

THE WILD WEST OF POLICY MAKING

**A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS'
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education.

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*To my parents and family who provided me the love,
opportunity, and motivation to do anything I wish.*

*To my wife, Carlyne, and our sons, Jeremy and Zakary,
whose sacrifices allowed me to make this journey.
(I'm coming home!)*

To all of the teachers who helped me get this far.

*Finally, to my Sherpa of Higher Learning, Dr. Gerald Walton.
You have been my guide, cheerleader, fighter, and friend.
I only enjoyed this arduous journey as much as I did
because you agreed to join me on the long climb up this
seemingly insurmountable mountain.*

ABSTRACT

Social media has become a technology that is increasingly shaping how young people connect, socialize, and learn (Ahn, 2011). Many educators and administrators endeavour to understand how this communications tool has evolved and is used. While some steer clear of it as a tool for teaching and learning, others grapple with how to employ its interactive, participatory potential in the classroom. Primary and secondary school administrators around the world have begun to create policies to delineate the use of social media in classrooms. However others continue to struggle with how to do so and many others have not even begun. Through a qualitative analysis of four distinct social media policies from the United States, this thesis examines extant discursive themes and discourses, and demonstrates how more schools, boards, and districts can develop their own policies to implement this potent teaching and learning tool for the benefit of students, the overwhelming majority of whom are already engaged in social media.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Social media.

Many educators and non-educators will not touch social media with a 10-foot mouse cord. And while the advent of the wireless mouse might spay that quip, school districts and administrators have been racing to understand how interactive, contribution-based, participatory technologies (hereafter referred to as 'social media') can be used as a teaching and learning tool. The race to catch-up is being conducted even as an increasing number of youth are using social media, a technology that is increasingly shaping how young people connect, socialize, and learn (Ahn, 2011).

Before plunging into the deep end of a pool filled with information about digital and cultural changes, emerging and evolving communication tools, and how it is all seeping incessantly into North American classrooms, let me begin with a true tale that illustrates why I have chosen to research and write a thesis about social media and education policy.

This thesis is being researched and written from the beautiful spaces and diverse places that make up Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus (Ontario, Canada). If you were to drive due south of Thunder Bay, you would eventually end up on United States Interstate 35, which will take you along the western shores of Lake Superior, down through the state of Minnesota, the middle of Iowa, and eventually into Missouri. That's where this story begins.

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Missouri's Story

In 2011, Missouri, a state almost at the midpoint of the continental United States, found itself at the center of media attention because of a new, state-wide education policy. Earlier that year, Missouri passed Senate Bill 54 (2011), otherwise known as the *Amy Hestir Student Protection Act* for a student who was repeatedly victimized by a teacher on social media. The Bill, which became law, stated that students and teachers are banned from communicating with each other using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Lytle, 2011). In its original form, Bill 54 included provisions that defined terms such as 'non-work related internet sites', 'exclusive access', and 'former student.' It also attempted to define 'appropriate communication' and the use of 'electronic media,' in addition to setting rules for teachers who wish to set up their own websites for personal and professional reasons.

Policies enacted into laws, such as Missouri's, are often in response to cases and headlines where contact between student and teacher outside the classroom led to headlines saturated with tales of inappropriate relationships (Texas Association of School Boards Legal Services, 2010) and online behaviour, or comments, by educators. Missouri was no different. Reaction to these cases and their headlines usually result in two outcomes: the blockage of access to websites on school computers, and restrictions of contact between a teacher and students via social media (Varlas, 2011).

It wasn't long before the new Missouri state law was challenged by the Missouri State Teachers Association (Murphy, 2011). It argued that the vast majority of its members' online contact with students was strictly for educational

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purposes. In September 2011, the law was amended by a vote of 139-2 in the state House of Representatives. A month later, Governor Jay Nixon signed legislation that included revised language, while reiterating his belief that social media is important for teaching and learning. A Missouri Revised Statute (2013) stated that, "Every school district shall, by March 1, 2012, promulgate a written policy concerning employee-student communication. Such policy shall include, but not be limited to, the use of electronic media and other mechanisms to prevent improper communications between staff members and students" (statute section 162.069. 1).

The amended law would no longer require all school districts to ban social media contact between students and teachers. However, it did order each of the state's school districts to set electronic media policies to prevent improper communications between staff and students. There were no stipulated consequences for districts that did not comply, nor is the term 'appropriate' defined. This allows for individual school districts to design their own policies, based on their needs and values. But not all state laws are so laissez-faire.

In states such as Indiana and Virginia, for example, "the department of education sets forth specific acceptable use policy requirements that all school districts must comply with" (Taylor, Whang, & Tettegah, 2006, p. 121). While in these states, school districts' social media policies share common rules, such as those attempted in Bill 54's original language, one school district's policy may be different from another. In Missouri — the 'Show-Me State' (as proudly emblazoned on state license plates) — many of the state's school districts sought resources to 'show them' how to develop effective social media policies that outline appropriate

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guidelines for online teacher-student communication. How will school districts with no prior experience in social media policy design a policy to address social media?

