
(Dis)connected: The Role of Social Networking Sites in the High School Setting

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This study examines the role of six popular social networking sites (SNSs)—Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest—in a high school setting. Students, teachers, and administrators were interviewed to learn how they use these SNSs to support a variety of functions in the school setting, including professional development, classroom learning, self-directed learning, and socializing. Participants also were asked about how they use SNSs more generally and points of overlap between personal and school-related uses. Findings show that although instructional use is low, SNSs nonetheless have a pervasive presence in the school. Being highly connected has both advantages and disadvantages for students and teachers alike. For individuals with poor social connections, the heavy use of SNSs can result in greater disconnection from school-related information and social circles. Implications show opportunities for selecting classroom learning tools, developing digital literacy and citizenship curricula, and supporting all members of the school community.

Social networking sites (SNSs) have an undeniable presence in American high schools, regardless of whether they are permitted in that setting by administrators and teachers. These internet-based platforms provide tools that facilitate interpersonal communication and information sharing in a networked environment. Most high school students are regular users of SNSs. The Pew Research Center reported that 97% of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 use at least one SNS and 95% have or have access to a smartphone (Anderson and Jiang 2018), which facilitates regular use. These SNSs support not only social interaction, but also self-expression (boyd 2014; Greenhow and Robelia 2009) and information seeking (Forte et al. 2014). When teenagers pursue these online

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activities, they must navigate the complexity of using SNSs to both perform identity and manage context collapse (Davis and Jurgenson 2014), just as they do in their face-to-face settings.

High schools often discourage or limit student SNS use to the degree possible, fearful of problems that are commonly reported in the mass media (Stern and Burke Odland 2017), such as cyberbullying, which is not consistently documented in terms of actual prevalence (Selkie et al. 2016), and sexting, which is reported to be on the rise (Madigan et al. 2018). This approach to SNS in schools overlooks the potentially positive outcomes for teachers and students who use SNSs (boyd 2014; Scolari et al. 2018). These positive outcomes extend beyond formal classroom learning experiences. Prior research on an earlier SNS, MySpace, showed that high school students do not see connections between SNS use and learning, although they informally developed digital literacy skills upon which schools might capitalize (Greenhow and Robelia 2009). Little work has been done to explore the role that SNSs might play in the school environment (Greenhow and Lewin 2016), despite the important role of peer relationships—which are played out on SNSs—in teenagers’ development (Korkiamäki 2016) and the potential of SNSs to assist with learning (Mao 2014).

Students are not the only users of SNSs in a high school. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff, as part of the adult population, are likely to be users of SNSs in their everyday lives; although use among the American population has plateaued, it has reached 79% within the college-educated population (Hitlin 2018). In the school context, SNSs are no longer a novelty with uncertain educational uses (Selwyn and Stirling 2016), although teachers are more likely to use SNSs in their personal lives than in the classroom (Greenhow and Askari 2017). SNSs have become a popular platform for teacher professional

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development activities (Macià and García 2016; Trust et al. 2016), and professional organizations for teachers have used SNSs not only to reach their current membership but also to connect with teachers who are not yet members (Bledsoe and Pilgrim 2016).

In the classroom, the ideal role and use of SNSs among students remains uncertain. Accordingly, how teachers should address or incorporate SNSs in the classroom setting is also unclear. One option is to seek integration of SNSs with instructional practices (Collins and Halverson 2018; Krutka and Carpenter 2016a), although presently there is little research available to suggest that SNS use has a meaningful impact on learning. Alternately, SNSs might be the subject of classroom learning. In this instance, teachers need to be prepared to support the development of digital citizenship skills and practices among their students (Krutka and Carpenter 2016b).

Navigating SNS use in a professional context can be complex for teachers, who may be reticent to use SNS in their professional capacity. The multitude of ways in which teachers may interact with SNSs during the school day, both directly (to support personal relationships, professional development, and teaching) and indirectly (monitoring and interacting in person with students who use SNSs), creates challenges for teachers. SNSs act as a virtual extension of both school and personal lives and can create an uncomfortable sense of familiarity when the two spheres are united in the same space (Sugimoto et al. 2015). This connection of two or more otherwise distinct components of one's life is called context collapse. It can occur purposefully through collusion or unintentionally through collision (Davis and Jurgenson 2014), with positive outcomes like social capital development (Uusiautti and Määttä 2014) or negative outcomes like self-censoring (Dennen and Burner 2017) or other identity-narrowing behaviors (Hogan 2010; Vitak 2012). Prior research has shown that both students and teachers strive to avoid uncomfortable moments of context collapse through SNS-based collision of personal and school lives (Dennen and Burner 2017). For this reason, teachers need to consider boundaries between themselves and students when SNSs are used in the school setting (Kimmons and Veletsianos 2015; Miller et al. 2016).

Purpose and Research Questions

Prior school-based studies have examined SNS integration in the curriculum or use by teachers to support planning and teaching functions (Greenhow and Askari 2017) as well adoption and digital literacy skills (Dennen et al. 2020). Other studies of youth SNS use have focused on experiences of teenagers both generally (boyd 2014) and as they follow their self-driven interests in networked

environments (Ito et al. 2018; Jenkins et al. 2009; Scolari et al. 2018). This study seeks a middle ground, with a school as the locus but a broad exploration of how students and their teachers use popular SNS tools. This study encompasses how these individuals use SNS tools for any purpose, whether learning or school related or not.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role SNSs plays in the high school context writ large, with attention paid to how each tool's affordances (i.e., possibilities that the tool facilitates, whether known or unknown to the user; Norman 1999) shape how the tool is used by students and teachers. We look beyond classroom and teacher-centered use of SNSs to examine broadly the role that SNSs play in the school ecosystem. We consider how the choice to use or not use specific tools affects students and teachers academically and socially within the school environment. In addition, because participants in this study spoke of their SNS use in broad and fluid terms across all parts of their lives, we similarly incorporate the diverse ways that individuals use tools for school (e.g., in support of classroom learning and extracurricular activities) and nonschool (e.g., friendship, entertainment) purposes as they move in and out of the school setting and through all of their daily activities. In other words, it is necessary to look at student SNS use holistically to understand its role in the school context.

