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# Social Media in the Classroom

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Social Media in the Classroom

By

Courtney Altenbach

A thesis is submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science of Education

May 13, 2016

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**Abstract**

The question that guided this study is: how can we use social media that our students are already fluent in, to engage them more in the classroom? The purpose of the study was to find out if teachers in the district where I work are using social media in their classrooms and if not, what objections or hesitations they have with social media. For the procedures, I interviewed elementary teachers in the district where I work, about how they use social media in their classroom and possible objections or challenges they might face in its use in the classroom. I was able to get the perspectives of 10 teachers, spanning grade levels of Kindergarten to Sixth Grade. The findings that were discovered from my data analysis were: 1) forms of social media are already being implemented, 2) teachers feel supported with the technology in their classrooms, 3) teachers view their tech savvy students as a positive, 4) despite concerns, most teachers recommend using social media for teachers. I was able to conclude from the findings that teachers are implementing a variety of social media modes successfully and see how it is positively impacting their students, and the objections that teachers have with using social media in their classrooms seems to be validated by research studies.

## Introduction

Do you ever find yourself mindlessly scrolling through your Facebook feed or constantly checking your Snapchat to see if anyone's life is more exciting than yours at that moment? Well, that is the world we live in now; the world of technology and social media. There are 4.5 billion likes generated on Facebook, 500 million tweets on Twitter and 70 million photos and videos shared on Instagram daily (Bullas, 2015)! What does that mean for education? Are teachers ready for it? Are educators using it the right way? All of these questions and more have gone through my mind during my time as a teacher and as a student. This *is* the age of technology and I have watched the classroom transform as technology has transformed society. However, social media is one technological resource that seems to be mostly untouched by educators.

Social media is a widespread avenue for communication across all generations, yet there is a significant gap in the use of social media in the classroom, especially at the elementary level. Many researchers have done studies on using social media in colleges and universities, and sometimes high schools (Mourlam, 2014; Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). However, even in high school, there is a hesitancy to incorporate different modes of social media. What is holding teachers back? "While educators may recognize the value of incorporating technology into the classroom, many may struggle to identify ways to use technology toward extending students' thinking, rather than as an add-on to a lesson" (Stuft, 2013, p. 24). I think that, generally, teachers understand there is a value in technology and that it can be beneficial, which is an important step forward. However, there are many reasons why educators are not using social media in their classrooms: unfamiliarity with the technology, inappropriate use of technology by students, and lack of guidelines and policies in the district, to name a few.

According to the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, students need to be competent in information technology, media, and technology skills to ensure their success (2009). All students learn in different ways, and teachers have to differentiate their teaching in order to meet students' needs. This includes being up to date with technology and how it is being used outside of the classroom, because, "[T]he digital world is changing the way kids think" (Jukes, 2010, p. 87) and that factor affects our teaching directly. The students that we are teaching have been immersed in digital technology their entire lives. The technology is advancing as they age, which means it is essential for teachers to familiarize themselves with how to use common technology to engage their students. The addition of SMARTboards, iPads, tablets, and netbooks is accompanied by the availability of many programs and apps. Fortunately, there are various resources available to teachers and students that can be incorporated into the classroom curriculum. Since YouTube became a popular video sharing website, many teachers have had the opportunity to incorporate short videos related to course content into their lessons. This has helped to, "change the nature of the learning environment" by expanding communication beyond the classroom to experts in the real world (Mourlam, 2014, p. 23). As adults, we are already using social media on a daily basis. Most of us have smartphones with game apps and Facebook apps. I know that I check my Facebook, even just to scan my newsfeed, several times a day. Students often have more leisure time than adults do, which makes it more likely that they are spending twice as much time on their phones and social media apps. So what is holding teachers back from utilizing this valuable resource?

Teachers face many challenges when it comes to using social media. One of the main difficulties that I have observed is the lack of policies and guidelines for using social media in school districts. "Superintendents and principals need to step forward to lead the change"

(Porterfield, 2012, p. 122). Teachers need the support of their administration in order to feel comfortable making these changes in their classrooms. Another challenge for teachers is how to make social media activities a meaningful educational experience not purely entertainment. I think that again it would be beneficial for administration to take the time to train teachers in these devices, especially those “digital immigrants” who did not grow up with the same technologies and are not as well versed in social media as the “digital natives” (Vooren & Bess, 2013, p. 33). There is also a valid fear that there could be inappropriate use of social media by students. For the sole teacher in the classroom, it can be difficult to manage every student’s use, including their use outside of school (Kahveci, 2015).

My research question for this study is to determine if teachers in District X are using social media in their classrooms. If these teachers are already using social media, first, I want to find out how they are using it, and second, what their goals and purposes are. If these teachers are not choosing to use social media, I hope to discover what is holding them back, and what their objections are to using it. Our students are already “savvy” in this digital age. “They use digital technology transparently, without even thinking about it” (Jukes, 2010, p. 15). It is their main source of communication and they build relationships through it. As educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should be taking advantage of this tool to fully engage our students.

Teaching is a life-long learning career and we cannot afford to keep our minds closed to the changes going on outside the classroom. As with anything new, social media is untamed and, in some cases, unexplored territory for teachers, but it has great potential for use in the classroom. Students are already using social media on a daily basis, which makes it easily accessible to them. If teachers can be open minded when it comes to using social media as a tool in the classroom, whole new worlds can be opened to them and their students.

Through this research, I want to find out how teachers in District X are already using social media in their classrooms to engage their students. It is encouraging to me to be able to see what is already being done, and perceive how I could possibly fill in the gaps. For teachers who are not using social media, I want to outline and illuminate different ways that they might incorporate it into their current curriculum. At the very least, I hope to open their minds enough to consider how social media could engage their students on a different level.

### **Literature Review**

Based on relevant literature pertaining to my study, I have found that there are more challenges that teachers face than I anticipated when it comes to using social media as a tool in their classrooms. Some of those challenges come from an administrative level and some come from a personal level. Therefore, I will review literature that illustrates what challenges and objections teachers have against social media in their classrooms. Interestingly, I have also found that there are many teachers who have successfully used different modes of social media in their classroom literacy practices. My aim is to highlight studies that show social media being successful and effective. This is a way to share information with educators who have yet to attempt using social media or have been unsuccessful, as well as a way to discuss the challenges teachers face with implementing social media into their classrooms and their objections to using it. For this study the term social media will be defined as “online tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media itself, thus facilitating conversations and interactions online between groups of people” (Vasbo, 2014, p. 110). When I am considering social media, I am including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, Flickr, Edmodo and Google Apps. In the next section, I will discuss, first, the issues teachers have had or are having with using social media and second, studies that showcase how



social media has been incorporated successfully into classrooms and the benefits that have been found.

### **Challenges**

“The single biggest problem facing education today is that our digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (Vooren & Bess, 2013, p. 35). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 44% of current teachers in the United States are under the age of 40 (2014), indicating that 56%, or more than half, of the current teacher population can be referred to as “digital immigrants”. This means that these teachers did not grow up in the digital generation, and therefore have had to learn about all of the most current technologies on their own.