Missouri's amendment should be lauded for providing schools and districts a foundation for the creation of social media policies in the state's schools. However, the issue of how to create a social media policy was far from resolved. First, individual school districts are well within their rights to develop policies imposing the very restrictions against which the Missouri Teachers Association argued (Murphy, 2011). Second, the policymaking process, itself, faced significant hurdles, such as the question of who was going to draft these policies and would they include protocols for the use of social media in classrooms.

One of the positive outcomes from recounting social media's evolution to its present-day form and function has been how that process revealed the issues associated with social media. As a result, this thesis serves to help support primary and secondary schools, districts, boards, and policy makers create their own social media policies to delineate its use as a teaching and learning tool their classrooms. My motivation for researching this topic stems from a personal and professional enthusiasm for, and confidence in, social media. Highlights from my use of social media include conversing with people whom I otherwise would most likely never have had the opportunity to engage with, as well as the months leading up to my family's move from Montreal to Thunder Bay. During the latter, I was able to connect with people living in Thunder Bay with ease, and gather opinions about a variety of curiosities, including the best places to eat, where to send my children to school and daycare, and the highest hills to go tobogganing. On a professional level, I have witnessed social media's power in bringing strangers together for a

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common purpose used in news media and classrooms, albeit in a more basic form in the case of the latter. As a substitute teacher in a Quebec high school, and teacher candidate in two Thunder Bay primary schools (grades 3-7), I had the pleasure of seeing how social media can awaken the minds of otherwise apparently unengaged students.

Thesis Map and Problem Statement

This thesis is organized for the benefit of those who may not be aware of social media's history and qualities, and how social media can play an important role in primary and secondary schools' classrooms. Chapter Two begins with a review of the literature on social media, and how social media permeated youth culture and mass communication trends before inevitably making its way into classrooms. I look at the pros and cons of introducing social media into classrooms as a teaching and learning tool, how educators have reacted to this possibility, the challenges social media policy makers face, and how those challenges may be ameliorated. To help understand the challenges that contemporary educators and administrators face that are posed by the increasing presence of social media into classrooms, I present discursive themes that are central to the problem, and analyze a cross-section of existing social media policies created by various academic groups.

Chapter Three is an in-depth discussion of my chosen methodology and method of qualitative policy analysis: critical discourse analysis (CDA). The original plan was to perform a quantitative analysis of at least 50 Canadian schools' social media policies — assessing them for common themes and guidelines. While searching for such policies in 2011, I was unsuccessful in finding any Canadian

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school policies that were social media specific. However, there were signs that social media was attracting attention by Canadian academic bodies. In early 2011, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) published an advisory to its members: a seven-page brief outlining what social media is, and informing its members of social media's potential as a teaching and learning tool, and a source for caution and diligence (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). After expanding the scope of my policy search to include other countries around the world, I found that the bulk of existing policies for primary and secondary schools were, in fact, from the United States. Finally, after looking for general commonalities among the American policies I collected, I found four subsets of academic institutions or level of governance. These included policies for religion-based schools, public schools, school districts, and state-wide guidelines. It was then that I decided to transform my research into a qualitative analysis of the themes present in the policies I collected, as I believe such an analysis could be more useful to policy makers and schools breaking new ground in terms of policy development than if they simply perused other schools' social media policies. This thesis, which is an analysis of discursive themes within social media policies, does not include a study of the creation, or implementation, of the policies. Referencing issues raised in the literature review, Chapter Three continues with an introduction to discourse and analysis as separate topics before delving into different forms of discourse analysis. Based on core themes present in contemporary social media policies, I present four questions to guide Chapter Four's critical discourse analysis of the American social media policies I collected:

1. What is the overall purpose of the policy and whom does it address?

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2. Does the policy define what a teacher or student may, or may not, do with social media in a classroom?
3. How does the policy deny, limit, facilitate, or encourage social media's use in classrooms?
4. What additional, prominent themes exist within the policy?

In Chapter Four, the four policies are examined as stand-alone texts, using the aforementioned questions to identify discursive themes. Using references from the literature review, I explain why certain policies address certain issues, and what guidelines may be missing from them. In Chapter Five, the results of Chapter Four's analysis are discussed, while also comparing and contrasting the four policies' discursive themes under the backdrop of bigger picture issues surrounding social media and school policy. In Chapter Six, I conclude with a review of the thesis, proposals for further research, and reiterate the need for schools to develop policies to delineate social media's use in primary and secondary classrooms.

As readers will see, social media policy is not a simple matter. Primary and secondary schools, districts, boards, and even teacher associations are grappling with the issue of social media as a teaching and learning tool. As the values of a community, existing school policies, and even state laws play influencing roles in the creation, and implementation, of social media policies in schools, it is interesting to note how many different themes and forms such policies can take. And while not all social media policies have the same goals, they all face similar problems.