In this study, we focus on the most popular SNSs among the teenage and adult populations per recent Pew Research Center surveys (Anderson and Jiang 2018; Smith and Anderson 2018): Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter (top five for teens only), YouTube, and Pinterest (top five for adults only). In addition, we recognize that for both teenagers and their teachers, "school" represents a combined learning and social space. Although the physical part of school is geographically and temporally bound, the larger experience of school can occur at other times and in other locales—including virtual spaces—when students and teachers think about, discuss, and plan for school activities and relationships. For this reason, we define the school context broadly, including not only activities that relate to school learning or occur during the school day on school grounds, but also any activities and interactions that the participants feel are school related. Similarly, we draw upon a broad definition of learning in this study, encompassing both teacher and student-initiated activities, and school-related and extracurricular or personal learning.

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. How do high school students and teachers use different SNSs in the school context?
2. What types of activities does each SNS support in the school context?
3. Do teachers and administrators have accurate perceptions of how students use SNSs in the school context?

4. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using or not using a particular SNS in the school context?

Method

Participants

This study draws on data from a case study situated in a high school. This Title 1 high school, located in a small city, enrolls approximately 650 students in grades 9–12. The school, students, and teachers represented in this study were not selected because they exemplified any particular type of SNS use, but rather because all outward indicators suggested that there was nothing remarkable about their SNS use. They were not involved in any special SNS-related projects or initiatives but instead were just regular people engaged in their everyday activities.

Students were selected from the tenth- and twelfth-grade levels. We chose these two grade levels because one was fully in the midst of the high school experience and the other was nearing the end. In the latter case, we were interested to see if there were shifts in use that reflected maturation or orientation toward postgraduation plans. In addition, we had studied students at these two grade levels in the same school the prior year (Dennen et al. 2017; Dennen and Rutledge 2018), and findings from that study were used as the basis for this study. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants.

Consent forms were sent home with all students and returned before the interviews began. Student participants were selected if their parents provided consent and they identified themselves as someone willing to be interviewed on the day that we entered their classroom. We attempted to recruit roughly equivalent numbers of students by sex and grade. Teacher and administrator interviews were conducted after student interviews and involved purposeful sampling. We requested teachers whose classes we had recruited students from

TABLE 1

Participants by Grade and Sex

	Male	Female	Total
10th Grade	10	8	18
12th Grade	6	13	19
Teachers/Administrators	6	14	20
Total	22	35	57

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as well as teachers who had been mentioned by students during interviews. In addition, we spoke with administrators who interacted with students in an advisory and disciplinary capacity.

Data Collection

Data were collected via one-on-one interviews conducted on school grounds during the school day. Our interview protocols were developed on the basis of our experiences working with students in this school during the prior year (Dennen et al. 2017; Dennen and Rutledge 2018). During student interviews, we asked them to comment explicitly on how they use each of the six most popular SNSs, and how their use relates to their activities and experience of the school context. In instances where a participant did not use an SNS, we asked the participant to share their reasons for nonuse along with their perceptions of that SNS. Teacher interviews addressed how both how they personally used SNSs for school and nonschool purposes and how they perceived, experienced, and guided, monitored, or disciplined student use of SNSs during school hours. Student interviews were conducted during class periods, and teacher interviews were conducted during their free periods. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused on how six core SNSs (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest) were used among our participants, both for school and nonschool purposes. These SNSs were chosen because collectively they represent the five most widely used SNSs among the American teenage and adult populations (Twitter was among the top five for teenagers only, and Pinterest was among the top five for adults only; Anderson and Jiang 2018; Smith and Anderson 2018), and they also were the most frequently used SNSs within our study population.

We used NVivo data analysis software to organize and code our data. We started with an a priori set of codes on the basis of our research questions and review of extant literature. Specifically we coded for each of the six SNSs and for user (student or teacher), and we coded teacher interviews for teacher perceptions of student use so we could compare their perceptions to what students had reported. On the basis of literature, we coded for types of formal and informal learning, positive and negative SNS experiences (e.g., opportunities, enjoyment, drama, and bullying), context collapse, and rules governing SNS

use. We initially coded two teacher and two student interviews and then met as a group and refined our codes. After coding was complete, we wrote memos for each tool, type of use, and positive or negative experience. Throughout the process, the research team met and discussed our emergent findings. For this article, we focused on being able to typify use of each SNS for both students and teachers and identify how the SNS supported different activities in the school setting.

Limitations

As a qualitative study situated in one US high school, we do not know the transferability of our findings to other high schools. It is possible, for example, that students, teachers, and other school staff with different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic contexts might use SNS differently from those at our school. In addition, our student participants self-selected into the study, potentially skewing findings toward more SNS-engaged participants or in some other way.

Findings

SNS in the School Context

Students and teachers at this school had access to SNSs throughout the day but not consistently in the classroom. The school officially allowed students to use mobile phones during the school day but not while class was in session. However, the school's official policy was not consistently upheld. Instead it served as a baseline to support teachers who wished to ban phone use from their classrooms. Individual teachers could opt to not enforce the policy to develop more lenient policies in their classrooms. SNSs were blocked from use on the school's Wi-Fi and thus were not accessible from school computers. Use from personal devices with data plans was acceptable at lunch time and between classes but was not acceptable during classes. However, we were regularly told about students covertly accessing SNSs on their phones during class.

Whether use was sanctioned or not, there was a heavy presence of smartphones in the school. In the classrooms, signs reminded students of phone policies. Outside the classroom, phones were in almost everyone's hands. During interviews, if a student did not have their phone on the table, it was nearby in their pocket or their backpack. One teacher discussed the ubiquity of phone ownership among the students: "The only instances I can think of where a

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student didn't have a phone is they broke a phone and it wasn't getting replaced right away or they were in trouble and it wasn't getting, you know, given back right away (laughs). But I'm not aware of any that just don't have a phone. And they're all smartphones." Another teacher indicated that smartphone use was high even across students of different socioeconomic status levels: "If you see any difference with the lower socioeconomic, it may be that sometimes there's limited data so they can do it but they're limited in the data that they can use. So they might be more circumspect on how much they use and when they use it. But it's not something that is really noticeable that I would say." We did not collect data about student socioeconomic status or data availability, and thus cannot confirm this teacher's assertion. However, we heard from multiple sources that personal data plans were necessary to use SNSs while on school grounds, and data access varied across students.

The current school leadership was described by teachers as being strongly in support of SNSs for marketing and communication, and potentially for instruction as well, but the previous administration was not. As one teacher noted, the previous administration "felt like (social networking sites) were time-wasters, they weren't educational, they wanted to protect the kids." Multiple teachers commented on how the shift from an administration that was unsupportive to a supportive one has opened opportunities for both teachers and students to freely use SNSs during the school day and in ways related to school activities (e.g., creating SNS accounts for extracurricular groups and sports teams). The teachers all commented on how heavily their students used SNSs and on the strong presence that SNSs have within their school. SNSs were not only something the students used but also something that they all talked about when not using them.