The digital generation has grown up with multiple modes of technology (ie. smartphones, tablets, and iPads), and can work these devices with ease (Jukes, 2010). When teachers have a classroom full of students who can navigate the SMARTboard more effectively than they can, it can make for a less meaningful experience for the students. For example, time can be wasted trying to fix the technical difficulties while students wait and become less engaged. On the other hand, if a teacher chooses not to use the SMARTboard at all, the students miss out on the opportunity to have an engaging and interactive experience with a tool that is very familiar to them. This kind of scenario highlights “the detriment to students’ learning experiences” (Jukes, 2010, p. 21), in a situation where teachers don’t have the proper knowledge to implement new technology into their classrooms.

“Teachers are lacking in their understanding of the use of technology, specifically the use of social networking” (Vooren & Bess, 2013, p. 35). This lack of knowledge and understanding of technology and social media is another challenge teachers face (Mourlam, 2014). I think that since teaching is an evolving and ever-changing career, part of the responsibility lies on the teachers to make themselves more knowledgeable, even if this includes technology or strategies they are not fully comfortable with. One way teachers can do this is by keeping up on current research that is being done by other districts and schools in their area or different parts of their state, in order to gain more knowledge and perspective. However, a big portion of this job is up to the school administration. “To adjust to the change, teachers will need the support from their school site and administration” (Vooren & Bess, 2013, p. 35). Holding workshops to educate teachers on how to implement these modes of social media into their classrooms successfully could eliminate this barrier that is holding teachers back. This would also help teachers to create meaningful experiences with social media for their students. “[A]lmost all faculty use video based social media like YouTube, but very few use Facebook and Twitter, which are two of the most used social media” (Mourlam, 2014, p. 24). Showing videos on YouTube is one way to engage students and get them interested in content. It allows for different perspectives to be introduced that they may not have thought about. “[L]earners can be motivated by social media but the teacher has a crucial role in facilitating sophisticated use for educational purposes” (Vasbo, 2013, p. 110). That is why it is important for teachers to have tools and training available to them in order to successfully implement social media in the classroom.

Another complaint of teachers is the fear of inappropriate use of technology. “[S]tudents could be targets for predators, or actively seek inappropriate material” (Kahveci, 2015, p. 84). It can be difficult, if not impossible, to monitor all of the students’ personal use of their tablets or

laptops, as well as their use in school and outside of school. Young students, especially upper elementary students, need to be taught how to use their devices appropriately and provided with good guidelines to follow. Our students may be savvy with technology, but they are not always wise about taking safety measures with the internet and using social media for mature reasons. However, it is not an easy task to implement a new technology or social media mode into a classroom and many teachers can see it as an unnecessary tool. The study by Kahveci (2015) stated obstacles that were indicated by teachers in a survey. Those obstacles included: accessibility, differing ability levels, dependability and need for supervision of the students especially from inappropriate websites (Kahveci, 2015). In the study by Jones & Cuthrell (2011), they mentioned that YouTube can be filled with a “wasteland of garbage” (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011, p. 81) which makes it so important for teachers to be critical examiners and have a well-developed knowledge of the right and wrong way to implement any kind of social media.

Social media platforms are mainly used for entertainment purposes among both students and teachers. This plays a role in how students will interact with something that they view as entertaining. Teachers have a legitimate fear about social media becoming a distraction. Can a student use a class Facebook page for discussion purposes in class without being tempted to check his or her own newsfeed? According to Flanigan and Babchuk (2015), “the Net Generation (or digital generation) has little to no experience using technology for professional or educational purposes” (p. 40). In this study, they found that social media is always available to students which makes it a distraction and can have a negative impact on homework and student success in the classroom. Students in the study said that because of their habitual use of technology and social media, it was an obstacle that overpowered their homework and study time at home. If students have negative views of social media being used for academics, it seems to be

reaffirming teachers' decisions not to incorporate it into their classrooms. A teacher has to first learn how to make social media a meaningful experience before they can begin to teach their students how to have meaningful interactions with a social media mode. So, not only do the digital immigrants have little knowledge and experience with technology, now they have to teach students how to use it in a new way. This can feel very overwhelming and time consuming for teachers, which in turn may prevent them from even trying.

One of the major arguments against using the internet and social media is the issue of privacy. The internet is vast and has a permanence to it and once something is out there, it is very difficult to get it back. The concern for many is that students are either unaware of how easily others can gain access to their personal information or they do not know how to prevent it. The internet can be a scary place for students if not used appropriately. "Facebook is a context where both known and unknown audiences can gain access to posted content, increasing the possibility for privacy breakdowns" (Child & Starcher, 2015, p. 483). The way that Facebook is set up, it allows for the user's associated friends to have a link to their page. If that user's privacy settings are not set to block associated friends (in other words, friends of the user's friends that the user may or may not know) then it gives easy access into that user's life online. Facebook also allows for users to stalk another user's pages and information with anonymity (Child & Starcher, 2015). This type of use makes it increasingly difficult to keep an individual's personal information safe, which is why it is important that students are aware of their use and how to manage their privacy.

By offering resources and training to teachers in how to use social media, teachers will be able to reach their students on a different level and be able to build a bridge connecting students' school and home lives. The role of social media has expanded from purely entertainment purposes to supplementing learning in the classroom and teachers need to make those

experiences meaningful (Abe, 2013). Social media is used mostly as a form of entertainment for children and adults; it can be difficult to see where the line is that transforms it from a distraction to an educational experience. Teachers struggle with how to do this, and, “simply adopting a technology and not truly understanding its potential will not suffice” (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012, p. 92). It would be a waste of time to show a YouTube video that has no real connection to material or to start a class Facebook page and not use it. In one study by Reid, the teachers created Facebook pages for their classrooms in order to incorporate the use of social media because many students showed interest in doing so (2011). However, the teachers found it difficult to keep it updated and eventually stopped posting on the page all together. I found this study particularly interesting because the students said that they actually found it *very helpful* when their teachers were posting assignment and test reminders and that they would “want to incorporate this type of social media into all their classes” (Reid, 2011, p. 76). This was only one of many ways that a class Facebook page could be implemented to engage students. There are many other benefits to using Facebook and other social media modes despite the challenges and objections that teachers may have.

### **Benefits**

Let’s begin with Facebook. On average, 700 billion minutes are spent on Facebook per month (Facebook, 2011). This number has probably increased significantly since the poll was taken in 2011. With the addition of Facebook apps on our iPhones and Droids, Facebook is at our fingertips every minute of the day. Even though social media sites, such as Facebook, are blocked in most school district computers, this doesn’t prevent our students from accessing them. So how can we, as educators, use this to our advantage? In a study by Fewkes and McCabe, they found that the benefits of using Facebook in the classroom included collaboration between both

student-teacher and student-student, extra help from the teacher on assignments, homework discussions, and self-organization (2012).

Facebook allows students to access their teachers outside of school and get extra support that they may need, or help with answering a question that has them stuck. Facebook posts allow students to ask for help from the entire class and not just specifically the teacher. This can open up a discussion about a question that perhaps multiple students are having issues with, and students can help each other without any teacher interaction. Fewkes and McCabe found that as a result, using Facebook fostered self-regulation and accountability both individually and collaboratively (2012). In the same study, they found that only 27% of students said that their teachers found ways to include Facebook in their actual lessons (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012). Using studies like this highlight the possible benefits of social media. By implementing an array of strategies that use social media to support the learning programs of our classrooms, teachers and students can broaden their horizons immeasurably.

