



AFTERSCHOOL *news*



When Students Blog: An Afterschool Guide to Social Media



The term “social media” refers to activities that combine technology, social interaction, and the sharing of words, pictures, video, and audio. Many people are familiar with social media like blogs, wikis, and podcasts and may have ventured into the world of social networking. Having students use these applications may raise concerns about safety, privacy, and appropriate use (see “Teaching Tip” for more information on safety considerations). However, a growing number of social media applications are designed for educational purposes and enable adults to monitor student activity.

When students learn to use social media appropriately, they write about a variety of topics, analyze and synthesize information, collaborate on projects, and give feedback to peers. Below is a list of types of social media that can be useful in afterschool programs. The technology section of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning’s Afterschool Training Toolkit (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/technology) also has resources for technology activities, including social media.



A **BLOG**, short for Web log, is an online journal or diary. Blogs enable people to write and publish about anything that interests them, from politics to hobbies to entertainment. Students can use blogs to practice writing, share ideas, and interact with their peers. For education and privacy purposes, consider Class Blogmeister (<http://classblogmeister.com>) or 21 Publish (www.21publish.com), two blogging tools that allow you to create multi-blogger communities where the instructor can review and edit student posts and comments before making them public. Other blogging sites like Edublogs (<http://edublogs.org>), Blogger (www.blogger.com), or LiveJournal (www.livejournal.com) allow instructors to create accounts that can be viewed only by friends (other classmates) and the instructor. For a more detailed lesson on using student blogs, see the technology section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/technology/ex_getting_word_out.html).



WIKIS are collaborative Web sites that more than one user can add to and edit. They demonstrate how technology can support cooperative learning. Wikis are popular because they often reflect the input of several people and therefore, some argue, offer a more balanced view than the research of one or two experts. The well-known Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) has entries ranging from biographies of famous (and not-so-famous) individuals to an explanation of particle physics. Web sites like wikiHow (www.wikihow.com) allow users to read, create, or edit entries on flower arrangements and stock investing.

One of the disadvantages of wikis is the potential for bias, inaccuracies, or vandalism because anyone can edit them. Be sure to point out some of these advantages and disadvantages to your students and ask how this might influence their work. Afterschool students can consult wikis as a source of information, or they can create or edit wikis as a way of sharing their research

The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.

www.sedl.org/afterschool



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with their peers. If you are looking for a wiki dedicated to educational purposes, consider the Student Wiki (www.thestudentwiki.org).



A **PODCAST** is a form of audio broadcasting on the Internet (think radio). Most computers with Internet capability and access have a media player that will allow listening to a podcast. Although

some podcasts are one-time productions (i.e., a student's lecture on art history), many podcasts are serial, with new episodes produced each day, week, or month. In an afterschool setting, students can create podcasts to share work in any content area. Your afterschool program could also consider publishing regular podcasts in the form of an afterschool news program. Consider Web sites like the Education Podcast Network (<http://epnweb.org>) or Podomatic (<http://podomatic.com>). The technology section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit also has a lesson on podcasting (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/technology/ex_creating_podcasts.html).



SOCIAL BOOKMARKING is a way for students to collect and organize links online. Sites like del.icio.us (del.icio.us) and Furl (furl.net) allow users to register and create accounts where they save and

tag, or label, links of interest. In an afterschool setting, students might use a social bookmarking site to save links for Web sites related to a topic they are researching. Students can use accounts individually or share an account for group work. Many of these sites also let you hide topics from public view to maintain privacy.



SOCIAL NETWORKING is one of the most popular forms of social media for young adults, but it is also one of the areas where they need the most counseling. Popular online social networking sites

include MySpace (www.myspace.com) and Facebook (www.facebook.com). In online social networking,

people register and create profiles that provide personal information and photos. They can then make connections with, or "friend," members who have similar interests or connections. Most social networking sites allow users to interact through a variety of features, such as chat, messaging, blogging, discussion groups, photo and video sharing, etc.

Social networking sites are some of the most popular forms of social media among young adults, but the potential for inappropriate use also causes some of the greatest concern among parents and teachers. Schools and afterschool programs have chosen a range of responses to these sites. Some have banned them altogether. Others are using the school setting to teach students to use these sites responsibly. If you are interested in exploring social networking sites, you might want to consider a resource like Elgg (www.elgg.com), an open-source software application that allows organizations to create their own social networking sites, thus regulating how much control users have over the different components.



