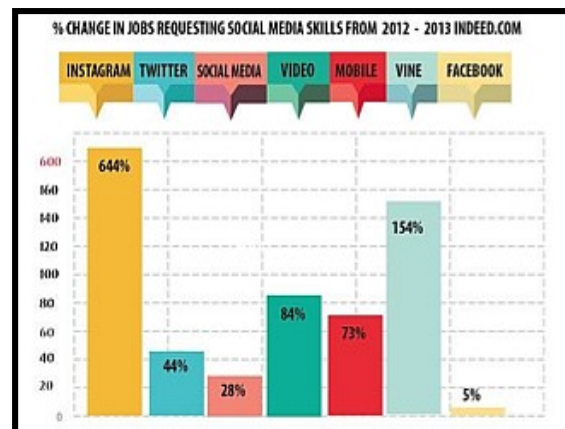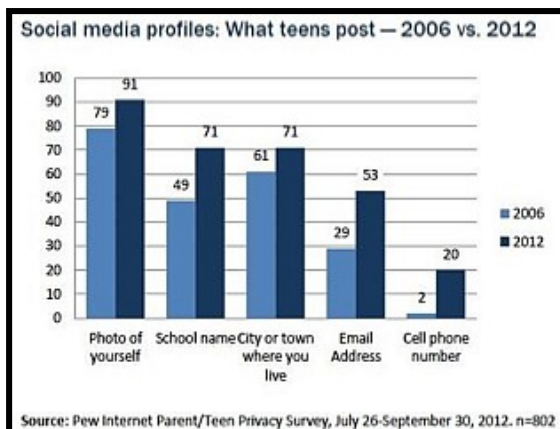# Why Social Media Needs to be Taught in School

Schools in the United States have been hesitant—even neglectful—when it comes to how they discuss social media with students. It's time for this to change.

Social media is a very real and ongoing aspect of our everyday lives. It no longer makes sense that, in today's world, several states still teach cursive writing when many students can text much faster on their smart devices. The gaping generational chasm between teachers who grew up before smartphones existed and students who were raised on them has resulted in a trial-and-error model of internet education and exploration, which could potentially wreak havoc on a student's future.

The latest statistics show that 83 percent of teens in the U.S. aged 14-18 are on social media. More than 90 percent of them share their real names and use real photos of themselves, and around 20 percent share their cell phone numbers, according to Pew Research Center figures from the past few years. Some interesting statistics are shown below:

Social media profiles: What teens post — 2006 vs. 2012

Category	2006	2012
Photo of yourself	79	91
School name	49	71
City or town where you live	61	71
Email Address	29	53
Cell phone number	2	20

Source: Pew Internet Parent/Teen Privacy Survey, July 26-September 30, 2012. n=802

% CHANGE IN JOBS REQUESTING SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS FROM 2012 - 2013 INDEED.COM

Platform	% Change
INSTAGRAM	644%
TWITTER	44%
SOCIAL MEDIA	28%
VIDEO	84%
MOBILE	73%
VINE	154%
FACEBOOK	5%

Along with personal privacy and safe Internet usage, recent hiring trends suggest teens should learn how to use social media for their jobs. A recent Indeed.com study of the site's job listings shows a huge spike in companies looking for employees with specific social media skill sets. By analyzing the data from the title and description of job postings, Indeed.com found that jobs requesting Instagram skills were up 644 percent from 2012, and those searching for Twitter experience was up 44 percent. The term "social media" rose 28 percent.

So how do we begin the process of teaching social media to students? Colleges, companies, and individuals will look at how these students act on social networks. There are several things schools can and *should* begin teaching students.

Online reputation

As students increasingly live out their lives online, we're seeing major downsides to all that social media over-sharing, and they might have little control over how they appear on the Internet. If someone says something negative about another person, it can really damage that person's future. At the same time, the person's digital reputation also creates significant opportunities for students to put their best foot forward. Students should understand that what they put on the Internet, good and bad, is out there for the public.

Privacy

A group of volunteers from Fordham Law School recently began teaching seventh graders in New York about online privacy. When asked why it is important to educate students on best practices for online behavior, one of the classroom teachers, Nichole Gagnon, said, *"Many teens believe that, because they are communicating through their own personal accounts, phones, and computers, it is private. While interacting with the law students, they soon realized that nothing that is public can be private at the same time."* It's not always that students don't know how to keep their online information private... they often don't realize how important it is to do so!

Benefits

While students might not understand it now, their classmates and teammates can become valuable connections down the road. Encourage students to connect with one another on social media and to stay connected even after they stop going to school with one another. If students know what they want to do after school, they can establish themselves in their respective fields through blogging and get involved in the right online communities. There are many other advantages to being Internet-savvy, like finding the cheapest used textbooks online for college.

Social media isn't going anywhere, and every year we put this off is another year we are behind. It's our job to teach students, so they don't have to learn the hard way from their own mistakes.

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Source: http://venturebeat.com/2014/10/29/why-social-media-needs-to-be-taught-in-high-school/