Another mode of social media that has been shown to be used successfully in classrooms is Twitter. In the study done by Vooren & Bess (2013), teachers implemented Twitter into their middle school classes by having their students create Twitter accounts and using them to communicate with the students. The teachers “tweeted” multiple times a week, including reminders about assignments, tests, and links that referred to the information covered in class. The students communicated with other students in the class regarding assignments and a small portion of the class formed a study group. The results of this study showed that the benefits of using Twitter included student introduction to the ethics of online communication, developing a community of learners through an expanded tool of communication, increasing the sense of community in the classroom, fostering the use of writing as an enjoyable activity, serving as a

tool to assess opinions, providing an engaging educational experience, improving the communication between teacher and student, and finally, encouraging all students to have a voice (Vooren & Bess, 2013). This study demonstrated that the students who used Twitter were not only more engaged in their work, but they were able to make it their own, which should be the goal for all teachers.

An additional benefit found in another study was that social media provided students with the opportunity “to reflect upon themselves and the world in new ways” (Vasbo, 2014, p. 111). The main purpose of this study was to find out how lower secondary teachers were facilitating their classes using social media forms. The most significant gain from using this type of networking in the class was the students’ ability to reflect. They were able to do this by engaging in online-chat with peers, making and sharing videos about a topic that they chose and writing blog entries. When using Twitter for these activities, students were able to draw on others’ perspectives on their topic and read comments and responses from peers, which in turn helped them to reflect on their own thinking. Student reflection inspires students to take ownership of their work and become active participants in their learning. This is the goal of all teachers. So, if social media will provide them with a way to do this, then teachers need to be taking advantage of this in their classrooms and finding strategies to implement it into the curriculum.

According to Krutka (2016), social media is beginning to change the way that students and teachers interact with each other and with the world outside of school. Social media platforms are blurring the lines of communication between people and allowing the potential for social media to have a place in the classroom. Krutka gives many other examples of how social media can benefit classrooms. His article maps out the who, what, when, where and why social media has a place in the classroom. One way that teachers can integrate social media is by

creating hashtags using Twitter. This feature allows students to “affiliate around common interests” (Krutka, 2016, p. 7). Students could opt to use a hashtag such as #studentvoice to search all other people who have used that hashtag for related videos or pertinent discussions in order to discover ideas and resources for a paper or presentation. The world-wide-web holds a wealth of information and Twitter’s hashtag feature can help students navigate to the information that specifically pertains to their objective or topic. A high school history teacher used Twitter to help his students view and analyze the differing perspectives of people who took part in the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions. “Social media afforded his students unique opportunities to hear unfiltered voices that he could not otherwise bring into his classroom” (Krutka, 2016, p. 8). This activity was successful for his students because they were able to hear the observations and views of people who were actually a part of the event. The students had a first-hand account that they surely would not have been able to get from a textbook. Another example of how social media was used in the article involved students creating their own Twitter accounts and using them to share their personal posts about social studies topics. This enables them to have dialogue with other social studies educators across the United States and even in Australia. Students were able to expand their thinking and get different perspectives from others outside of their classroom and textbooks. This article outlined many potential uses of social media for teachers and encouraged educators to begin to think about the many benefits that come from technology: improved student-teacher relationships, learning among peers, meaningful academic discussions lead by students and the introduction of different personal and cultural perspectives on the topics being studied.

Social media allows the opportunity and strongly encourages students to expand their audiences. One of the first social media modes that began to do this for teachers and students was



YouTube. Every day more than 100,000 videos are being uploaded and publicly shared on YouTube (Special Interest Group for Teacher Educators (SIGTE) Leadership and National Technology Leadership Summit (NTLS) Program Committee. 2008), allowing it to be one of the leading video-sharing sites available. According to Jones & Cuthrell (2011), YouTube is “an innovative technology tool” (p. 83) that all educators can commit to integrating into their classroom in order to engage their digital learners. Jones and Cuthrell (2011) share their findings of potential uses for YouTube as an instructional tool in planning and preparing lessons. Videos can be used as an attention-grabber to get students interested in a topic or to begin a new unit to present information in a more intriguing way. They can also serve as a model or to prompt discussions (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). YouTube provides the opportunity for exposure to a wide range of information about current and cultural events such as campaign debates and presidential speeches. Students can be introduced to more perspectives and opinions than they would have experienced with input only from their peers and teachers. Jones and Cuthrell also warn readers that although there are many uses for YouTube videos in the classroom, they also need to be approached with caution. Teachers need to be careful and critical about the type and content of videos they choose to share in class, because the goal is to engage and enhance the students’ experiences with the lessons and not hinder their learning.

“To effectively educate the youth of today teachers must interact using the modes of communication embraced by their students” (Vooren & Bess, 2011, p. 33). The students in our classrooms have grown up in a different age of technology than we could ever have imagined. Educators need to embrace this change and incorporate the technology that our students are so efficient at manipulating. Social media is the main communication tool of our youth today and for most people in general. Despite the pitfalls and challenges that may be holding some back, it

is critically important that districts and administration begin to support the changes that our schools need to implement in order to effectively teach our digital natives. “Teachers are central to any lasting reform and what actually happens in a classroom” (Meabon, 2014, p. 43).

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to find out how and why teachers in District X are already successfully using social media in their elementary classrooms. If teachers were not using social media in their classrooms, I wanted to find out what may be holding them back. I also wanted to expose teachers to the various ways that they could incorporate social media into their own classroom practices. By researching how teachers are incorporating new technologies in their classrooms in the district where I am currently working, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how I as a teacher can better connect with my students who are growing up in this digital age.

### **Participants**

The potential participants for my study included elementary classroom teachers and support staff at the elementary school where I work. The elementary teachers in the school teach all subjects (Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies) excluding the special areas (Art, Music, P.E.). There are few un-tenured teachers in the school and many have been teaching for at least 5 years or more. I would also point out that there are few teachers nearing retirement. The majority of the teachers in the school are middle aged Caucasian women, but there are also a few male classrooms teachers. Most of the male teachers in the school are special area teachers.

Teachers were selected for this study based on their willingness to participate. I sent out an email to all of the teachers in the school explaining the purpose and procedures of my study. I asked teachers to email me if they would like to participate and requested that they indicate

whether or not they use social media in their classroom. Originally, I was hoping to interview 10 teachers: 5 who are using social media and 5 who are not using social media. Selection of participants for the study was to be based on a first come, first served basis. The first teachers to respond were asked to be interviewed. However, only 10 teachers responded to the email, so all 10 teachers were interviewed.

Based on the responses to my email, I did end up having 9 classroom teachers to interview and one support staff who is the gifted and talented teacher in the school. There was 1 kindergarten teacher, 3 second grade teachers, 1 fourth grade teacher, 3 fifth grade teachers, 1 sixth grade teacher and the gifted and talented teacher, who teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The gifted and talented teacher is one of the few male teachers in the school and he is also in charge of many of the technology related clubs. For instance, he has a club called the First Lego league and a Coding club that works with computer coding and teaches students safe practices when using the internet. The kindergarten teacher is one of the oldest teachers in the school. She has been teaching Kindergarten for over 30 years and loves it! The rest of the teachers that I interviewed are also female and all about middle aged. One of the fifth grade teachers is in her second year teaching at the school and I was happy to get a younger generation perspective in my interviews. The fourth grade teacher that I interviewed is the one pilot class for the Chromebooks this year. It is a new technology the district is trying and she is one of the teachers in the school who uses technology and modes of social media fluently in her classroom. From my first round of interviews, I did not get many responses from the upper grade levels, so my second round of emails targeted the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers specifically and I was able to fill my last spots with the upper grade levels. The 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the school

all have 1:1 iPads and I thought it would be important to get those teachers' perspectives on using social media because they have more access to the technology.