The remainder of our findings are organized by SNS. Each of the six SNSs that we focused on during the interviews is discussed separately below, presenting how students report using the tool, teachers' perception of student use, and how teachers use the tool. We address both learning-related tool use and other tool use because both were present in the school environment and were in many ways intertwined for these participants.

Instagram

Student use: Instagram is who I am.—Instagram provided the teenagers with a space for sharing visuals related to their current activities. Essentially, it was a way for teens to document their days for others to see. Photos of classrooms, school events, and school projects were among the images shared on Instagram. Most participants reported using Instagram daily and interacting with a variety

of people ranging from close friends to acquaintances. Some students followed accounts for the sole purpose of learning from them, with topics ranging from sports techniques to future careers. Privacy settings helped these teenagers control who saw their Instagram accounts, and they closely monitored their followers.

Some teens maintained two Instagram accounts. One account, informally called a “spam” account by these teens, also referred to as a “finsta”¹ or Fake Instagram in popular culture, features a more eclectic collection of posts, and access is restricted to close friends. In contrast, “main” accounts present curated identities. The teens identified Instagram specifically as a teen space, with one participant stating, “Instagram is more for our generation. I don’t see older people and I don’t see people younger than us.” This statement is ironic given the various older people whom these students follow for self-directed learning purposes, but it indicates their experience that Instagram networks are not used for interacting with adults from their everyday lives such as parents and teachers.

Teacher perception of student Instagram use.—Instagram was identified by teachers as the most popular SNS among the students. The teachers shared that their students had developed substantial followings on the platform, in one case reporting, “One of our students has 7,000 followers.” Instagram is frequently discussed during class. “You’ll hear them in the background. ‘Someone just Snapchatted me’ or ‘I just got this Instagram.’ And of course, you’re trying to keep them away from their phones for most of the day so it’s more so just trying to keep—they’re not very secretive about it. It’s like put it away, we’re trying to learn.” Teachers know that students not only look at Instagram but also post during class, which occasionally is a problem: “Some of them are more covert than others but yeah. They’re sitting there, you’ll see the flash of someone’s camera going off.” The teachers are also aware of the existence of finsta accounts; however, they are not entirely sure what they are. One teacher explained to us, “And I mean, like, there are social media sites like Kik and—what’s that other—I feel like there’s another one that’s kind of—oh, Finstagram, Funstagram—it’s like a shadow Instagram site, and you know, the kids are on that.”

Teacher use of Instagram.—Many of the teachers had personal Instagram accounts. These teachers used their Instagram accounts to connect with family and friends. Overall, the teachers considered themselves to be consumers on Instagram, posting an occasional photo of their daily life. Most avoided connecting with current students and school parents; however, these connections were sometimes welcome after the student had graduated.

One teacher shared a positive experience of sharing his personal life online on Instagram and having student followers. He did not invite students to follow his account but knew that students were followers because his account was public.

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He mostly posted photos of his cats and his travels with his wife, and he knew his students were interested because they commented on it:

[I]n weird ways I've connected with students in class because they know that my Instagram account exists. . . . I don't know how awkward this sounds but like I have a student in my seventh period who's kind of a pain in the butt sometimes but for whatever reason follows my Instagram and will comment every time that I post a picture of one of my cats. And particularly the orange one. I feel like—it almost felt like it was kind of mocking at first but it's kind of turned into he's legitimately like when are you going to post another picture of [the cat]. (laughs) So those kinds of connections kind of happen every now and then. I actually had a girl write in my yearbook that—she's like something to the effect like when she grows up she hopes she has the kind of relationship and can travel like my wife and I do. So there are things that I don't even realize that they're pulling from this that they actually are, so as long as I keep it clean, I don't mind that they follow.

This teacher's example shows how students look to their teachers not only for their formal education but also to provide a model of adult life.

Other teachers reported not having an Instagram account. Their reasons varied. Some were simply not interested. Others were wary of the time and effort it might require. Avoiding students was another reason to stay off Instagram altogether, as one teacher explained: "I really don't know much about it. And it also seems like a lot of my students are on it. And I don't like to be on anything that they're on."

Most teachers had not considered using Instagram to support instruction. The only example of such use came from a teacher who was personally very active on SNSs and who also used Twitter with her class. She reported maintaining an Instagram account for her class and for an extracurricular group. In class, she had students check what they were working on against photographic examples she had posted, and with the group she used Instagram to promote group activities.

Snapchat

Student use: Snapchat is for the moment.—Students reported using Snapchat to communicate directly with friends, sharing what they were doing, thinking, and—because it is a visual tool—seeing. Whereas Instagram accounts were used for sharing content that would be preserved over time and shared with a wide audience, Snapchat was the tool of choice for sharing messages or memes with an individual or a small group. Photos, videos, and messages sent to connections

via Snapchat disappear after they are viewed, and photos and videos shared to Snapchat stories disappear after 24 hours. The temporary nature of Snapchat made it the tool of choice for sharing anything that was not intended to be saved. Students said they used stories to share their current activities but without creating any sort of permanent memories. Events that students wanted to memorialize with photos were shared on Instagram.

Streaks were a Snapchat phenomenon supported by most of the users we spoke with. A streak is the term used to describe continuous daily snapchatting with another person. To maintain a streak, two people must exchange at least one snapchat every 24 hours following their initial snapchat. The tool reports the number of days a streak has continued, and several of these students had maintained streaks for longer than 100 days. Although this activity may seem frivolous on the surface, streak maintenance requires a fair amount of dedication to the task.

Students reported using Snapchat to get homework help. For example, they might post a photo of a math problem they are struggling with or of something written on the board in the classroom that day. One student talked about using Snapchat to support group work in a science class: “I think it was biology. Like, we had to take pictures—and it was Snapchat, but it was student run, and then they submitted it all for us, so we used that all together to collaborate on a project. So we would go around looking at trees and like, frogs and whatnot and take pictures of them via Snapchat and send them to that account.” Teachers were neither involved in these Snapchat activities nor part of the students’ networks.