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Defining social media has also not been simple. I once fully supported the argument that email was a form of social media because the content of an email has the potential to engage with any number of recipients the sender wishes to send it to. Those responding to a mass email “reply all” to a message participate in an online group discussion, thereby contributing to a conversation and engaging with an online group (ergo social media). Then, a couple years ago, I read an argument claiming that email is separate from social media. In 2011, Peter Kim, the Chief Digital Officer at Cheil Worldwide (www.cheil.com/web/?sub=About&) — a marketing solutions company within the international communications juggernaut Samsung Group — supported a 2010 piece by Anthony Bradley, a vice-president in Gartner Research — who originally wrote that two important distinctions keep email from being considered social media (Kim, 2011):

1. “Email is a distribution mechanism and social media is a collective mechanism” (para. 3). This is to say that email is more about direct communication to a fixed mass of recipients, or mass communication, whereas social media is primarily focussed on collaboration (interaction) and its potential to reach and engage with a worldwide audience.
2. “Mass communication” (email) “is different from mass collaboration” (social media) (Bradley, 2010, according to Kim, 2011).

This is the definition of social media that I bring into this thesis: Social media as a tool for mass collaboration. This is to say that social media, as referred to my research, includes more than commonly known platforms such as Facebook and

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Twitter, and extends to include the multitude of online mass collaboration tools and social networks such as Wikispaces Classroom, Twiducate, and Edmodo.

I argue the need to incorporate the teaching and learning and collaborative potential of social media in primary and secondary classrooms. This thesis examines extant discursive themes and discourses in and influencing social media policies, and demonstrates how more schools, boards, and districts can develop their own policies to implement this potent teaching and learning tool for the benefit of students, the overwhelming majority of whom are already engaged in social media.

Chapter 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I have organized this thesis into progressive parts, that we may wade into the issues of how daunting social media can be to many — both as a pedagogical step forward and the process of creating policies to delineate social media use in classrooms. Academia and government face hurdles as they discover and face emerging teaching and learning tools. First, I look at the evolution of social media and the emerging trends it has provoked in the realm of education. Second, I review contemporary themes in the literature surrounding the arguments for and against, social media in classrooms. Finally, I examine research from around the world that examines how social media policies attempt to resolve inherently complex issues.

I have elected an evolutionary approach to this thesis, which is to say I will present the step-by-step rise of social media and the evolution of social media in classrooms as an issue for policies. This is in keeping of Zhao and Frank's (2003) conclusion that introducing new policies and pedagogies into classrooms should not be done hastily. While Kuhn (1962) may disagree, saying that revolutionary change can help facilitate new ideas, Klein (1999) says that organizing change as a step-by-step evolution of ideas has two advantages: it provides an opportunity to more effectively share information with others about a coming change, and more time to help persuade others to buy into and accept an impending change. Applied to this thesis, Klein's step-by-step approach means first explaining how social media came to be before attempting to persuade policy makers, schools, and administrators that policies to oversee social media's use in classrooms is necessary, or inevitable. By revolution or evolution, social media as a teaching and learning tool has become

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a necessary addition to digital literacy curricula, and that today's and tomorrow's students and teachers require policies to delineate its use in classrooms, lest schools keep their proverbial heads in the sand about evolving pedagogical needs and tools.

Education philosopher John Dewey (1916) stated, "If we teach today, as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow" (Turkmen, 2006, p. 71).

Another philosopher of education and pedagogy, Paulo Freire, supported change in the classroom, in addition to recognizing the inherent challenges. Throughout his career, Freire reasoned that teachers have the daunting task of constantly rethinking how they've traditionally approached teaching students so that they, themselves, are involved in the process of learning as well. Teachers need to remain open to other teaching methods. In his published dialogue with Shor, *Pedagogy of Liberation* (1987), Freire offers the idea that teachers must 'let go' of the 'sage on the stage' teaching philosophy and experience the learning process in the classroom with the students, thereby validating creative learning by learning creatively, in-process.

While I do agree with Freire's idea as it pertains to classroom environments where open discussion and exploration of what's being learned can occur, I believe there are other learning environments where this may not be appropriate. For example, highly sensitive or specialized lessons in bomb disposal techniques, flying lessons, or brain surgery might not be suitable for teachers to encourage their students to get creative, or try teaching the educator a thing or two in the midst of a class. Teachers as creative, dialectic agents providing students with opportunities for creative sparks is harder than it seems, and harder still for teachers who do not

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believe themselves to be creative, nor able enough to answer the call of pedagogy's challenges and changes. Social media has changed the way humans interact. This change has implications for how teachers and students interact, and how teaching and learning occurs. Creative use of social media is one thing. However, creating policies that delineate issues that could, have, and will continue to emerge is quite another.

The Evolution of Social Media

The Internet had taken society by virtual storm as an immense information resource. This new online resource, however, was really only a prodigious, virtual library, where users could search and read content, but no more than that. In his 2007 TED Talks video, *Laws that choke creativity*, Harvard Law professor Dr. Lawrence Lessig labeled the people who availed themselves of the Internet as members of the *read only culture*. This culture still exists, today, though much less so than over the last several hundred years. Lessig's *read only culture* is the idea that a society's minority creates the culture to be consumed (the arts in all its forms) by the majority.