### **Setting**

The school is set in a quiet, rural area outside of the city. The school is on a residential street where houses have space between them, and the street the school is located on is not a main road and is used mostly for local traffic. The school district is in a quiet, suburban area and is a suburb of a larger city in Western New York. The socioeconomic status of the majority of the community is middle class, but the school district has an average of 14% of the student population who receive free and reduced lunch (Schoolgrades.org). The grade levels in the school span Kindergarten to Sixth grade

The technology available in the school includes SMARTboards in every general education classroom and most special area classrooms as well as desktop computers. The upper grades in the school, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, have individual iPads for the students' use throughout the school year. The iPads are used for all school work and they are able to take their iPads back and forth from home to school.

### **Positionality**

As the researcher in this study, my positionality can affect my attitude toward the research and how I conduct the interviews. I am a white, middle class female in my late 20's that grew up in a large city in Northern California. My family was middle class and my brother and I grew up in comfortable circumstances. I was the first in my family to attend a university and graduate with a Bachelor's degree, as well as continuing my education by pursuing a Master's degree. My mother is a high school graduate and my father graduated with an Associate's degree

from a local community college. The importance of education was instilled in us by both my parents.

I am currently a substitute teacher and have been teaching as such for almost two full school years. I began substitute teaching in the same district that I did my student teaching but switched districts this year. Since I have been able to work in multiple districts and with many different teachers, I think that this experience gives me a better perspective, and a way to compare the various ways teachers implement strategies in their classrooms. I have also had the opportunity to work with and teach an age range of children from preschool to high school.

I am fortunate to work in a school district that offers many technical modalities to their students. This allows for a wide variety of opportunities to differentiate learning and add social media into the curriculum. I am an avid user of Facebook and Instagram personally. I have family and friends all over the country and I feel it helps me stay in better contact with them and share what is going on in my life. At the present time, I use social media mostly for personal entertainment purposes. However, Google Apps play a big role in any group project that I plan and implement for my graduate and undergraduate classes. In this way, I am able to see both sides of how social media can be used.

## **Methods**

Data were collected exclusively through the one to one interviews that I did with each of the 10 teachers that participated. I conducted one face-to-face interview with each teacher. The interview questions were the same for each teacher. However, I allowed for a semi-structured interview in order to leave areas where the conversation could lead in different directions or more in-depth with each person. The interview questions asked teachers about their use or non-

use of social media in their classroom, how and what modes they have implemented, and what objections or hesitations they may have. Finally, I offered some suggestions about other successful strategies teachers have used with social media, and asked their opinions about implementing these into their own classrooms (interview questions located in the appendix). Since the interviews allowed for conversation between the participants and myself, I also audio recorded the interviews on my smartphone and later transcribed the interviews into a Word document. Each participant has a pseudonym (Teacher A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I) in order to protect their personal information from anyone other than myself.

### **Procedures**

To begin my study, I sent an email to all of the elementary teachers and support staff in the school where I work, in describing my study and asking for willing participants to be interviewed. Once I began to get responses back to my original email, then I selected up to 10 teachers that I interviewed based on the first teachers to respond. My goal was to get 5 teachers who were already using social media in their classrooms and 5 teachers who were not using social media in their classrooms. When all of the teachers were selected and notified, I distributed the consent forms to each teacher and set up a date and time to do the interview with them. I spread out the interviews over a 3-week period with about 3-4 interviews per week after school. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes, varying for each teacher, and was audio recorded on my smartphone. The interviews took place either in the teachers' classrooms or in the library of the school. The teachers decided which space was more comfortable and convenient for them to do the interview. During the interview, I made notes about the conversation and the teacher's answers, but also listened to the audio recording afterward and

scribed more detailed notes on a double-entry journal in a Word document on my computer. These notes and double-entry journals serve as the data that I analyzed.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure credibility in my research study, I created a proposal of my research topic and the process of my research. The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at SUNY Brockport. I obtained consent from each participant that I interviewed for this research and informed them fully of what providing their information meant. The principal at the school was also aware of my procedures and gave me permission to conduct my research at the school. Trustworthiness in this study is established through data triangulation (Shagoury & Power, 2012). I read and analyzed multiple sources that discussed potential benefits of social media use and teachers' perspectives on not using social media in schools. These sources came from credible and trustworthy articles and studies that were based on peer-reviewed databases. Credibility is also established in this study through the measures I have taken to collect and analyze data. Coherence among the relevant data, data sources, and data collection will answer my research questions. Data collected from relevant research answers the questions of how teachers are using social media in their classrooms and challenges that teachers face. The data collection was through interviews that sought to answer the same two research questions, but more specifically in my school. Triangulation of the data is accomplished by using multiple sources (Interviews by many teachers across grade levels; social media users and non-users) in order to incorporate different perspectives. There are always two sides and my study seeks to display both sides; the teachers who are successful using social media and the objections or hesitations teachers may have.

## **Analysis**

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed my notes, audio recording, and data using a coding process called the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I began my analysis by first transcribing all of my audio recordings into Word documents, including my own notes taken during the interviews in order to condense each teachers' interview onto one document. Once I transcribed all of interviews, I went through each question in the interview one at a time comparing the answers of all the teachers. For some of the questions, I was able to mark tallies for their answers and for other questions, I wrote down each teacher's response to the question. After the first run through, some themes began to emerge. So, I went back a second time and analyzed the notes for each question. I was able to start picking out specific commonalities among the questions on an individual basis and in relation to other questions. I took a finding from each interview question and was then able to combine themes among the initial findings and categorize them into four more specific findings.

The purpose of my study was to find out if teachers in the district where I work are using social media. If they were already using some forms of social media, I wanted to find out what they were doing and how they were doing it. If teachers were not using social media, I wanted to discover their objections or hesitations to implementing it. The themes in my data analysis led me to four findings. Forms of social media are already being implemented into classrooms; teachers feel supported with the technology that is available to them in their classrooms; teachers view their tech savvy students as a positive; and despite the concerns of teachers, most of them recommend using social media.