Teacher perception of student Snapchat use.—Teachers likened Snapchat use among their students to texting, with one explaining Snapchat as “their form of interacting with each other.” Multiple teachers commented about how students used Snapchat to communicate with each other during the school day, even while in close proximity: “They can be on one side of the courtyard to the other side and they’re snapchatting each other or texting. Texting is so blasé. They don’t do that anymore. But they do, you know. I guess I have a pretty good sense that [Snapchat is] more constant with them.” Although teachers did not use Snapchat with the students, they knew that they could be featured in students’ Snapchat stories. One teacher with a child attending the school shared, “[M]y daughter will come home and say I saw you on [name of student]’s Snapchat today, you know, and usually if I see them doing it, I’ll just smile or I’ll make a face.”

Snapchat was often involved in drama at the school, which required teachers to intervene. Teachers reported that drama was usually related to gossip, with students feeling a false sense of security about the privacy of their messages and images. One teacher summed up the problem as follows: “We’ve had issues with pictures, because from what I understand with Snapchat, it goes away, so they take pictures thinking it’s gone, and it’s not really gone.” Typically, what happened in these instances was that someone screenshot an item and shared it more

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widely. The photo or message traveled via student networks until it reached an individual whose feelings were hurt. Eventually, teachers and administrators became aware and intervened.

Teacher use of Snapchat.—Teacher use of Snapchat was dependent on having a network with whom to use it. Teachers who used it had family members or friend groups to interact with. Few did, although one of the teachers who also held a coaching role shared that he used Snapchat as a coaching backchannel. That coach also was maintaining a streak with a colleague of mostly motivational messages with a few random snaps on days when there was nothing else to share just to keep the streak going. Only one teacher reported any student connections on Snapchat. He followed, but did not directly interact with, a few students after they graduated. Three teachers reported enjoying the ephemerality of Snapchat in the same way that students did, stating, “I’m running out of storage, so I love that Snapchat doesn’t save it,” and “I use Snapchat if I’m having a conversation that I don’t want anybody else to be able to see, because I have nosey children at home.”

Teachers generally did not see a role for Snapchat in the classroom. One teacher explained why Snapchat was not her teaching tool of choice: “I’m not using Snapchat with the kids. I mean, there’s plenty of other things online. Like we’re using things called Kahoot! where the kids will pull out their phones . . . and there’s also something called Quizizz, which I learned that I like better than Kahoot!” The only teacher who considered using Snapchat reported thinking about how video clips could be used to model activities for students but had yet to determine how the video sharing would work with students.

Outside the instructional context, the librarian took some initiative with Snapchat, recognizing its popularity among students: “Now, I did help the school get a Snapchat filter for the school . . . actually, we got two approved. We’ve got one for homecoming and one that’s just there.” None of the students mentioned the school’s Snapchat filter, but the librarian indicated that students used the filter, which she knew from following a Snapchat story based on geolocation.

Facebook

Student use: Facebook is for family.—Most students in this study have Facebook accounts, but relatively few are active users of Facebook. During our prior study in this same high school (Dennen et al. 2017), it became clear that the teenagers were reticent to admit among their peers that they were Facebook users. In this study, students expanded on this phenomenon. They were unlikely to friend each other on Facebook but rather used it as a space to connect to their family. The reasons for using Facebook in this manner were twofold. First, Facebook was the online social network most likely to be adopted by their family members.

Second, these teens wanted to avoid context collapse between their family and peer worlds. They adjusted privacy controls to ensure their peers would not see their Facebook activity or were simply lurkers in that space. For example, a female participant commented that she has “an album for my family so they can go look at [my photos],” and a male participant commented, “I get on there to see what my family is talking about . . . I get on [Facebook] a lot, but rarely post anything.”

Students nearing graduation saw greater uses for Facebook. They shared how they used Facebook to investigate universities and to “get the feel of [a] school” from their Facebook presence. A few students joined “Class of” groups on Facebook to interact with current and newly admitted students. For these seniors, Facebook was taking on a new function as an information resource. Other students shared situations in which Facebook would be used as information resources, helping locate local garage sales or interact with community organizations.

Teacher perception of student Facebook use.—The teachers recognized that student Facebook use had declined in recent years. One teacher shared her experience discussing Facebook with students over several years: “Especially when we were talking about fake news, I mean, I would start with that chart of the fake news—real news being shared on Facebook, that chart, and so I would say to them, like, who’s got Facebook, and there were a lot fewer hands this year than there would have been in the past . . . Because Facebook is just not cool anymore because grandmas are on it, so yeah, it’s just not cool.” One teacher suggested that Facebook use may yet rise as students age: “The older kids are a little bit more okay to use Facebook. The younger kids typically aren’t . . . It seems to be more of a college aged thing. Now, by the time they get back to college or close to going into college, they start using it a little bit more.” Her observations confirmed what the students reported about their Facebook use and networks changing as they neared graduation.

Teacher use of Facebook.—The teachers were Facebook users or at least had been at one point in time. They reported using it primarily to connect to their family and friend networks. Many expressed a love/hate relationship with Facebook and told us about needing to take breaks, remove it from their phones, or stop using it during the school year. Reasons for walking away from Facebook included lack of time, lack of interest in content (“everybody sharing random videos”), and stress related to political postings.

Teachers avoided student connections on Facebook, suggesting that teachers wanted to shield their Facebook lives from student eyes as much as students wanted to maintain their own low profiles. A few teachers indicated that they would selectively connect to students who had graduated, but most chose to keep their distance. In one instance, a teacher shared that at one point she unfriended all of her colleagues because she needed a place where she could disconnect from colleagues.

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Only one instance of instructional Facebook use was shared. It was second-hand and from several years earlier. One teacher remembered a history teacher having students create Facebook pages for historical figures at the height of the platform's popularity. However, none of the teachers expressed any interest in using Facebook either in the classroom or to support professional development, nor did they believe their students would want to use Facebook as a learning tool.

Twitter

Student use: Twitter is for following.—Although Twitter was used by about one-half of the teenagers, they did not use it to interact with family, peers, school groups, or other local groups to which they belonged. Twitter was not a space where they performed identity or shared their daily activities with people they knew well, although they may have been connected to a small group of those individuals on Twitter. Most of the teenagers in this study who used Twitter said they knew relatively few people from their Twitter networks in real life. They typically followed school and local sports team accounts in addition to celebrity accounts.

Teacher perception of student Twitter use.—Teachers did not have much to say about student use of Twitter. One teacher commented that younger students used Twitter more than juniors and seniors, but another teacher felt that Twitter was more heavily used by the older students. A few teachers noted that Twitter was used by students involved with some extracurricular groups, but overall, Twitter was not considered a primary SNS tool.