Originally, that asymmetrical online resource — a one-way relationship wherein users consumed online information, but did not contribute to its content — the Internet, or World Wide Web, evolved to become what was coined 'Web 2.0,' a participatory state of the Internet wherein users are no longer just consumers, but producers of online content, as well. Lessig terms this form of read-write culture, as Internet users continued to absorb what was available online and then began contributing their own content and interacting with one another online. By means of digital platforms such as Facebook, which facilitates immediate interaction in a

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more personal way, the social characteristic and potential of the Internet revealed itself. Lessig called what was to come “the new literacy,” as Internet users use these new and evolving communication tools to express how they think, speak, and see themselves in ways never done before.

In his book, *New Media: An Introduction*, Flew (2011) describes the differences between the Internet’s original structure (Web 1.0) and Web 2.0 as the move from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process. Social media, according to new media expert, Lon Safko, is “user-generated content — blogs, audio, video, music, news, photos, tweets — working together with digital technology in [an] environment [where] everything is accessible from everywhere and everything is connected” (2009). It is worth noting that as newcomers began producing content and new forms of art, they were doing so for the love of self-expression and culture — as opposed to professionals employed to this end (Lessig, 2007). Tapscott (2009) argues that youth are increasingly attracted to, and are using, Web 2.0 because it represents a more democratic and open space where they may search for, and lend their voice to, all sorts of information. I would add that these particular Web 2.0 abilities promote a sense of freedom in youth, and thus empowers their sense of independence. The Web has evolved to permit users to experience forms of knowledge, cultures, conventions, customs, and concepts in ways not previously available. It allows contemporary computer users to see the world and themselves anew, while providing a means to come together, virtually (Manovich, 2001).

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In addition to user interaction, social media has also become highly portable. A 2010 Pew Internet and American Life Project study reveals that 75% of Americans aged 12-17 years own their own cell phone (Lenhart Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). The same study claims the digital divide between the haves and have-nots may be closed by 2015, when all students will have a smart phone. These statistics, if they hold true, will ultimately satisfy another series of reports examined by Loertscher (2011), who offers a glimpse into the technology phenomena among American youth. These technological and educational trends include:

- “People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want;
- While E-books are often static text, watch developments such as Blio for a new generation of interactive texts;
- The world of work is increasingly collaborative, giving rise to reflection about the way student projects are structured” (sparking a reconsideration of how student projects are structured);
- “Mobile devices are becoming mainstream in teaching and learning”; and
- VDO (virtual desktop infrastructure) utilizing cloud computing makes all resources available on any preferred student or teacher device” (p. 40).

Many of the trends mentioned above can be regarded as a form of social media, as they involve interaction between people through online applications. In my opinion, the use of these tools to build the basic building blocks of society has become a necessary addition to curricula if we expect the next generation of

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students to study, work, and socialize responsibly, today and tomorrow. With social media and social networking firmly entrenched in the vocabulary of the youngest computer users (Lenhart et al., 2010), this burgeoning of resources and relationships — made easier by the Internet — challenges educators to re-evaluate their roles as teachers. Beyond their roles as sense-makers, coaches, evaluators, and those who bestow credentials, teachers must look to become policy implementers who wrestle to understand how to blend pedagogy with technology trends. As young people began using social media, daily, it was only a matter of time before some saw how it could become a potent teaching and learning tool. The next step is introducing social media into pedagogy, responsibly. Policies delineate its responsible use in classrooms by students and teachers.

Social Media, Classrooms, and Policy

As the information age gave rise to a new policy age (Jenson, Brushwood Rose, & Lewis, 2007), educators and governments around the world were motivated to create policies to delineate the use of social media in classrooms for various reasons. For example, Anderson and van Weert (2002) state that ICT “is now a fundamental building block of modern society and the global community believe that understanding it, and mastering basic skills and concepts about it, must be a core part of education, alongside reading, writing, and numeracy” (p. 8). Given ICT’s growing importance as a type of literacy — social media being one of its forms — Moll and Krug (2009) also warn that its “issues are extremely complex, dynamic, and need to be viewed within the situated contexts of educational, community, and societal perspectives” (p. 114). These perspectives must be taken into consideration if any policy is to be created to delineate the ways in which social

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media can be used in a learning environment. The authors warn that just as ICT literacy has an integral role in enhancing “learning and for the benefit of global collaboration and it can also be used to distract learners or even as an instrument of social destruction and harm” (p. 114).

As is the case with many policy initiatives, policymakers face numerous challenges and obstacles. As more schools draft and adopt policies to oversee the use of social media, it is worth noting some of the trends and approaches policymakers have had to consider or use. In the American state of Georgia, Forsyth County Schools established a BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology) policy and installed a student-only, login-required Wi-Fi network for students who wish to use their mobile device in classrooms (Hill, 2011). Forsyth Schools’ Director of Instructional Technology realized that whether mobile devices are forbidden, or not, students are bringing them to school, anyhow. He said, “We felt this was our opportunity to leverage these tools for learning instead of outright banning them” (para. 7). When considering the issue of equal access to all students, the director and other administrators believed it was unrealistic for a school to purchase a device for every student. Instead, they decided to embrace the pervasiveness of technology and leverage what some students already had before levelling the playing field by purchasing devices for those who did not have their own portable computer device, likely because they did not have the financial resources. In addition to addressing the increasing pervasiveness of mobile devices in the hands of students, Forsyth County Schools’ example illustrates one of the many other challenges and issues faced by schools and policymakers — in this case, equal

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access — who wish to permit the use of a new technology in their halls and classrooms.