FEATURED *resource*

TECHNOLOGY LESSON PLANS THE AFTERSCHOOL LESSON PLAN DATABASE

This resource has activities for six content areas, including technology. Lessons are browsable by content area and grade level.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/lessonplans/index.cgi?location=menu&show_subject=Technology

Chief Leschi School 21st CCLC

PUYALLUP, WASHINGTON



The Chief Leschi School 21st CCLC afterschool program uses technology for a variety of activities, including core content instruction that is aligned with the day-school curriculum and enrichment and extension activities. "We use technology to engage kids in learning," says special services director Norm Dorpat.

Although technology is integrated into both the regular school day and the afterschool program, the afterschool setting allows for more flexibility and hands-on use of technology. "In afterschool, kids get to sift through the technology and use it as they need to," says program coordinator Sunny Anderson. This might include using tutorial software to reinforce core academic subjects, using the Internet for career exploration, or watching video clips that support literacy topics covered during the regular school day.

Technology also helps Chief Leschi School meet student needs as a tribal school serving American Indian students in Puyallup Valley. The school is the largest of seven tribal schools in the state of Washington, with students from nearly 60 different American Indian tribes, clans, and independent nations. The afterschool programs includes culture classes that creatively combine the use of technology

with activities that teach American Indian traditions. For example, in a recent beading activity, students used the Internet to research their tribal history and patterns and designs that were used in tribal artwork. They then used a graphic design program to create beading patterns that served as the prototype for the final piece of art.

Like many successful afterschool programs, the Chief Leschi School 21st CCLC fosters strong relationships between students and afterschool staff. Many of the day-school teachers also work in afterschool program. "The staff are already invested in the kids," says Dorpat. "The relationship they build after school helps the students' attitudes during the regular school day. Afterschool is not an add-on. It truly is an essential part of what we do."

Photos courtesy Chief Leschi School



"Afterschool is not an add-on. It truly is an essential part of what we do."

NORM DORPAT
special services director

AfterWords Wins Top Publishing Award

AfterWords won the 2008 Distinguished Achievement Award from the Association of Educational Publishers. The March 2007 issue of the newsletter won in the category for adult learning, e-newsletter. The issue focused on afterschool program evaluation. For more than 40 years, the AEP awards have recognized significant and excellent achievement in educational products and education marketing.

AEP received about 1,000 entries this year in the Distinguished Achievement Award and Beacon Award competitions. The *Wall Street Journal* and WestEd were finalists in the E-newsletter, Adult Learning category along with SEDL. The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning's Afterschool Training Toolkit was also a finalist in the Adult Learning Instructional Technology category.



Access the March 2007 issue at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/archive.html.

IN YOUR *words*

What types of social media do students in your afterschool program use? (Select all that apply.)

- Blogs
- Wikis
- Podcasts
- Social bookmarking
- Social networking
- None

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200806.html

EVENTS *calendar*

July 15–17 21st Century Community Learning Center
Summer Institute
DALLAS, TX

July 30 Webinar: "Technology in Afterschool"
1 P.M. CDT

For more events, visit our calendar at
www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.



TRAINING *tip*

Internet Safety

Like handing young adults the keys to the family car, allowing them to participate in social media can offer exciting opportunities for learning and exploration, not to mention freedom. It can also put students in contact with new responsibilities and risks. Some concerns with these sites include unsafe disclosure of personal information, addiction, risky sexual behavior, and cyberbullying.¹ "The Internet is a tool that students can use to achieve positive or negative results," says Danny Martinez, a SEDL program associate who helps teachers integrate technology into their instruction. "It is up to them to show students how to use technology for good outcomes while avoiding risks." Before you have students use the Internet, consider some of the following steps:

- Review your program's (or school's) Internet usage policy and safety guidelines. If your program does not have a policy, consider working with a computer instructor to create one.
- Obtain parent permission if necessary.
- Discuss safe and appropriate Internet use with students. Web sites like the NetSmartz Workshop have safety pledges for different age groups (www.netsmartz.org/resources/pledge.htm).
- For social media, try to use applications that allow an administrator to monitor student activity. If this is not possible, have an adult set up student accounts and control log-in information so that student activity can be monitored.

¹ Willard, N. (2006). "Schools and Online Social Networking." Education World. Retrieved from www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues/issues423.shtml.

Do you have a training tip you would like to share? E-mail us at afterwords@sedl.org with "Training tip" in the subject line.

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