Social Media for Reading Instruction: The Benefits and the Challenges

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Introduction

• The purpose of this study is to understand how social media is used as an instructional tool for reading promotion to increase students’ reading level in the K-12 school environment.

• Research Questions:
  1. How do teachers – school librarians, English teachers and ESL teachers – use social media for their reading promotion and instruction?
  2. What benefits do teachers see from using social media?
  3. What challenges do teachers have in using social media?
Research Methods

• Teachers who have at least two year teaching experience as a full-time school librarian, ESL teacher or English teacher in K-12 school settings

• Individual Phone Interviews

• Content analysis of interview transcripts

• Preliminary findings from 30 interviews
  – 16 school librarians
  – 6 English teachers
  – 8 ESL teachers
Social Media Tools
Social Media Tools

• 83 projects in total
  – Average 2.77 projects per teacher
  – # of tools per project: range 1-4, average 1.40

• SM Tools
  – 43 different kinds of tools
  – Blog (18.1%), YouTube (15.7%), Edmodo (10.8%), Facebook (10.8%), Twitter (7.2%), Wiki (7.2%), Animoto (4.8%), Glogster (4.8%), Skype (4.8%), Voice Thread (3.6%)
  – Others: Blackboard, Destiny (Follett catalog), GoodReads, Google Docs, My Big Campus, QR Codes, Teacher Tube, Text Poll, Audacity, Kerpoof, Voki, Xtranormal, flip cameras, etc.
Blogs

• Provide resources for research, review books, discuss texts

• Weebly, BlogSpot, Edublogs
  – Edublogs more self-contained, less commonly filtered
YouTube

• Watch re-enactments of texts such as plays or poems
  – Students respond, summarize, discuss purpose or mood, compare/contrast on screen with written text

• Book trailers: on website or in class

• Alternatives: TeacherTube and SchoolTube
  – Fewer videos
  – Screened for academic content
Edmodo

- Students like it – it looks like Facebook!
- Multitude of applications
  - Discussions about class reading
  - Post assignments and resources
  - Badges as incentives
  - Parents can view what’s happening in class
  - Polling
- Provides continuity from week to week
- Allows students to practice reading each other’s writing and writing for an audience
Facebook/Twitter

• Market library events, services, new books
• Connect with students
• Link to sources
  – Research
  – Reviews
• Embed Twitter updates into website
• Many students already use
Wikis

• Book clubs or whole school – discussion site
• Hosted on sites such as PBWorks
• Some issues
  – Lower participation
  – Unfamiliar interface
... and more!

- **Animoto**
  - Video creation for advertising, book reviews, book trailers

- **Glogster**
  - Interactive posters for reports, etc. (sample glogs at [http://edu.glogster.com](http://edu.glogster.com))

- **Skype**
  - Video conference with authors

- **VoiceThread**
  - Comments after hearing story: characters, visualization, inferences, etc.
  - Share recommendations with other students
Benefits

1) Engagement and motivation

Helpful to increase students' interest and motivation; Allows more creativity; Enriches in-school life; Engages students with a lot of the resources that people are sharing

2) Learning outcomes

Writing and reading skills; Technology competency; Reading activities; Being Independent thinkers and creators
Benefits

3) Student-oriented approach

Students already used to communicate that way; Sharing their progress of work even though it's incomplete; Comfortable zone for conversation

4) Extended functionality

Sharing feedback online; Very effective for discussion; Online activities for monthly face-to-face meetings; Providing one-stop-shop for all assignments and announcements; Easier for teacher to assign manage course.
Benefits

5) Continuous instruction

Instruction stays with them because of social media

6) Remote access from home

It is a worthwhile use of free time for students at home; Getting family involved and building relationships between the library and the parents; Students can share their work with family (parents) at home; Learning opportunities for family
Challenges

1) Filtering at school

Facebook is blocked so it's not used at school, but used for announcements, such as parent meeting, etc.; Teachers have to work at home for teaching prep.

2) Time commitment

Time to learn social media tools; Both prep time and classroom time – a lot of extra steps!
Challenges

3) Limited Access to Computer

Limited access at home; Limited access to computer at school (little time or not enough computers)

4) Internet Safety

Bullying; Lack of content control; Policy barriers; Control from central office; Need parents’ permission; Fear from the principal and parents
Challenges

5) Different reactions from students

No mental break for students; Students' language (e.g., slang vs. academic English) on social media; Sometimes students feel they get sidetracked; Challenging to have students engaged in educational social media

6) Teachers’ resistance to technology

Getting the teachers to use technology in any format; Controversy about electronics vs. papers among English teachers
Challenges

7) Lack of consistency

Lack of consistency of how each tool is applied throughout the school; Uniform policies around social media are needed; Younger kids' difficulty with remembering ID and PW
Discussion & Questions

• Would using social media be helpful to improve students’ reading skills?
• Have you used these or similar tools in an educational context? Have you found them to be helpful or harmful to learning?
• What might the library/classroom of ten years from now looking like?