Teacher Twitter use.—Teachers who used Twitter primarily reported using it for personal reasons and, similar to their students, were mostly followers on the platform. One teacher shared the rationale for following but not posting: "I don't feel like I need to publicly share to society my little snapshot of a thought." She further indicated the purposefulness of following others on Twitter, stating, "I use those tweets to end up going to the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. So as a gateway to the news source." Still, some teachers had quite negative views of Twitter, with one boldly opining, "I kind of think like it's a narcissistic format for semi-cogent brief thoughts."

Only the librarian reported using Twitter heavily in the school context. She maintained personal, school, and library Twitter accounts and had a large network of librarians with whom she interacted on Twitter. Her library Twitter account was followed by students, parents, and teachers, and she interacted with former students on Twitter: "I think they kind of lurk on Twitter. I don't know how much they post. A lot of our former students who are in college now, a lot of them use Twitter, and they'll comment on things I post or they'll like my posts or whatever, and I'll follow them back when they're in college. So I will see things

that they are doing. A lot of them will contact me on Twitter to ask me to read their papers, edit their papers for them.” In the library, she also set up a physical bulletin board with announcements in a Twitter-like format, trying to appeal to students, but took it down when she realized that it was too much work to maintain on a regular basis.

The librarian also tried to support professional development for Twitter, offering a workshop for teachers, but that effort did not lead to widespread Twitter adoption. She shared some of the barriers she experienced, such as getting the technology coordinator to unblock Twitter for the workshop and then finding that it was again blocked the next day. Momentum was lost, but with an administrator’s support Twitter finally was unblocked for the teachers. Still, it did not majorly take hold. Two teachers reported trying to teach with Twitter. One had a well-known unit that many students also discussed in which students assumed the role of an organelle and debated the merits of their respective organelles on Twitter. She used a separate account for this activity to keep student activity out of her regular feed. Another teacher once had students create Twitter accounts based on book characters but was no longer using that assignment. That same teacher once reached out to an author via Twitter and was able to arrange for the author to Skype with her class.

The band director previously tried to use Twitter to share information about band but had since abandoned that effort because of low use: “I started the Twitter with the kids and I don’t think a lot of kids use Twitter anymore, and so it just wasn’t quite as useful . . . because the kids would rather use Instagram or Snapchat, and I’m not going to Snapchat kids because that’s weird. And so I tried using Twitter, but there were maybe two parents that would ever see it, so I just kind of stopped (laughs).” Because Twitter use was low and passive, and Twitter networks were not school-centered, gauging the effectiveness of Twitter as a broadcast medium at the school was challenging.

YouTube

Student use: YouTube is like watching TV.—YouTube is a popular SNS among the students, but most do not take advantage of its social networking affordances. These students were neither content producers nor networkers on YouTube but instead used the platform to consume content shared by people they did not know.

Although the students were aware that YouTube contains SNS features like comments and liking and that they could follow people and create channels, they did not consider it an SNS tool. For example, one student contrasted Instagram and YouTube as video-hosting platforms, sharing, “When someone gets in a fight, they like record it and put it on YouTube. Or get on social media, like put

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it on Facebook and Instagram.” This student expanded on the topic of fights being videotaped and shared on YouTube, indicating that it was common at another school she had attended but not at this school. An administrator at the school confirmed that disciplinary action would be taken against anyone posting a video of students engaged in a fight.

Students reported using YouTube for a range of entertainment and educational functions. On the entertainment side, they accessed music videos and watched humorous vlogs. On the educational side, they looked up videos related to homework (e.g., math problems and science experiments) and tutorials to accomplish specific tasks (e.g., playing guitar, soccer drills, makeup tips).

Teacher perception of student YouTube use.—Teachers had little to say about student use of YouTube. They knew that students watched videos and listened to music on YouTube but did not perceive YouTube as occupying the same type of social networking space among their students that other platforms occupy.

Teacher use of YouTube.—Teachers shared many ways they used YouTube in their classroom. The most common uses were playing music and playing video clips related to course topics. The Latin teacher reported finding videos related to Greek and Roman history, mythology, and culture, as well as videos made by students in other Latin classes. Another teacher created a YouTube channel for students, consisting largely of original content: “Mostly stuff that I’ve created. I just kind of needed a place to house it. At one point, I was blogging a lot more than I am now about just kind of the development of the stuff and it was easy way to kind of house it to not have to like upload it and save it on the site that I was blogging on. But I can just kind of link it and it wasn’t eating up my space.” Only one teacher engaged students in making their own videos and posting them to YouTube, presenting it as one of several options for students in a history class but also expressing concerns about teaching and supporting technology use:

Most students do a PowerPoint or Google Slide or a Prezi, but I tell the students they’re always welcome to make a video, post it to YouTube—or, you know, either Movie Maker or post it to YouTube, or do—I think that’s pretty much it. . . . I don’t think I got any this year, but last year I had a student who did all of her projects as videos. . . . I don’t think it’s a valuable use of a history teacher’s class time to teach students how to upload videos to YouTube and—because I’m not even extremely knowledgeable on all that stuff . . . I just can’t justify too much class time on how to use those things.

Pinterest

Student use: Pinterest is personal.—Pinterest is a less popular tool among both students and teachers, although the few students who use it report doing so frequently. The student users were female, and they referred to Pinterest for

crafting, cooking, makeup, and hair information. Two students used Pinterest with family members to share ideas, and no one had a Pinterest network. Instead they viewed it as a bookmarking site.

Teacher perception of student Pinterest use.—Unsurprisingly, teachers had nothing to say about student use of Pinterest. Teachers did not see students engaged in Pinterest use, which likely reflects both the low rate of use among students and the personal, non-networked ways that students use this SNS.

Teacher use of Pinterest.—Similar to students, teachers reported personal use of Pinterest focused mostly on personal bookmarking. Pinterest use could readily blend personal interests with professional ones, as indicated by this teacher: “I love Pinterest. Yes, I’m on Pinterest daily. . . . I don’t really share anything on Pinterest but I love to accumulate pictures. I’m a bookmarker. I think in visuals too, so I think it’s very appealing to me and I find a lot of educational ideas online on Pinterest. And recipes.” School-related Pinterest content that the teachers bookmarked included lesson plans, icebreakers, and organization ideas. One teacher shared an example of implementing a lesson she found on Pinterest, and others were just seeking ideas. None of the teachers tried to use Pinterest with their students, nor did they share plans to do so.