Motivations to Develop Social Media Policies in Schools

The need to educate youth about the sensible and ethical use of social media has never been more urgent given the advent of social media-borne issues such as sexting, cyberbullying, and other forms of harassment that too easily migrate from the virtual realm to the real world. Fortunately, initiatives and ideas for the effective and responsible integration of social media into classrooms are surfacing. In May 2012, The George Lucas Educational Foundation — an organization dedicated to celebrating and encouraging innovation in K-12 classrooms — and Facebook — arguably the world’s most popular social networking service with over a billion members as of September 2012 (Fowler, 2012) — collaborated to create the policy help guide, *How to Create Social Media Guidelines for Your School* (Edutopia & Facebook, 2012). Acknowledging how social media has become “as ubiquitous as the air we breathe” (p. 1), the document is a partnership of two giant organizations (one non-profit and the other for-profit) created as a resource for school administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

While the partnership’s effort should be lauded for its noble intent, it would be interesting to look closer at the motivations behind it: a non-profit and a for-profit. While George Lucas’s foundation proclaims to focus on the advancement of more effective ways of teaching, what might the motivations of Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg be for bringing Facebook into the effort? Marketing, perhaps? While George Lucas’s foundation proclaims in the document to focus on more effective ways of teaching, the motivation and role of Facebook is unclear. I

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would conjecture that it may be a marketing ploy, but regardless, the collaboration is clear evidence that social media is affecting pedagogy and classroom cultures to a point where profit and non-profit organizations are banding together to answer a perceived need to facilitate social media's move into classrooms.

In 2008, England's Crook, Cummings, Fisher, Graber, Harrison, Lewin, Logan, Luckin, Oliver, and Sharples produced a report on research into Web 2.0 technologies for learning. It is based on how boards and schools understand the motivation behind introducing social media into classrooms, including how these tools matched contemporary curriculum goals and embodied the very significant theoretical perspectives on new approaches to learning. They wrote that new ICT's afforded schools the opportunity to better prepare "school-leavers" with regards to new educational agendas, such as making certain they can successfully engage with an economy as "knowledge workers" (p. 29). It was also crucial that students possess some flexibility in what might be considered a fluid skills market. This kind of preparation speaks to the need for teachers to play a role in facilitating creativity in individuals, that students might then be able to adapt and be flexible over the course of their lives. The same could be said for social media policies — that teachers need to play a greater role in the establishment of them and that such policies should not be so stringent that they cannot adapt to changing circumstances over time.

The need for new regulations and policies governing emerging educational technologies is not new. However, they are more frequently borne of situations no one previously imagined. For example, "much of the consideration for privacy and security coincided with the Y2K issues at the turn of the new millennium" (McMillan

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Culp, Honey, & Mandinach, 2005, p. 298). A year later, North American education policies began including “new regulations to account for issues that have begun to arise with the proliferation of the Internet and virtual learning environments, with recommendations in this area emerging in reports including the Web-based Education Commission’s report (2000)” (p. 298). More recently, however, there has been an emphasis on the educational benefits of social media for students (Ward & Parr, 2011). These benefits include greater student independence, engagement, and motivation, as well as a richer interaction between teachers and students (Somekh, Underwood, Convery, Dillon, Jarvis & Lewin, 2007, as cited by Falloon, 2010). And while those benefits may seem to be enough reason to introduce social media into classrooms, there are others, including how it can be used to teach students about how people and organizations use social media to advance or stymie political ideologies, and, of course, how to protect themselves against dangers such as identity theft and cyberbullying.

Social media’s potency was demonstrated in 2012, when it helped spark and promote the spread of political activism through the international *Occupy* and *Idle No More* movements. Facing potentially large-scale protests in cities around the world, authorities have either considered, or conducted, shut downs of mobile phone services across a section of a city (e.g., London riots of 2011), or specific areas such as subways (e.g., San Francisco protests of 2011). Its potentially dangerous influence on youth has been evident through reports of illegal interactions between children and adults, and between adolescents as in the many tragic cases, and outcomes, of cyberbullying.

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Cyberbullying is a perfect example of how social media can be a double-edged sword. The term “cyberbullying” was coined by www.cyberbullying.ca founder, Bill Belsey (Campbell, 2005), a Canadian who says cyberbullying is increasingly used by youth to mistreat and abuse others (National Children’s Home, 2002). In Canada, social media was used to convey an outpouring of outrage and sympathy for two girls who committed suicide within months of each other (15-year old Amanda Todd in October 2012 and 17-year old Rehtaeh Parsons in April 2013) after each had endured intense torment in the form of sexual harassment from online bullies. While the motivation to bring social media into classrooms is often fuelled by positive intentions and its documented use as a teaching and learning tool, examples of how it can empower protesters and cyberbullies illustrates other motivations behind why educators should bring social media into classrooms: to teach youth how to protect themselves when social media is used as a weapon while exploring its potential as a learning tool. Scholars such as Shariff (2009), Hinduja and Patchin (2012), and Limber and Small (2003) do much the same.