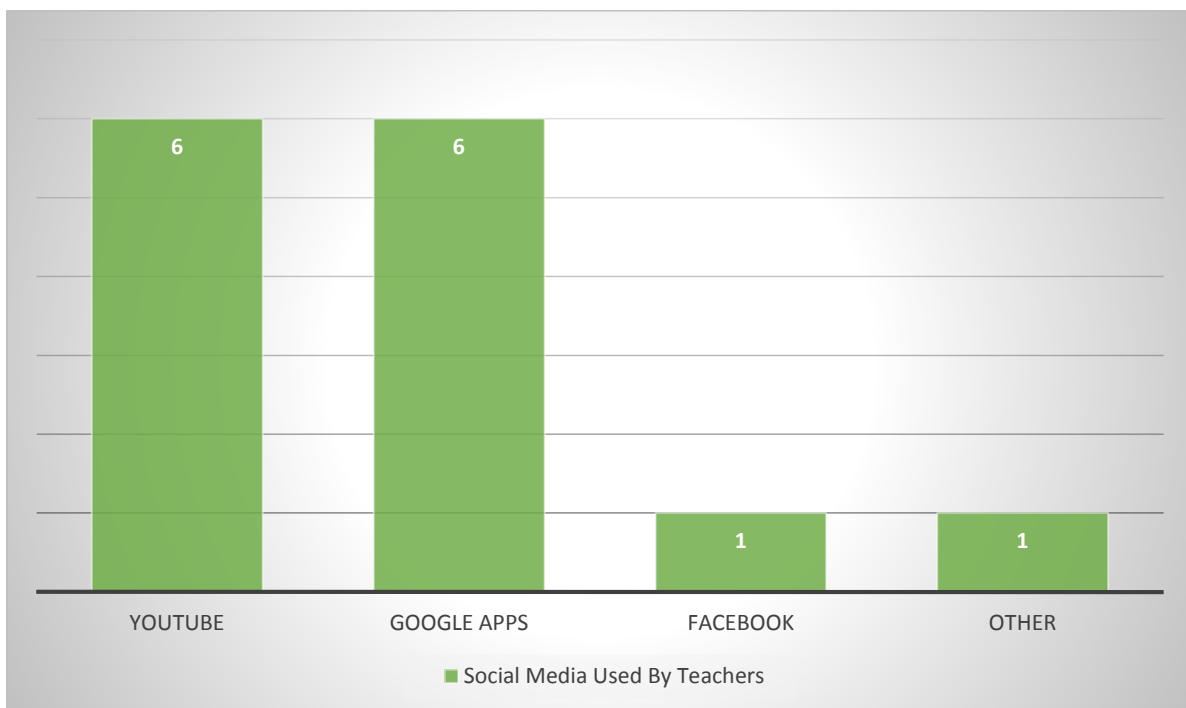
**Finding One: Forms of Social Media are Already Being Implemented**

Some modes of social media are already being used in many classrooms throughout the school. Question three in my interview asked teachers if they currently used any types of social media in their classrooms and for what purposes. Based on answers to this question, six said that they use YouTube, six use Google Apps, one uses Facebook and one uses Edmodo. Edmodo was not one of the platforms of social media in my definition, however it is a communication tool that is being used across many districts. This showed me that, out of the ten teachers interviewed, every one of them uses some form of social media already with their students. This is an important finding because the prevalence of social media use in this school is more developed than I had originally thought.

Vooren (2013) outlined the many benefits that come from using modes of social media in the classroom: developing a community of learners through an expanded tool of communication, increasing the sense of community in the classroom, fostering the use of writing as an enjoyable activity, serving as a tool to assess opinions, providing an engaging educational experience, improving the communication between teacher and student, and finally encouraging all students to have a voice.

When the teachers were given specific ways to implement social media into their classrooms (Facebook, Twitter, Google Apps) and asked which they could see themselves incorporating, Google Apps was the most popular form. Half of the teachers stated that they would use Google Apps to facilitate group projects with their students. Teachers A, D, E, and F all said that Google Classroom is something that they are already using and love the versatility of the different apps available through Google. Google Apps also seems to be the easiest form of social media to implement, especially in the upper elementary levels (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades). Two

teachers (Teacher A and F) said that they could see themselves trying Twitter and its blogging outlets for incorporating different writing activities. Teacher F has used other blogging programs in the past like Bloomz and Blogger but said she “would be willing to try a different outlet of blogging and see if the hashtag feature would benefit my students.” Two teachers (Teacher B and I) said that they could see how using Facebook to communicate with students and parents would work better than just standard emailing and texting. However, Teacher E stated that there are “better ways to communicate with parents than Facebook and Twitter.” Teacher E stated that she had used Edmodo in the past for communication with parents and found that it was simple and user friendly, but has never actually used a Facebook or Twitter outside of personal use.



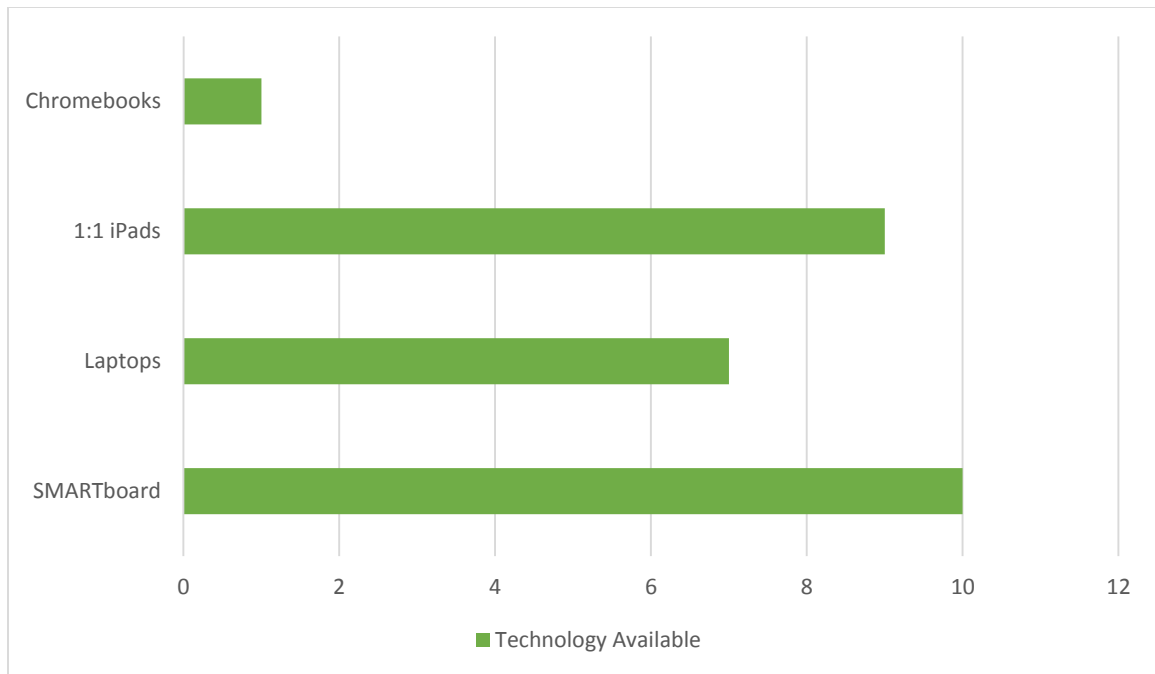
*Figure 1. Social Media Used By Teachers.* This figure shows the prevalence of different social media modes used by teachers in the school.

Many of the teachers were able to recommend other websites or online programs that they use with their students that have had a positive impact. Question four in the interview asked

teachers what kinds of technology and media they are using with their students. TeacherTube was recommended as an alternative to YouTube. For practicing listening, reading and comprehension skills one teacher uses RAZ kids. SpellingCity was mentioned by multiple teachers for reinforcement of grammar and word work. The teachers have access to iPads and therefore use many math and literacy apps for centers with the primary grade levels. Based on the technology that is available to all of the teachers in the school, it makes implementing social media and these other media forms much easier and more accessible.

### **Finding Two: Teachers Feel Supported with the Technology in Their Classrooms**

This district was able to implement 1:1 iPads into the classrooms in the upper elementary, middle school and high school classrooms about two years ago. This means that all of the students in those grade levels have an iPad for their own personal use through the school. This advance in technology has allowed more opportunities for teachers to implement a wider range of media into the classrooms. Based on the first question in the interview, all ten teachers have a SMARTboard in their rooms, seven have laptops available for the students and all ten have personal laptops, nine classes have 1:1 iPads for their students and the one 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher has Chromebooks in her classroom. There are multiple modes of technology devices in the school and in each classroom, that are available to teachers and students. This gives more opportunity for teachers to implement social media and other online programs to engage their digital learners.