All but one of the Pinterest-using teachers was female. The lone male teacher who used Pinterest felt sheepish about it, believing Pinterest to be a platform dominated by women: “I actually do have a Pinterest account. Don’t tell anybody . . . I actually got one because I became the SGA sponsor and just I was always looking for fundraising ideas or leadership lessons.”

Discussion

Student and Teacher Use

Our findings about student and teacher SNS use confirm findings from several other studies about how specific tools are used. For example, Facebook’s decline as a peer network for teenagers has been documented through Pew Internet’s surveys of American teenagers (Anderson and Jiang 2018; Lenhart 2015), as has Snapchat’s use as a messaging system among people with established relationships (Piwek and Joinson 2016). YouTube’s use as a source of informational videos and entertainment is well documented for both the adult (Smith et al. 2018) and teenage (Anderson and Jiang 2018) demographic, and both the adults and students in this study used YouTube regularly for these purposes.

The affordances and constraints of each medium shaped their use. Snapchat provides a clear example of the trade-off between affordances and constraints. In this study and others (Bayer et al. 2016), Snapchat was perceived as a medium

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for informal communication among friends rather than as a broader broadcast medium. This renders it inappropriate for use in a classroom context but well suited for homework-related communication among peers. The medium's ephemerality supports interactions about moments that need not be saved (Charteris et al. 2014). Homework is exactly this type of interaction; Snapchat will neither aggregate nor archive conversations (Soffer 2016), and students recognize that neither they nor their followers will be interested in the finer points of an algebra problem solved weeks earlier.

All of these SNSs can be used for multiple purposes, including socialization and connected learning via affinity networks (Ito et al. 2018). On Twitter, teens can interact with friends, seek or share information about a topic, have a learning-oriented chat, or simply pass time or entertain themselves. On Pinterest, teachers can find lesson plan ideas in the midst of collecting home decorating inspiration. Instagram supports identity and affiliation cultivation, sharing event photos with friends, following celebrities, and hobby-based learning. The connected learning skills that students and teachers develop independently have implications for school use of SNSs but are not directly or purposefully integrated in the school context.

In the school setting, teachers and students used SNSs for a variety of purposes but did not often use them together. Teacher-student collaborative use of SNSs was only evident in support of school-supported activities, whether in the classroom or extracurricular, and these collaborative activities occurred less frequently than other activities. Table 2 summarizes the different ways that SNSs are used in this school.

We noted that despite proclamations that people use SNS tools differently on the basis of age or generation (e.g., Prenksy 2001), the element that most shaped SNS use in the school context was not age so much as user role (i.e., student or teacher). Beyond that role, we saw individual people building and interacting

TABLE 2

SNS Use for Different Purposes by Students and Teachers

SNS Purpose	Students	Teachers	Students/Teachers Together
Professional development		X	
Lesson planning		X	
Classroom activities			X
Homework	X		
Extracurricular activities	X		X
Self-directed learning	X	X	
Social	X	X	

NOTE.—SNS = social networking site.

within social networks that matched their personal needs and preferences as well as the needs and preferences of their peer or primary interaction groups. Although we might invoke White and Le Cornu’s (2011) “digital visitors and residents” typology, which focuses on neither age nor adeptness, students and teachers in this study seemed to occupy more fluid positions in their SNS worlds. These positions varied on the basis of the SNS being used and the user’s purpose for using it. Even individuals who reported being fully comfortable with one platform might find another one puzzling or use it in a more mechanical way.

SNS and Classroom Learning

The use of SNSs to support classroom learning in this school is neither remarkable nor robust. Teachers selectively use SNSs to support classroom activities, and students may look to SNSs for homework help, but popular SNSs rarely are the primary means of facilitating a lesson (see table 3). Facebook is not used at all, and Instagram and Snapchat are only used to facilitate basic visual communication. The few examples of SNS-based classroom activities that we uncovered through our interviews were shared by multiple teachers and students. These instances stood out because they involved more than just passive use of YouTube as a content resource and because they were relatively unique at this school.

Students are not aware of how teachers use SNSs to support their own professional development and lesson planning. These activities benefit but are not visible to students. That said, these teachers did not report heavy reliance on popular SNSs for finding lesson plans. A few searched for items on Pinterest, and all stayed safely in the consumer portion of Hu et al.’s (2018) framework for

TABLE 3

Summary of SNS Use for Classroom Learning

SNS	Use in Classrooms	To Support Classroom Activities
Instagram	Photograph and share work	None
Snapchat	None	Peer homework assistance
Facebook	None	None
Twitter	Debates	None
YouTube	Listening to music; watching topical videos	Homework support
Pinterest	None	Teacher planning/ideas

NOTE.—SNS = social networking site.

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teacher resource curation. This finding may reflect the presence and active use of a state-supported online repository with vetted, standards-aligned lesson plans that has been heavily promoted in this school.

The teachers in this study used SNSs more for professional development than for classroom activities, and they were likely to be what Prestridge (2019) called info-consumers. They used the tools to locate resources for teaching, but they did not contribute resources for other teachers to use, nor did they focus on communicating and interacting with other educators. When they posted items online, they acted for their students, not to participate in the larger teacher sharing economy of open educational resources. Other studies show a preference for using SNSs for professional development over classroom use (Krutka and Carpenter 2016a) and for remaining in the information consumption zone (Gomez and Journell 2017).

The low rate of SNS use for classroom learning does not appear to be problematic, although it could be improved. By all reports, the students are thriving academically. The school boasts strong standardized test scores, consistently above the state and local district average, and administrators, teachers, and students all reported that many of the students from this school are admitted to and attend colleges. This study did not yield indicators that the students would perform better or be more motivated to learn if their teachers integrated SNSs more frequently or systematically in the classroom context. However, we saw missed opportunities for SNS-related education in this school. These opportunities related to developing digital literacy and digital citizenship skills and preparing students to become well-informed, powerful users of SNSs. Students and teachers in this study shared only discipline-oriented examples of school-related adults or policies guiding student use of SNSs. Aside from the librarian, school adults did not seem well-positioned to address either digital literacy or digital citizenship in their classrooms.

