



**How can teachers use
social media to
engage learners?**

Overview



- A rationale for incorporating social media
- Anticipating some resistance
- Considerations to make:
 - why use social media?
 - how can we support online reading?
 - how can we implement social media?
- Specific considerations and ideas

A Thought



- Pen pals as the “original” social media class project: What was **GAINED** by having students send/receive letters?

An authentic audience?

A contextualized writing experience?

Opportunities to learn about other places first-hand?

A personal rather than generalized view of culture?

A chance to incrementally build knowledge, upon an individualized framework?

A lateral rather than hierarchical construction of meaning?



Rationale

- Social media (potentially) means:
 - New audiences for receiving work
 - New structures for organizing information
 - New formats for presenting ideas
 - New methods for collaboratively creating knowledge
 - New opportunities for engaging students by making learning relevant to their outside-school lives.

Benefits to Students (including Reluctant Readers)

- Collaborative learning
- Project-based, “authentic” learning
- Experience with ill-structured problems (rather than black-white thinking)
- Practice with writing process
- Increased critical literacy and evaluation of online information
- Choice of texts and media, thereby increasing interest and relevance
- Validation of adolescent social language while building upon it with academic language
- Re-enfranchisement of students who see traditional school curriculum and practices as irrelevant



Points of Resistance

- “I don’t need to use social media to meet the same old standards.”
- “I have to deal with internet safety issues.”
- “I don’t have the expertise.”
- “I don’t have the time or resources to implement this fully.”

Online reading: harder than print?

- “Online learning is NOT online reading”

— Jim Vanides, HP Global Social Investment

BUT, the problems are related....

Some complexities of navigating online spaces



- Online texts **change daily** in structure, form, and content
- Online texts often contain **hidden social, economic, and political agendas** not typically found in closed hypertext learning systems
- Online texts are **not bound** within a closed system with only one organizational structure
- Online texts introduce **infinite intertextual connections** and intercultural negotiations

(Coiro, 2008)

Five circles are arranged horizontally at the top of the slide. From left to right: a solid light purple circle, an outlined light purple circle, a solid light purple circle, an outlined light purple circle, and a solid light purple circle.

So: It's about structure!

- Online social media projects, just like any other off- or online spaces, require structure for meaning.

That's where YOU come in.

Basic considerations for implementing social media

1. Ask yourself: Why **social** media?
2. Determine standards and objectives that can be met with the project
3. Plan the project/assignment—with special attention to structuring students' online experiences
4. Select format, materials and resources
5. Develop tools for assessment
6. Revise at the project's end



Further details and examples

BLOGS: An example.

- During this unit, you'll be responsible for jointly creating a class newsblog. Each of you will be responsible for selecting a topic related to this class and then preparing a short "article" which explains and illustrates the topic you've selected. Four students will post each week, and we'll take the first twelve minutes of class each Friday for those students to present their article to the class. In addition to the article you post, you'll also be required to comment on at least two other posts, adding information about the topic based on your own research/experience.

Behind the scenes



Benefits: continuous learning community, authentic audience for writing, potential for feedback/guided feedback

Considerations for blog-based units:

- Choose a service (such as blogmeister, blogspot, edublogs) which allows you to moderate content and to control access to the posts.
- Work with IT to make sure the blog site is not blocked by district filtering software.
- Draw up a blog contract with guidelines for parental permission, password-controlled access, student privacy, acceptable use policies, consequences for misuse.

Behind the scenes

Benefits: skill in categorizing information. collaborative resource lists for research projects.

Considerations for social bookmarks:

- Select a social bookmarking site such as del.icio.us or diigo.
- Provide clear instructions about HOW to tag.
- Provide students with at least SOME of the tags you expect them to use. Consider tags about content (what is the file about?), context (what is the file related to, in terms of the class—essay 1, WWIIunit, group-project1?), media (what type of information is it--blog, news, primaryresearch, secondaryresearch?).
- Provide exercises to help the students see how tags can help them analyze the bookmarked material.

(An example: <http://jenverschoor.wordpress.com/2008/03/09/using-delicious-in-my-classroom/>)