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9 ways to use social media for education

Social media is the most efficient communication tools we know, but how can we use them to enhance training?

According to the famous Italian encyclopedia **Treccani**'s definition, social media are "The set of information and communication technologies and tools aimed at creating, exchanging and sharing multimedia contents such as texts, images, videos and audios on the Internet". therefore, it's not just for posting our vacation photos online.Over the years social media has gained credibility as a reliable source of information and as a platform where different organizations can interact with the public.

Today we can see educational institutions adapting these developments into their systems and relying on team resources and mechanisms to improve student lives. The use of social media in education helps students, teachers and parents to get more useful information, connect with learning groups and other education systems that make education convenient.

There are many different ways to use social media for education. Social media can be used both in the classroom and in one's free time, and since it is no longer possible to underestimate the power of social media to simplify almost everything, in this article we explore 9 ways to use social media for education.

Benefits of social media in education

Social media and technology are an integral part of daily life, and integrating the use of these tools into the classroom is more natural than ever, as many students are used to it.

Each social media platform offers many different ways to be used in the classroom, from sharing announcements to live lessons, and so much more. First, **social media provides a more fluid and direct communication tool** between students, teachers and parents, who can supervise and ask or answer questions.

The other aspects it offers are **flexibility and continuity in learning**. Specifically, social media can be used both in the classroom and outside, in dead moments of the day and wherever we are. As a result, they can ensure continuity of learning as they keep students constantly connected to the learning material.

The University of Toronto, Canada identified the following **benefits** of using social media in the classroom after integrating it into their education strategy:

- Learn new digital skills
- Improve knowledge retention and understanding
- Increase class participation and motivate students
- Building a community; connect students with each other and with the global community
- Becoming an effective member of an online community
- Improve student writing (through peer review, feedback)
- Learn a different writing style
- Go beyond text, for example with images, videos, designs.
- Make class knowledge public
- Allow students to show their personality better than the traditional model
- Improving students' attitudes towards course content
- Digital Citizenship
- Global expertise
- Internationalization of learning in Global Classrooms, where faculty and students teach and learn with peers abroad using Internet-based communication technologies.

Social media in the classroom

In this section of the article we talk about the different ways in which social media can be used directly in the classroom. There are many educational tools that can be used by students of all ages, from elementary school through college.

1. **Use a Facebook page to broadcast updates and alerts.** Facebook can be the perfect social media platform to incorporate into the classroom. Instead of forcing teachers and students to learn something new when it comes to running an online classroom, it's best to stick with something everyone already knows. Have students follow the class Facebook page that the instructor can use to post class updates, share assignments, and encourage discussion. Keep in mind that Facebook Pages are public and anyone with a Facebook account can comment on posts.
2. **Use a Facebook group to broadcast live lessons and host discussions.** Teachers can also create Facebook groups for each of their classes, both public and private, and broadcast lessons live, post discussion questions, assign assignments and make class announcements. For example, it can be a great reminder for busy students during vacation breaks. When using social media for education, it's important to ensure a professional boundary. In some cases, when creating a Facebook group, teachers cannot send friend requests. With a Facebook group, you can send parents and students a direct link to the group for access. Groups are a perfect reference point, especially for an online course, and can facilitate communication with students, parents and other teachers.

3. **Use Twitter as a class bulletin board.** Another tip for integrating social media into your educational offering is to use Twitter as a discussion forum or bulletin board for the classroom. Teachers can create a single Twitter account for each class and reuse it each year, or they can create a new one for each school year. Teachers can use Twitter to post reminders of homework due dates or to share inspirational quotes and helpful links to quizzes or practice resources. The teacher can also create discussions and Twitter chats around a specific hashtag that he has created.The 280-character limit causes students to think critically about the need to communicate concisely and effectively, a useful skill to develop.

8. **Use Instagram for photo essays.** Students can use Instagram to present a series of photos or graphics in a visually appealing way. Instagram allows students to practice digital storytelling in ways other social media platforms don't allow. Students can create class-specific Instagram accounts and can delete them after class if they wish.
9. **Use Youtube videos as additional content for the course.** Youtube is one of the most popular social media among young people and it is possible to find high-quality content developed by reputable and well-established content creators in their field. The amount of resources on this platform, the fact that you can find content of all lengths, and the popularity of the platform among young people make YouTube a valuable resource for eLearning.
10. **Create a class blog for discussions.** Writing blog posts gives students another outlet for digital content which can then be easily linked to social channels in the classroom. There are several platforms, such as WordPress, SquareSpace, Wix, Blogger, Tumblr or Medium, on which teachers can create a class blog. Students can create their own user accounts to create discussion posts or add comments to class requests. The course syllabus, assignments, updates and resources can also be shared on a blog for reference.
11. **Assign blog posts as essays.** If blogging is used as a communication tool, another strategy for combining social media and learning is to encourage students to create a personal blog for writing essays or short texts. Ask students to answer weekly questions, making them as informal and unstructured as possible. These answers can be published in the student's personal blog or in the class blog.
12. **Create a class-specific Pinterest board. Teachers can create Pinterest boards for each class and save relevant pins for classes.** Pinterest is a great social media platform that teachers can use to prepare but most importantly organize resources, lesson plans and assignments for their classes in one place. You can create cards by class or subject and create sub-topic cards for weekly units or for all worksheets. Pinterest can also help students share relevant content they find around. For example, they can create a digital bibliography for research projects, papers, or group assignments by posting websites, books, or videos on a single-topic bulletin board, and refer back to it when it's time to write.
13. **Create interest-based Facebook groups.** Make it easy for parents and students to find the social media profiles of your school or the courses you offer by adding links to your website's main navigation or by creating a social media directory that has them all in one place.

Bottom-line

Nowadays many parents and prospective students check a school's website first if they are interested, and offering more ways to understand how the school is organized and what it offers allows informing the public more effectively. For example, simply sharing photos of classes, events and staff on campus allows you to connect with your audience much more effectively than through a speech or presentation in schools. Highlighting extra-curricular events and activities can make your school stand out from the rest. While school and college websites tend to follow the same pattern, social media allows you to be unique and casual.

Also, many people want to be involved in their schools even after they leave them, especially university alumni. Creating Facebook groups for students and alumni can increase school spirit and engagement. Alumni groups, groups for different graduating classes or departments, and groups for different extracurricular activities.