SNS Use and the Social Context

SNS use to support social connections was high overall, but not among everyone. Most students boasted large numbers of SNS friends and followers, but some students chose to opt out of using these tools or building large networks because of discomfort associated with being online. Teachers downplayed their own use of SNS because they did not want their use to be equated with student use. Also, the teachers were aware that their personal SNS use posed a conflict with their professional roles during the school day.

The presence of SNSs to support socialization among students was simultaneously important and disruptive. Peer friendships were valued, but their maintenance on SNSs conflicted with learning activities. Students reported

using phones to covertly and instantly connect to their friends in other classes. Pre-SNS, these interactions would have been relegated to lunch, free periods, and passing notes, and it is possible these interactions were used to plan for meeting up during lunch and free periods (Garcia 2017). However, teachers did not want to be in the position of policing student phone and SNS use in the classroom, and they also recognized that sometimes phone and SNS use supports learning, such as when students take photos of the board to share and assist with homework. They struggled with how to negotiate legitimate use with potential distractions.

Adult Perceptions of Student Use

Adult perceptions of student SNS use are important to consider because school adults determine whether SNSs are officially sanctioned and used to support learning and other functions in the school context. Similar to Garcia's (2017) finding that school adults had a poor understanding of how students use mobile learning and boyd's (2014) descriptions of students who felt their parents do not see the positive side of their SNS use, the school adults in this study did not fully intuit the breadth or personal meaningfulness of student SNS use. School adults were highly aware that most students were SNS users for social purposes, and they could easily recount negative aspects of SNS use in the school context (e.g., distraction, disciplinary issues). Some teachers knew of specific or isolated instances of SNS use by students to accomplish school-related tasks, but they did not see the valuable ways students used SNSs for self-directed learning purposes. For example, adults who did not use Snapchat or Instagram did not understand the importance of streaks for maintaining personal relationships, photograph cultivation for identity development, and following others for learning. They did not understand that Facebook was a family space, not merely "uncool." Adult characterizations of specific SNSs as used by teenagers were often dismissive. In sum, adults did not appear to understand the intricacies behind teenagers' choices of particular SNSs to support their networked interactions, which means they are not well poised to either support or build upon the skills that teenagers need and use to engage in participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009).

We did not explicitly ask students to comment on adult use but nonetheless learned about this topic via students' stories. Adults were not viewed as peers on SNSs but rather as surveillants and disciplinarians. In addition, adults were not considered very knowledgeable about using SNSs other than Facebook. This finding represents the flip side of adults not being well-poised to guide teenagers' SNS use in a school context or any other context; students know they can seek school adult help when SNS use becomes problematic, but similar support is not available for proactive and positive uses of SNSs.

(Dis)connection: Benefits and Drawbacks of Use

As currently approached, there is a school-constructed divide between school-related and sanctioned SNS use and SNS use for other purposes. However, for many SNS users who are part of the high school community, this divide may feel artificial; they experience both school and their social networks as a part of everyday life, inextricably intermingled in their daily activities. In addition, some students use social media to pursue independent learning activities (Rutledge et al. 2019). School-based attempts to discourage the use of SNSs during the school day are short-sighted. Still, it can be difficult to reconcile the systemic nature of SNS use across aspects of peoples' lives with the use of specific SNSs to support teaching and learning functions, and the school treated SNSs as collective whole rather than as unique platforms with different affordances and constraints.

The overall benefit of SNS use outside the school context is the ability to connect with other people and information sources, whether within or beyond one's existing communities and networks. With students' enthusiasm in their personal lives to use SNSs, there is possibly an untapped potential of SNSs in schools that would motivate students both in the classroom as well as in the larger school community. At the same time, we must contend with institutional reticence about student SNSs intermingling with school activities and in classroom spaces (Halverson and Shapiro 2013). As a result, at the institutional level we see a disconnect between opportunities and practices and policies. This disconnect was present in this school, even with a recent transition to an SNS-friendly administration that uses Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to broadcast school-related information. The administration's selective use of SNSs in ways that simplify getting important announcements to parents allows the school to take advantage of a major benefit of SNSs without having to enter the uncomfortable zone of sanctioning or encouraging student use of SNSs in the school context.

At the individual level, teachers and students in this study appreciated the ability to use SNSs to maintain their relationships, seek information, learn new things, and enhance their everyday activities. However, too much connectivity was not always a good thing. For each benefit of SNSs, we heard a counterpoint. Network maintenance takes time. Online self-disclosure can lead to discomfort for both the sharer and the viewer. Information shared online may be inaccurate, and messages may be misconstrued. In other words, using SNSs has benefits and adds complications.

We found that SNSs had a strong presence in the school among students and teachers but not a strong presence in formal learning activities. Further, we found that instances where students received adult guidance for SNS use were

ad-hoc, student-led, and related to problematic situations. Here we see a gulf between actual and potential knowledge and interactions. Prior studies have shown how teenagers use SNSs to explore their identity and participate in youth culture (boyd 2014), to find and participate in affinity networks (Ito et al. 2018), and to initiate learning activities in a participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009; Scolari et al. 2018). Teachers are ill prepared to learn from or alongside these students who are engaged in self-directed learning pursuits via SNSs, or to support other students who would benefit from guidance to locate and connect with appropriate SNS-based resources and learning opportunities.

Students in this study benefitted from access to SNSs when engaged in coursework, using YouTube as an informational resource and tutorial in and out of the classroom and using their peer networks on Snapchat and Instagram for homework support. The few glimpses we saw of classroom-based SNS use other than passive YouTube consumption, such as the Twitter-based debates one teacher used, suggest that well-designed SNS activities may yield positive results. At the same time, SNSs remain a classroom distraction. Students and teachers both reported how access to non-learning SNSs took away their focus on work. Studies have found that internet-based multitasking detracts from learning activities (Mokhtari et al. 2015) and that students who use smartphones in the classroom to access SNSs also engage in procrastination (Rozgonjuk et al. 2018). This is not a causal relationship but nonetheless suggests that students who otherwise may struggle to complete their work may not benefit from having easy access to their social networks in the classroom.

Still, the engaging nature of SNSs cannot be denied. If teachers had a better understanding of how students use SNSs in an authentic, self-directed manner to support personal learning and social networking needs, they might be able to design learning activities and homework or projects that capitalize on and further refine these skills. This would be a benefit of SNS use. At least in this school, several conditions would need to be met before this suggestion could become a reality, including a change in school policies and additional training for teachers focused on how to use select SNSs in support of teaching and learning functions and how to teach and support appropriate use of SNSs. Institutional policies can help shape teacher activities in this area, but teachers are still the front line for helping students learn about issues such as managing digital footprints, privacy, and intellectual property (Dennen 2015).