Social Media Policies in Schools

Before looking at the arguments for and against the use of social media in classrooms, I would like to acknowledge that there are pros and cons with every form of pedagogy, and that both aspects are at play in any form of teaching and learning.

Arguments in Favour

While there are those who champion the integration of social media tools in classrooms — stating their proven attractiveness to schools as a means to facilitate “greater student independence and autonomy, greater collaboration and increased

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pedagogic efficiency” (Franklin & van Harmelen, 2007, p. 3) — others are more cautious. Alam and McLoughlin (2010), for instance, warn that academics and policymakers must remain focussed on the change in pedagogy, and not the technology, itself, lest we put the cart before the horse. Tapscott (2009) echoes this approach, stating that we should not simply “throw technology into the classroom and hope for good things” (p. 148).

McMillan Culp, Honey, and Mandinach, three education technology researchers with New York City’s Education Development Center’s Center for Children and Technology, share reasons why North America should invest in educational technology in classrooms. First, they state that today’s students need digital and technology-based skills to respond to contemporary shifts in a global economy and society. Second, they write that investing in technology for the classroom is key to retaining the United States’ economic and political dominance in the world. If we look at technology as an agent of change, as McMillan Culp et al. do, it presents the possibility that investments in classroom technologies could be the catalyst of change in the content and activities of the teaching and learning environment. Such change might include a Freire-inspired shift from lecture-driven instruction methods to more constructivist, inquiry-based environments. I propose that the people most directly involved in teaching and learning — students, and the teachers who will implement any change — are the real change agents. In the end, technology by itself is not the central issue. It is how it is used that is important.

Crook et al.’s 2008 report, *Web 2.0 technologies for learning: the current landscape – opportunities, challenges and tensions*, tries to help teachers, schools and boards understand and appreciate the motivation behind introducing social

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media technology into classrooms. According to them, bringing such technologies into classrooms makes sense, in that it matches “with current overarching policy and curriculum goals” and that “the forms of activity cultivated within Web 2.0 are widely endorsed as important by theoretical perspectives on learning” (p. 29). They claim that information and communication technologies can, and should, go beyond basic accessibility, so students have an educational experience that is not merely adequate, but enhanced. I agree with Palfrey (2010) when he says, “technologies can also help to support new and enhanced pedagogies to provide multiple avenues for expression, engagement and content presentation” (p. 16). In my experience, teachers who embraced new technologies as teaching and learning tools in their classrooms were in a stronger position to cultivate more collaborative learning skills and engagement with unmotivated students.

Arguments Against

Despite young people’s desire to incorporate social and digital media into their education, the majority of school districts block access to such tools and technologies” (Lemke, Coughlin, Garcia, Reifsneider, & Baas, 2009, p. 1). Fuelling this resistance are the unfortunate controversies spawned from social media technologies, such as perceived inappropriate teacher-student relationships and communication and the kind of high profile legal battles school districts would rather avoid (Cambron-McCabe, 2009; Verga, 2007). Exacerbating these issues is defining terms such as inappropriate teacher-student relationships and communications. One argument for preventing the use of Facebook in classrooms, for example, is the fact that many teachers are not as savvy about social media as one might think they should be. Case in point: Dr. June Talvitie-Siple. In 2010, this

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supervisor of a Cohasset, Massachusetts, high school math and science program was forced to resign over comments she made on her personal Facebook page (WCVB.com, 2010). On her Facebook 'wall', Dr. Talvitie-Siple called the residents of Cohasset "arrogant and snobby," adding that she's "so not looking forward to another year at Cohasset schools" (para. 6). This was not the first time she had posted such comments or jokes about the school and its students. However, in her testimony, she stated that she believed her online sharing of thoughts were private. They were not, and the community and school board taught her a stinging lesson about the potential misuse of social media.

Another argument against introducing social-media based exercises in classrooms is its potential to become a distraction, even as they are employed for teaching and learning in a classroom. Zhang, Flammer, and Yang (2010) discuss this particular challenge. In their study of students' use of social media during class time, they found that using "social media can consume significant amount of time and distract the students from studying and working" (p. 229). In fact, many of the students who participated in the study used the word "addiction" (ibid) to describe their use of social media.

One of the more potent arguments against putting social media in the hands of youth is how it is used as a weapon of bullying. Campbell (2005) interpreted Limber and Small (2003) and McCarthy, Rylance, Bennett, and Zimmermann's (2001) respective works on the historical perception of bullying to mean that "bullying has not been seen as a problem that needed attention, but rather has been accepted as a fundamental and normal part of childhood" (Campbell, p. 2); even if the "societal problem, beginning in the schoolyard and often progressing to

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the boardroom” (ibid). To address cyberbullying, the Ontario Ministry of Education rolled out in 2008 a ‘Safe Schools: Progressive Discipline’ strategy to address the issue of bullying (Government of Ontario, 2008). It involves promoting a positive, safe school environment. In it, school principals are empowered to choose how inappropriate student behaviour should be addressed, in addition to offering students supports to promote positive behaviour. Cyberbullying, which can entwine a school and board into all sorts of risks and criminal issues, has become a potent extension of how students bully each other in and out of school (Shariff, 2005).

