention, Facebook's Journalism Program Manager Vadim

Lavrusik said he believed people needed to stop seeing social media as micro-blogging and begin to see it as micro-publishing. Considering Lavrusik's view, journalism educators have experience that is a valuable asset to share.

In Missouri, legislators told teachers that using social media was unacceptable — under the ruse of painting them as potential pedophiles — in the classroom.

I disagree vehemently. In fact, I would say the best possible thing we could be doing is model for our students what good usage of social media looks like. How many of them know that a four- or five-line post with a photo is most likely to get clicks or that an individual who asks questions of the online community is more likely to receive responses than someone who simply posts statements?

What follows is a model social media policy. It is not perfect, but it is a start. Innovators may want to add to the policy. This is a social media document. Use it to further a discussion about how to better reach and educate our students. ■

when appropriate. | Don't post things students may find offensive (politics, off-color humor, etc.) | **Do proofread and edit posts. Verify sources. Model professional expectations while online.** | Don't post about anything a teacher should not share in the classroom. | **Do consult immediately with superiors when confronting a potential problem — as teachers do when encountering a potential problem in classroom behavior.** | Don't do anything risky. Avoid swearing, advocating politics, anything that can lead to trouble.

5 DO'S AND 5 DON'TS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA WITH STUDENTS
Do make use of social media as often as fits your lessons and curriculum. | Don't allow open access to social media. Students need to learn there are appropriate times to use it. Set your privacy levels to the highest levels the medium allows. | **Do make social media a part of your classroom culture.** | Don't post links to sites without personally viewing them. | **Do encourage students to use technology (smartphone, laptop, iPad, etc.) in your room**

Below is a draft model social media policy. It is a start, and like the DJNF Teacher of the Year Aaron Manfull said, a challenge. This is a public Google document. If you like what you see here, take it to your administrators and explain to them the need for social media education for our students, teachers and administrators. This is a social media document, designed to start a discussion about how better to reach and to educate our students.

Matthew Schott, CJE

MODEL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

Our goal is to create a social media model policy for school districts in Missouri that will protect students and teachers and be respectful of all parties' First Amendment rights as well as to encourage the use of technology in and out of the classroom. Instead of shunning and restricting this technology, which is often free, school districts should embrace it through increased training and sharing of best practices.

STUDENT TRAINING

Districts will encourage social media use in English, social studies and business departments (or their equivalents) as well as in other departments. The curriculum should include materials about how to be a proper digital citizen and about the need to make sure students are aware that the laws of publishing apply when they distribute information and opinions on the Internet. Students definitely need to understand that publishing questionable content can impact them in the future. Additionally, districts should stress the positive uses for technology and social media, such as forceful writing, accurate statements, correct grammar, photography skills, marketing, networking and more. Districts should encourage teachers to incorporate social media into regular assignments.

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING

Districts will regularly provide training to update teachers and administrators about the newest ways to use technology and social media in the classroom. Training will utilize techniques to improve writing, grammar, photography skills, marketing, networking, etc. They will use the techniques to further the learning mastery of students as documented by curriculum goals. Additionally, teachers will be strongly encouraged to use

social media in a responsible way in their classrooms to model proper social media behaviors to their students.

Teachers and administrators who choose to post to their social media accounts should understand the perils of sharing with students on their social media accounts. Teachers who opt to utilize social media in their classroom will inform their department chairs, assistant principals of instruction and building principals of their intentions to do so.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

As the social media landscape is constantly changing, each district shall designate an employee or employees within the district who will be responsible for finding materials to be distributed to administrators at both the district and building levels as well as to teachers and to students. The educator(s) should have a strong background both in technology and in technology usage in the classroom as well as extensive knowledge of free expression laws.

HIRING

As part of the hiring process of teachers and administrators, the district shall conduct a background search that includes a search of the applicant's social media history and activity. In addition, as part of new employee training, there shall be at least two hours of training on the district's use of social media within the district. Also, the district shall provide new hires an extensive list of resources for using social media in the classroom.

MONITORING

The 21st century classroom does not end at the classroom door. It is expansive and incorporates varied forms of communication. Teachers and administrators should begin viewing their classrooms and social media as one in the same. In

social media situations, all parties should view discussions online as important as they would discussions in classrooms.

School accounts will be monitored for questionable issues per district policy, but districts should empower their employees to use technology regularly. As they would in their classroom, when a teacher observes any inappropriate behavior via social media, that teacher should report it in accordance with the policy. Districts should incorporate appropriate standards and discipline procedures in their codes of conduct

Each school in the district shall maintain at least one social media account (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) to use for communicating school procedures and for promoting activities — all as part of a diligent effort to explain policies and to distribute information about the school to its community. In addition, the district shall encourage all of its student media (newspapers, websites, yearbooks, broadcast outlets), as well as other student organizations, to maintain social media presences. Finally, teachers employing social media in the classroom shall inform the building principal (or designated administrator) of their intent to use social media for educational purposes.

Administrators should be trained, as they are for other valid educational instruction methods, to evaluate the teachers' usage of social media for instruction. ■