Although students and teachers were curious about each other's online activities, they did not opt to connect to each other while in the midst of an active teacher-student relationship. Both groups emphasized using SNSs for personal and social activities and recognized the difficulty of connecting on SNSs without sharing their personal and social connections with each other. Teachers in particular felt others might view these connections as inappropriate, and both

teachers and students were aware that in many schools teachers are officially forbidden from making or accepting friend requests from current students.

Context collapse (in this case, the merging of school and personal realms) remained a concern for students and teachers alike. Both groups were aware of the discomfort or confusion that might occur among individuals within an educational relationship when they become too familiar or connected outside the classroom (Kimmons 2014; Sugimoto et al. 2015). In this study, we saw the tension between students wanting a window into the world of some of their teachers' lives but not necessarily wanting that window to be transparent on both sides. This finding is consistent with other studies, which highlight conflicting opinions about teacher-student SNS relationships (Dennen and Burner 2017; HersHKovitz and Forkosh-Baruch 2017).

Although online relationships were not considered appropriate or desirable, students and teachers both seemed to recognize the importance of having teachers available to students—even if just offline—to help navigate difficult situations that might arise on SNSs or because of SNS use. Students knew they could seek teacher help if someone was engaged in inappropriate or unsafe activities, and teachers and administrators knew from experience that students could not keep SNS events contained to a teen-only, online context. They viewed both mentoring and discipline related to SNS activities as part of their jobs.

Despite concerns with context collapse, SNS spaces devoted to disseminating school information and supporting peer collaboration were well received. Importantly, the tools used in these instances were Twitter and Instagram, both of which do not require a bi-directional following relationship. Homework assistance and other collaboration occurred via Snapchat, which maintained privacy and relegated the communication to a temporary digital presence. In addition, students used SNSs independent of their friendship networks to seek information related to personal interests, similar to findings in Aillerie and McNicol's (2016) survey of how students use SNSs. For some students with few friends at school, SNSs can provide access to people outside the school setting with similar interests.

SNS connections were socially important for many students, and they may enable school friendships to be more easily maintained. The school draws students from a sizable geographic region with poor public transportation infrastructure. SNSs help students connect to collaborate on homework and socialize when they are not at school, and they can be preferable to exchanging phone numbers.

It is easy to focus on the well-connected people at the school. There are many, and they have a strong presence. However, it is also important to be mindful of students who are disconnected. Students with few friends in the school may find that SNSs and their own weak connections exacerbate feelings of isolation. This is a situation where highly connected and highly motivated students will

continue to do more, and those who are less connected or motivated recede further into the periphery. Teachers also may feel disconnected. Although none of the adults we spoke with seemed dissatisfied with their personal levels of SNS use, they were quick to highlight their own points of disconnection or low knowledge and skills, suggesting an ambivalence about the role of SNSs in their lives not exhibited by the students.

Conclusion

The practices and experiences of individuals at this high school demonstrate how SNSs feel omnipresent in the high school context but are not necessarily well understood or used in the school community or instructional context. A high level of SNS presence may hide a lack of knowledge about how to use SNS instructionally and obscure situations in which people are disconnected because of low SNS use.

This study has implications for which instructional tools teachers select for classroom use and the practices they engage in with those tools. The most popular social networking tools may not be the best choice for learning activities because of context collapse (Dennen and Burner 2017). Research in this area remains thin, especially with regard to learning outcomes for students (Greenhow and Askari 2017), and more focus is needed on the pedagogical practices enabled by tools and how they meet student learning needs (Greenhow et al. 2019). Given that it is developmentally appropriate for teenagers to have interaction spaces that are not continuously monitored by adults, consideration should be given to whether classroom learning is best served by using the most popular SNSs, lesser-known SNSs designed to support specific types of interactions, or tools with SNS-like features designed specifically for the education market. The latter two options encourage a focus on pedagogy over popularity, which is appropriate in this context.

This study also has implications for curriculum. Current efforts to use SNS for teacher professional development and isolated classroom activities are a start, but SNS use for formal learning is not necessarily the goal. There are scenarios where SNSs could be used as more than just a delivery or communication medium in the classroom. Digital citizenship has become increasingly important and is presently more likely to be learned by teenagers through their own experiences outside the school setting (Gleason and von Gillern 2018). Calls to teach digital literacy and citizenship are not new (Hollandsworth et al. 2011), but schools could have greater influence in this area. However, this study and others suggest that teachers are not yet fully prepared to teach about digital literacies (Claro et al. 2018) and may have low levels of knowledge and self-efficacy related to digital citizenship (Choi et al. 2018). In addition, teachers may need to let go

of the digital natives myth (Kirschner and De Bruyckere 2017) and recognize that they can effectively guide student learning in these areas if they develop their own knowledge and skills.

Outside the classroom, administrators and teachers need to consider the consequences of a shift toward SNS use for disseminating important information. If official information is posted on SNSs, some students and teachers might not see it, either because they are non-users or infrequent users of that SNS or because the information does not show on their feeds. This creates a situation where individuals become reliant on their face-to-face network to pass along information, and poorly networked individuals will become even less informed. Thoughtful procedures for sharing information are necessary, placing emphasis on whatever means will reach all school constituents.

School policies also need to be revisited. Rather than prohibiting or discouraging specific SNSs, policymakers should respect the purpose these tools hold in students' and teachers' lives and develop policies that will allow schools to be leaders in SNS use for learning and performance functions. This requires a shift from thinking narrowly about both curriculum and technology. Policymakers need to consider individual SNSs and their affordances across different dimensions of life and to recognize that for students and teachers, both learning and the school context extend well beyond the classroom when SNSs are involved, whether these tools are officially sanctioned or not. Thus, school policies should be guidelines for how students and teachers should use SNSs not only within the school context but also in participatory culture, affinity networks, and other activities of daily life.

SNSs have become ubiquitous in the lives of students and adults in high schools. They have potential to motivate students and adults, create networks between members of the school community, and provide multiple methods for communication and information gathering. Effective SNS users are well poised to engage in self-directed and lifelong learning. Yet although many students and adults are active SNS users, schools have yet to find ways to effectively coexist with personal use of SNSs and support SNS use for learning functions. Through greater focus on the affordances and constraints of different SNSs, it is our hope that we can come closer to understanding the best way to harness SNSs for a variety of school-related purposes.

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