*Figure 2.* Technology Available in the School. This figure shows the various types of technology available to the teachers in the school and in their classrooms.

With all of the technological devices available to teachers, most of them commented about the amazing tech team at the school during the interview. This support is important for teachers, especially the digital immigrants (Vooren, 2013), who have to teach themselves new technology, which can often be unfamiliar to teachers (Stufft, 2013). Teacher E discussed that she felt there is “little support for monitoring students.” As this is a valid concern for teachers in general with students who are using 1:1 iPads, it does not stem from the lack of support coming from the tech team at the school. Being the only teacher in a room full of students, the idea of being able to monitor each and every students’ moves and actions on their technology devices is unrealistic. Teacher E also went on to say that “it is difficult to keep students safe as well as keep material appropriate, however Google is the exception.” Although the concerns of Teacher E make sense, the technology support team at the school is not responsible for monitoring the

students' individual use with their technology devices, but they are supportive in educating students and teachers about their devices. Teacher F has had members of the tech team come into her classroom in the past to "show the students how to use new apps on their iPads and how to navigate Google Classroom through the app as well." So, they are able to come into the classroom and support the students and teachers.

Teacher E said that Google is the exception when it comes to safe and appropriate material and Teacher F agrees with her. Teacher F stated that the school recently expanded professional development with Google Apps for all the teachers. Google Apps is one of the major forms of social media used by teachers in the school, so it is important that there is support for those that are using the programs in their classes already and those who are contemplating introducing it. Teacher F commented in the interview that when members of the tech team are asked, they are always willing to come in and give demonstrations to the class as a whole. "Mr. Smith came into our class last month to show the students how to use a new app on the iPads called Notability. He stayed for over an hour to support students individually with any questions. It was really beneficial for the students" (Teacher F). Notability is functional with Google Classroom and allows the students to take notes on any assignments that are uploaded to Google Classroom.

Teacher A mentioned that she feels that the support from the school is "definitely strong" but for her it is finding the time to plan out lessons using the technology. Teacher A also went on to say that "I object to using social media because, for one reason, a great deal of time would need to be devoted to teaching specifics on the types of programs, the purposes and the appropriate use." There is a great deal of time involved with implementing new technology and the technology team "is more than willing to support teachers with implementing anything new,

related to technology and is very good about getting back to teachers with any questions” (Teacher D). Overall, the school has offered many resources for teachers to implement technology into their classrooms and have the support of the school and the members of the tech team to be successful in doing so.

### **Finding Three: Teachers View Their Tech Savvy Students as a Positive**

According to the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, students need to be competent in information technology, media and technology skills to ensure their success (2009). In order to get a better idea of teachers’ perspectives on technology in general and how they feel it is impacting their teaching, I asked them the question: “With the knowledge that our students are so technology savvy, how do you think that may influence or impact your teaching?” The positive impacts stated by the teachers outweighed the negatives significantly.

Impacts on Teaching	
Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering games</li> <li>• Websites reinforce knowledge</li> <li>• iPads for projects, listening centers and learning apps</li> <li>• Technology natural for students</li> <li>• Differentiate more easily</li> <li>• Students more independent</li> <li>• Multiple ways to access information</li> <li>• More responsible with work</li> <li>• Better at using iPads than us</li> <li>• Investigative</li> <li>• Hands-on</li> <li>• Push their thinking</li> <li>• Able to become the “teacher”</li> <li>• Use inquiry to present new information</li> <li>• Not hesitant to explore new things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have to compete with animation</li> <li>• Can get addicted</li> <li>• Requires more planning</li> <li>• More distracted</li> <li>• Not using basic tools like Word well</li> <li>• Not as tech savvy as we think</li> <li>• Assistance needed</li> </ul>

*Figure 3. Positive and Negative Impacts of Technology in the Classroom. This table shows all the teacher responses of positive and negative impacts they see in their classrooms of technology and their tech savvy students.*

Based on the answers from all the teachers, the use of technology in the classroom seems to open up the content to be explored, taught and reinforced for the students in new ways. Many of the teachers said that the students are much more comfortable with the different websites and apps that are being used in the classroom than they are. “With students having these technological skills it can certainly enhance and have a positive impact on student growth, learning and my teaching as we can utilize empowering games and websites to help reinforce knowledge” (Teacher A). With using programs like Google Classroom, the teachers are finding that the students are more responsible for their work because they can keep track of what is done and what tasks still need to be finished. Teacher D said that she is able to do a “quick reminder” for the class as a whole at the beginning of lessons about who hasn’t finished a particular assignment yet, which allows the students to “get back on track.” Teacher E agreed by saying that “[i]t helps them to know what they have completed and keeps all their assignments in one place.” Many of the teachers also made comments about how independent their students are when using the computers and the iPads. The independence “shows student confidence with the material and helps me as the teacher get a better grasp on who needs extra support from me” (Teacher G). The use of technology is having a positive impact on student learning in these classrooms despite the negatives that are present.

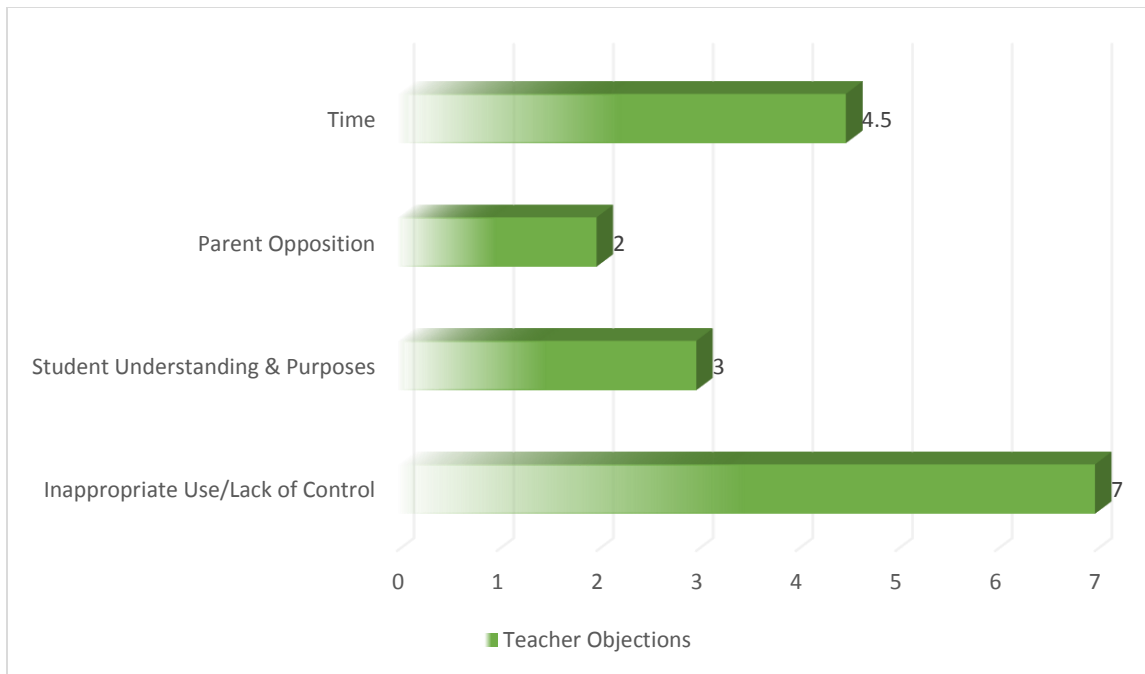
The unwanted effects of technology that were mentioned by the teachers seem to be less concerning to them based on the fact that they are all continuously using technology in their classrooms. Teachers indicated that there is a large amount of time that has to go into using different types of technology (Teacher A), not only to figure it out themselves but then to teach it to their students. This applies to the idea of “digital immigrants” who did not grow up with the same technologies and are not as familiar in social media as the “digital natives” (Vooren, 2013,