Other legal risks to schools that are exacerbated by social media networking are discussed by Swain (2008), who points out that “copyright and intellectual property issues involved in Web 2.0 remain vague” (para. 18). In addition to the liability problems that could face a school, teacher, or student if someone misuses intellectual property, she explains the issue of students’ privacy: “It is not yet entirely clear how far students want [schools] invading their online space” (para. 17). According to Montana Miller, an associate professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio and an expert in social media and Internet ethics, the problem is that “social media breaks down the walls between what was a previously clear distinction between ‘on-campus’ and ‘off-campus’ activities” (quoted in Sostek, 2011, para. 13). Citing a survey done on behalf of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC, www.jisc.ac.uk) in 2007, Swain (2008) illustrates another potential challenge for schools wishing to integrate social media into their classrooms. She says that according to the JISC survey, “65% of sixth formers hoping to go to university used social networking sites, but most failed to see how they could be used for teaching and resented the idea that academics could

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interfere in a forum they saw as primarily social” (Swain, para. 19). In addition to students not seeing how social media could be integrated into their classrooms, teachers and institutions resist this potential integration when, for example, they are, according to Crook et al. (2008), “suspicious of the pedagogical shift from emphasizing teaching methods to learning strategies” (p. 34). Teachers and policymakers cannot assume that students will transfer their recreational knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, emerging technologies like social media into classrooms for the purpose of learning. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) agree, saying that while a lot of adults will generalize Western youth culture as being inseparable from social media technologies, not all children are exposed to computers and the Internet at a very young age.

In the 1990s, when American school districts’ leaders were presented with the new, problem-solving approach to teaching math to young students, Spillane (2000) notes that people were quick to “draw analogs to surface features rather than to the structural features that are crucial for making inferences” (p. 167). Leaders’ lack of appreciation and understanding of problem-solving math led to premature conclusions about its effectiveness. Spillane suggests that without a more fundamental understanding of mathematics (most admitted math was not their strong suit), it is “unlikely that district leaders would have constructed understandings that reflected the structural features of the reforms” (p. 167). In Canada, the 1990s shift to a problem-solving style of math was slower than in the United States because it is provincial bureaucrats who make curriculum decisions and change, resulting in what O’Shea (2003) describes as, “considerable deliberation before implementation” (p. 12). Contrary to Canadian systems of

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education, the United States possesses a more decentralized school governance structure. O'Shea admits that despite Canada's pace of curriculum change, it has its merits, specifically that there is more time to debate and consider reform proposals and potential consequences before implementing them too quickly. Obstacles to education reform — aided by the resistance to change deeply rooted in education systems — and, in the case of social media, the fear of technology dominating people's lives, represent forces that can withhold change (Vrasidis & McIsaac, 2001). However, curricular, pedagogical, and policy changes are essential for the success of education reform.

Changing the philosophical and pedagogical assumptions of established education systems requires time, effort, and strong political will. The arguments for and against the integration of social media into classrooms are ongoing, and those in the middle of the discussion are the educators who, as I have indicated, are somewhere between not knowing enough about social media to try it in their classrooms, and realizing just how much they are the key players, or agents of change, in bringing social media into classrooms.

Educators and Social Media Policy

In August 2010, MSNBC reported how a Florida school district became the first education jurisdiction in the state to officially advise its teachers "not to 'friend' students on social networking sites, claiming that teacher-student communication through this medium is 'inappropriate'" (Murphy, 2010, para. 1). The Florida advisement came in the form of guidelines produced by school district officials in an effort to delineate their teachers' use of social media. However, the guidelines did not prevent teachers from using social media to reach out to students. And while it

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did not address how students should use social media, the guidelines did remind educators of the limits of the teacher-student relationship and what are appropriate and inappropriate communications.

In the United States, the use of technology for instruction in classrooms and task management varies greatly from school to school. Starr (2012) states that some American schools can safely say that nearly all their teachers use some form of technology in the classroom, while other schools, unfortunately, would have to admit that virtually none of their teachers use any technology. Harris and Hofer (2011) ask how teachers' understanding of how to bring technology and pedagogy together can be improved. In their study of "technological pedagogical content knowledge" (p. 1), Harris and Hofer cite two conflicting ideas regarding the use of technology in classrooms. They found that while CDW-G (2006), a United States' government education technology supplier, reported that parents and teachers have wanted more technology used in classrooms when educating children, there are others who question technology's real efficacy and results in the classroom (Schrum, Thompson, Maddux, Sprague, Bull, & Bell, 2007). If teachers and administrators face pressure from their school administrators and parents, respectively, then why has technology as a teaching and learning tool not made more strides? Referencing CDW-G's 2006 annual report that tracked the use of technology through a survey completed by 1,000 American teachers, Harris and Hofer state that the answers are "complex and interconnected" (p. 227), and include "insufficient computer access, budgeting challenges, and lack of instructional and professional development time" (ibid). American education writer, columnist and blogger, John Spencer (2012), offers several more reasons for why

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teachers are not using technology, including fear, lack of leadership, lack of knowledge, lack of technology, and a lack of research on how it can and should be used in a classroom. The CDW-G report did offer a positive finding: that despite the aforementioned obstacles to get teachers to use technology in classrooms, when they are provided the proper resources and time, "they use technology more and their students, in turn, use technology to learn" (para. 1). A fundamental challenge to getting teachers to use technology in the classroom may stem from a teacher's own experience, as well as their pre-service training.

