THE SOCIAL MEDIA DILEMMA
IN EDUCATION:
POLICY DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION
AND EFFECTS

Dr. Devery J. Rodgers, Mount St. Mary’s College
Dr. Pedro E. Garcia, University of Southern California
Attendees will walk away from this interactive seminar with:

- Knowledge for effectively managing existing and future technology investments
- A strategic, workable, and pragmatic plan for the next 12 months
- A platform to defend and protect student learning environments
- A comprehensive session executive summary
- A support network of other leaders facing similar challenges and opportunities
- Suggestions for how to apply the presented descriptive research
The Problem

• Social media presents a new world of opportunity and a new wave of potential problems.
  – Students and teachers want to use social media in the classroom, but are discouraged by district filters and firewalls that prevent use (Evans, 2010; USDE, 2009).
  – Schools and districts want students to use 21st century tools, but want to protect stakeholders from any unwarranted dangers (NCES, 2010).
The Problem

• School Internet use is governed by Acceptable Use Policies which were written before the advent of social media and its promise for the classroom.

• A knowledge gap exists between the ubiquitous use of social media by today’s students, and an education policy that regulates this use.
AUP and Social Media

- An **Acceptable Use Policy**, commonly known as an **AUP**, is a legal document that sets standards for responsible use of computer technology. “At the school level, an AUP acts as a written contract between administrators, teachers, parents and students. It outlines the terms and conditions for Internet use by defining access privileges, rules of online behavior, and the consequences for violating those rules.”

*Media Awareness Network (2003)*
Rationale for the Study

- This empirical study sought to explore how social media policy is developed and implemented within a school district.
- **Problematic:** The Social Media Dilemma refers to two countervailing forces in schools today: the explosive growth in use of social media among young people (Lenhart et al, 2007, 2010) and its potential for use to enhance learning (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009) versus the anti-social media use policies adopted at schools as a defense against abuse and ultimate liability (Ofsted, 2010).
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- **Timely:** In August 2011, the Federal Communications Commission lifted its restrictions on Internet communications for users of eRate funds, creating new opportunities for social media integration in K-12, making the field ripe for policy change (FCC, 2011).
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• Relevant: This study discovers strategies that schools are developing to successfully address both sides of the dilemma.
Social Media Tools
(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

Ubiquitous Social Media Use by Teens
(Lenhart et al., 2007, 2010)

Neomillennial Learning Styles
(Prensky, 2001)

Educational Practices with Social Media
(Evans, 2010)

Education Technology Policy
(USDE, 2010)

Acceptable Use Policies
(Miller, n.d.)

Risk Management
(Ofsted, 2010)

Social Media Initiatives in Education
(US Gov’t, n.d.)
Laws which Have Governed Social Media Cases

- The First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendments of the United States Constitution are not inalienable rights for K-12 students, as determined by Supreme Court rulings in case law:
  - *Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) was a pivotal case regarding student’s First Amendment Rights, dictating that “...conduct by the student, in class or out of it, which for any reason - whether it stems from time, place, or type of behavior - materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is, of course, not immunized by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech.”
  - *Vernonia School District 47J v. Acton* (1995) was pivotal for Fourth Amendment Search and Seizure, ruling that the legitimate interests of the government in maintaining order and discipline outweighed any intrusion on student privacy rights.
  - *Bethel School District v. Fraser* (1986) was pivotal for Fifth Amendment Due Process, ruling that a school is not violating a student’s rights when taking immediate action for offensive acts.
  - Federal and state law (*Broadband Data Improvement Act, 2008; California Educational Code 489002r, 2008; Children’s Internet Protection Act, 2000; National Education Technology Plan, 2010*) mandate that school districts learn how to introduce education technologies while managing risks.
Research Questions

1. What defines “social media policy” and what are the different types of social media policies presently in place at the K-12 level?
2. What factors support and/or hinder the development and implementation of a social media policy within a school district?
3. How are these factors reconciled (or not), and to what degree, in a school district’s social media policies?
4. What are the most promising practices for the development and implementation of social media policy?
Sample of Population

- Classroom Teachers: 56%
- School Site Administrators: 20%
- Out-of-Classroom Teachers: 14%
- District Administration: 10%

Methodology:

Instrumentation

• The school district was the unit of analysis, while teachers and administrators were the population.
• The following methods were employed during the study:
  – **Document Analysis** (n=41)
    • quota sampling
    • District/School Social Media Policies
  – **Interview** (n=14)
    • purposive sampling
    • school site and district office administrators, out-of-the-classroom and classroom teachers
  – **Focus Group** (n=3 with total 46 participants)
    • online=stratified random sample ≠ face-to-face=clustered random sample
    • teachers and administrators
  – **Survey** (n=100)
    • simple random sample
    • school site and district office administrators, out-of-the-classroom and classroom teachers

K-12 schools defined social media policies in two factions: content and targeted subject.

- **Content**
  - Blogging
  - Content Communities
  - Social Networking
  - Virtual Worlds
  - Collaborative Projects

- **Targeted Subject**
  - Employees
  - Students
  - Instruction

There are 4 different types of social media policies in place at the K-12 level*: social media, amended AUPs, social networks, and blogging.

*excluding mobile technologies

There are 3 different targeted subjects for social media policies at the K-12 level: students, staff, and/or instruction.

The same factors that support social media policy development also hinder it; personal/school liabilities is a significant factor.

There are 4 significant factors to be reconciled within present school district social media policies: school/district policies, 21st Century learning initiatives, ubiquitous social media use by teens, and personal/school liabilities.

The reconciliation of these factors is explored within the identification of best practices.

There are 2 findings most relevant to promising practices: development, for which there are 4 criteria, and implementation, for which there are 3 criteria.

**Policy Development**
1. tiered job-level access
2. instructional focus for social media activities
3. ensuring social media education prior to access
4. stakeholder representation on decision-making committee

**Implementation of Policy**
1. embracing and adapting vs. blocking
2. progress monitoring
3. a cycle of feedback

Dr. Devery J. Rodgers

- [http://Educate2Elevate.info](http://Educate2Elevate.info)
- Educate2Elevate@gmail.com / (310) 929-0865
- Twitter: @ D_Educator / Skype: D-Educator
- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/pub/devery-rodgers/14/8a3/27a](http://www.linkedin.com/pub/devery-rodgers/14/8a3/27a)

Dr. Pedro Garcia

- pegarcia@usc.edu
- University of Southern California
- (805) 469-3377