p. 33). Two of the teachers stated that they don't feel that "students are as tech savvy as we think" (Teacher F) and one teacher stated that the students are "lacking the ability to use basic tools like Microsoft Word" (Teacher G). Even though the students are considered digital natives (Vooren & Bess, 2013) and are "so natural when it comes to using technology in the classroom" (Teacher D), the basic use of computer software, like Word, are not clear to students. This may be true for some students, but based on the interviews it seems that it does not apply to the majority of the students in their classrooms. The teachers of the lower elementary grade levels seemed to agree that their students were too young to implement social media into the classroom. Teacher J stated that "her kindergarteners were too young to try and use any other type of technology in the class" and she only uses her SMARTboard to show YouTube videos and other videos for the class. Teacher B, who teaches second grade, agreed that, "trying to implement these with her students is difficult and I don't feel that my students are old enough to really use it appropriately." Even though there are some negative effects of technology on students and teaching, the teachers in this school seem to have a more positive outlook toward the use of it in the district.

#### **Finding Four: Despite Concerns, Most Teachers Recommend Using Social Media for Teachers**

Although many of the teachers had concerns about the negative effects of social media with their students, when asked in the interview if they would recommend using specific modes of social media to other teachers, the majority of them did recommend them.



*Figure 4. Teacher Objections to Use of Social Media.* This graph illustrates the various objections that teachers have with using social media and the average of the ten teachers interviewed who have the same objections.

The majority of the concerns that were brought up by teachers seem to match what the research identified in my literature review. The most common objection of teachers was over the lack of control on what the students are doing on their own. There were seven teachers who voiced these concerns during the interview. Teacher E is piloting Chromebooks in her classroom this year and uses many different modes of social media with her students already; she stated that “The only objection is the constant need for checking to make sure nothing inappropriate is viewed by students.” Kahveci (2015) discussed that there are many predators that exist online and students can easily become targets when not using social media appropriately. It can be difficult, if not impossible, to monitor all of the students’ personal use of their tablets or laptops. The 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the school have 1:1 iPads that they bring back and forth

from home to school, so the concern of students using their iPads or Chromebooks inappropriately is valid since the teachers don't follow the students home. This makes it much more difficult to monitor what is happening at all times.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers and Kindergarten teacher all thought that their students were too young to use any of the recommended modes of social media. As mentioned in a previous finding, Teacher J does not feel that her kindergarten students have the maturity to use all the technology devices on a regular basis. Teacher B stated that she does not use any of the social media modes recommended because “the students, I feel, are too young to be using these types of social media. However, I could see how they could be used in the older grade levels. The maturity level is not quite there and I would not feel comfortable introducing those into my classroom”. According to Flanigan and Babchuk (2015), young students have very little experience “using technology for professional or educational purposes” (p. 40). Students use technology devices for entertainment and teachers fear that the maturity level to make that switch has not been reached at these grade levels.

Two of the lower elementary level teachers also discussed that they do would not use social media because of parent opposition. Teacher B stated that social media “introduces avenues that many parents are not comfortable with their children being exposed to”, especially when talking about Facebook or Twitter. Teacher C also said, “it is too difficult to implement these social media types with my grade level (second grade) because the parents are against it in most cases.” In the study by Jones & Cuthrell (2011), they mentioned that YouTube can be filled with a “wasteland of garbage” (p. 81) which makes it so important for teachers to be critical examiners but also can make parents uncomfortable and not want their children to be exposed to in school.

In the interview, I offered some recommendations of ways that teachers could implement social media (Facebook, Twitter and Google Apps) into their classrooms and asked them if they would consider incorporating any of them in their own classrooms. Based on the answers from the interview, there were five teachers who said they would incorporate Google Apps into their classroom. There were two teachers who considered using Twitter and two teachers who considered using Facebook with their classes. Google Apps was clearly the most popular form of social media discussed among the teachers. Of the five who said they would incorporate Google Apps, four of them said that they use it with their students already. “My students will be creating their own blogs soon with the help of the instructional technology teacher and myself” (Teacher E). Teacher D told me that she has been using Google Apps with her students for a few years now and they love it! Google Apps seems to be the easiest to incorporate into classrooms because of its versatility. Teacher F commented that his “students are able to navigate through Google Classroom with little support once given basic instruction using it” and that “they love being able to get to their assignments when they are at home in case they were absent or missed something in class.”

There were also a few teachers who said that they wouldn't incorporate any of the social media platforms that I recommended. The lower elementary level teachers (K-2<sup>nd</sup>) seemed less prone to use any type of the suggested modes with their students. Teacher J said that her students are much too young to “be using any of those on their own.” Her kindergarten class only has a set of 4 iPads for the class, which limits her students' technology device availability. Teacher C commented that she “would not use them for this age level”, however she has “used a Facebook page to communicate with parents and post pictures of class activities.” Teacher B said that she has found “better ways of communicating with parents than Facebook.”

Although Google Classroom seems to be the most popular among the teachers, the other two social media modes that were offered to teachers had some potential as well. There were two teachers who said that they could see themselves using Twitter for blogging with their students. Two other teachers also said that they would incorporate a classroom Facebook page with their students as well. Teacher A discussed how she spends a lot of time emailing and texting parents and could see one of these forms of social media being a better outlet. So, even though Google Classroom seemed to be the favorite among the teachers, especially the upper elementary levels, all 3 of the social media modes that I recommended for teachers to incorporate were positively received. In regard to all three of the social media references, Teacher A commented that she “absolutely could see myself using these and have in the past with third graders. Just recently switched to a new grade level and will soon be tackling this again as the benefits can be very helpful with teacher guidance.” When talking about all three modes, Teacher H said that “Yes of course” she could see herself incorporating them into her fifth grade classroom. Teacher H went on to say “my fifth graders are encouraged to do many projects throughout the year, on their own and with groups, and the various apps that come with Google like Google Slides and Google Docs, allow the students to work together easily.” It was encouraging to see how well received the social media recommendations were among the teachers.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to find out the attitudes toward social media and the use of social media in District X. This study was focused around the following research questions:

- *Are teachers using social media in their classrooms?*

- *If they are using social media, what are their goals and purposes?*
- *If they are not using social media, what are their objections or hesitations?*

My findings, based on teachers' responses, show that benefits of using social media are student collaboration, knowledge reinforcement, differentiating learning and students' advanced experiences with technology made it easier to implement new things. These ideas directly connect with Vooren's (2013) idea of students as digital natives and being born into a generation with advanced technology and devices. Students can work new technology with ease because they have been born into a generation focused on technology. Krutka (2016) shared in his article the many benefits of using social media, specifically Twitter, and many of the same benefits (student collaboration, differentiation) were mentioned by teachers during the interviews who use Google Apps and other online programs with their students.

My findings also show that the objections that teachers have with using social media connect with what I found in my research studies. The biggest concern for teachers was the lack of control that they have over what their students are doing online. In the study by Child and Starcher (2015), they discussed how Facebook allows for unknown users to gain access to information on profiles and it can make young students into targets. Students are not always careful users of the internet and for the right purposes. Since students with a 1:1 iPad, in the school, take these back and forth to school, teachers cannot control what happens all the time in school and they definitely cannot control what happens at home.

## Conclusions

**Teachers are implementing a variety of social media modes successfully and see how it is positively impacting their students.**

My findings clearly showed how teachers in the district are already using many different modes of technology in their classrooms already. The most common among them are Google Classroom and YouTube. The benefits of using these and other technologies has had a positive impact on the students in this school. Teachers are incredibly excited about the options that come with using 1:1 iPads and SMARTboards. I have seen how teachers connect with their students using these devices in the classroom and it is amazing to watch how easily small ways of using technology can make an immense impact. There are many other teacher friendly websites and online programs that the teachers recommended and use in the school that are alternatives to social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter. Teachers view their tech savvy students through a lens of possibility and see them as explorers, even though there are risks involved.

**The objections that teachers have with using social media in their classrooms seem to be validated by other research studies.**

Many of the teachers expressed their concerns about using social media during the interviews, despite the positive attitude toward it. A few of the teachers who regularly use Google Classroom also warned to proceed with caution because there are uncertainties that coincide with students using these modes of technology. One of the fifth grade classes in the school had to have all of their iPads wiped clean by the technology team because of inappropriate games. So, even though there are so many benefits of having the iPads, it is almost

impossible to avoid any issues. The main concerns of teachers are reflected in what I found in my research: inappropriate use, lack of control, and teacher unfamiliarity.

In the study by Vooren and Bess, they brought up the idea of the digital natives versus the digital immigrants (2013). This shows that those not born into the digital world have to teach themselves the new technology. Many teachers are unfamiliar with new programs that come out and new software, and that makes it intimidating for teachers to implement them into their classrooms. The other objections of lack of control and inappropriate use connect with the same ideas that came from the study done by Kahveci (2015). Young students are easy targets for predators and they also lack the understanding of the consequences of using the internet inappropriately. This is a difficult concept for teachers to take on with their students, in order to help them make wise decisions when no one is looking and use their technology devices with maturity.

### **Implications**

**It is important for teachers to implement technology in their classrooms because our students are part of the digital generation.**

Our students are surrounded by technology and social media through many different devices on a daily basis: televisions, iPads, tablets, laptops, smartphones, video games, and the list goes on. These devices are changing our world and they are changing the way our students' think (Jukes, 2010). As life-long learners, it is our job to continue to stay knowledgeable about current methods to meet the needs of our students, and that includes technology. There are many available resources for teachers to accomplish this in their classrooms. SMARTboards are common in most districts and classrooms today as well as desktop computers. Teachers need to



educate themselves about new ways to implement technology with the resources in their classroom in order to meet out digital natives' needs (Vooren & Bess, 2013).

**Teachers need to make time to scaffold the use of technology resources to ensure students are having meaningful experiences with technology.**

Even though our students are surrounded with technology, most of the time spent using these devices is for pure entertainment. “[T]he Net Generation has little to no experience using technology for professional or educational purposes” (Flanigan & Babchuk, 2015, p. 40). Students use media devices for recreational purposes and to fill time, and many do not understand how to use those devices in an academic setting. This means that having 1:1 iPads can quickly become a distraction for students. The concerns that the teachers had with using social media (lack of control, inappropriate use) mimic concerns for using technology devices as well. That is why it is important for teachers to make sure that the technology that they are implementing allows for the students to have meaningful academic experiences with it. Teachers also have to be critical researchers in order to make the experiences with social media have a purpose for students. “[E]ducators must critically examine the internet material for credibility, accuracy, reasonableness, and support” (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011, p. 81-82). For students to gain the content knowledge or skill that is being addressed, teachers have to make sure that they are scaffolding appropriate practice with their students.

**Students need instruction in how to use social media appropriately for academic purposes.**

The internet can be a dangerous place for anyone, but especially for those not being careful with the amount of personal information they are putting out there. One of the major

concerns for people on the internet is that no one has to be honest about who they are or disclose the entire truth about themselves. It is also incredibly easy to lurk online and cyber-stalk others. “Unknown audiences may have indirect access through that user’s friendship associations” (Child & Starcher, 2016, p. 483). There is a reason for privacy settings and the option to block other users on various websites and programs online because they want to encourage users to be safe. Young students do not always understand the consequences of poor judgement on the internet. Cyber bullying has become an enormous problem for many students of all ages in public schools. That is why it is essential that students are given instruction on how to appropriately use the internet and social media platforms.

### **Limitations**

Although my research provided me with some valuable information and insight into teachers’ perceptions of social media in the classroom, I cannot over-generalize the findings of my study. For the data collection, there were only 10 interviews conducted. Even though I was able to get a range of teachers across grade levels, not all grade levels were represented and not all teachers participated. The small amount of teacher participation in the school cannot show how all the teachers feel in general.

### **Future Research**

One recommendation for future research is to get a broader teacher perspective about social media in the school district. I would like to interview all of the teachers in the school and at the other two elementary schools. Then I would also like to see how the teachers at the middle school and high school are using social media. I think that would give me a better perspective of how the district as a whole think toward social media use.

In the future, I would also like to implement these modes of social media into my own classroom. Since I think that I have sufficient knowledge about how to use social media in a classroom and I see the benefits that can come of that, I would like a first-hand account of how it benefits my own students. I think that would provide me with the best possible perspective.

### **Overall Significance**

The significance of this study is important for me and for all educators because we have to make sure we are meeting our students where they are. In order to do that we have to make sure that we are remaining open-minded to new ideas, but also seeing both sides. Teachers have to be investigators first in order to get our students to be the same. Advances in technology open many doors to our students and to us as teachers, so it is important that we do not ignore those opportunities. “To effectively educate the youth of today teachers must interact using the modes of communication embraced by their students” (Vooren, 2011, p. 33). This really sums up what it means to be a teacher in the digital generation and the importance of choosing a life-long learning career.

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## Appendix

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What technology is available to you in your classroom? (SMARTboard, iPads, laptops, computers)
2. With the knowledge that our students are so technology “savvy”, how do you think that may influence or impact your teaching?
3. Do you currently use any modes of social media in your classroom? And for what purposes? (Modes of social media include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Apps, Edmodo, YouTube)
4. What have you used that worked with your students and had a positive impact?
5. Would you recommend using social media to other teachers? Why? Or why not?
6. What would be your objections to using social media?
7. Based on the list below, could you see yourself incorporating any of these into your classroom?

- \* Twitter – Blogging as a form of writing; or  
as a center for writer’s workshop

- \* Facebook – Use to send homework/test reminders;  
for students to ask questions about  
homework to peers;  
have discussions about topics talked about in class

- \* Google Apps – Groups of students work collaboratively on a project or paper

8. What kind of district support is there available for using social media?
9. How would you and other teachers in the school benefit from having workshops focused around the use of social media as a teaching tool?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your use of technology or social media that you think is relevant?