According to Gu, Liu, and Lin (2005), while it is necessary for teachers to grasp basic computer skills, it seems problematic that teachers spend most of their time struggling with unfamiliar technologies. The key point of teacher training is to reshape teacher's view of e-learning rather than to fill their heads with complicated and frustrating technologies (Chu, 2002). Only then can a teacher help their students "evaluate and synthesize information gained through mobile devices" (Hill, 2011, para. 14) that are only becoming more prevalent in classrooms. Gu et al. also claim that most teachers are "not well prepared for using high technologies in daily teaching" (p. 114). This statement reminds me of preliminary research I conducted among various educators during the first year in my Master of Education program. While trying to unearth the root of the obstacles facing teachers who wish to integrate social media technologies in their classrooms, elementary and secondary school, teachers I spoke with said that they couldn't or wouldn't use technologies such as social media in their classrooms due to a lack of training, resources, and/or a policy.

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In Gu et al.'s study, an excellent point echoes what I have found during my review of the literature thus far: simply providing the technology does not guarantee it will be used, or used effectively. The authors agree with Hudson (2001), whom they say supports the idea that first "other conditions must also be met, such as content designed for curricula and appropriate for various age groups and learners" (Gu et al., p. 115). Simply having access to technology in a classroom does not guarantee its use and could, in fact, facilitate its misuse. So how are these challenges overcome when scholars such as Finger and Lee (2010) assert that modern classrooms seem resistant to how ICT can transform teaching and learning as the majority of schools around the world linger in their traditional state? Kennedy (2004) explains that this specific challenge will be overcome, and educators will only engage in a new policy when it mirrors their principles. Emphasizing the importance of educator involvement in any effort to integrate social media into classrooms, Zhao and Frank (2003) outline four techniques to help promote teacher participation and endorsement:

1. *Teacher recruitment/selection* — Discerning in an interview how a teacher might be amenable and open to technologies is a key policy implication.
2. *Teacher training and socialization* — While Zhao and Frank suggest that on-the-job and external training activities may be offered to teachers, they believe teachers are more likely to buy in to new technologies through the behaviours and beliefs of their peers.
3. *Providing opportunities to explore and learn* — Zhao and Frank support the idea of allowing teachers to take time during regular working hours to

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test drive new technologies so they can learn about new classroom tools as they relate to a teacher's respective needs.

4. *Leveraging change through the social context* — Teachers are encouraged to engage in social media outside the work environment, that they might experiment and develop a level of comfort through the social context (p. 841-842).

Teaching the appropriate, responsible, and effective use of learning tools is every teacher's duty to students. What teachers and administrators may not realize is their own potential to play a significant role in inspiring, coordinating, and evaluating students' social media activities in a classroom environment (Gu et al., 2005). Developing policy to delineate teaching using social media becomes another layer of the policy development issue. Arguing that students are increasingly interacting online and that the information they access is increasingly virtual, Vie (2008) suggests that educators make themselves aware of the ways in which their students already use online tools like social media. Vie's suggestion stems from her assertion that different generations of people experience and use technology differently. According to Vie, millennials (a term used to describe people born between 1980 and 2000), unlike previous generations, tend to view computers as being inseparable from their everyday lives, and, according to Jenkins (2006), use numerous forms of technology simultaneously. Teachers need to overcome traditional uses of technology that may inhibit their ability to understand and become more fully engaged with, for example, how culture and technology have converged and support each other. Yancey (2011) proposes that teachers consider

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how to bring new technologies, such as social media, into classrooms by helping students acquire what she calls “textured literacy — the ability to comfortably use and combine print, spoken, visual, and digital processes in composing a piece of writing” (p. 38) — while Selfe (1999) warns teachers against shunning new technologies, saying, “we rob ourselves and our students of the opportunities to continue the conversation (of how technology affects us implicitly and explicitly) and to develop the critical stance necessary for technological literacy” (p. 430).

Before teachers arrive at a point where they might employ social media in classrooms, Vrasidis and McIsaac (2001) suggest starting the integration process while teachers are in pre-service instruction programs. Instructors in teacher-education programmes should structure the learning environment so that the instructor has the opportunity to model expert behaviour to pre-service teachers in the sound uses of technology-based teaching and learning. It is important that teacher-educators become experts in technology-based learning because only then could they model it for their students, the pre-service teachers. If, as Rudd (2013) asserts, teachers are considered agents of change — in that they have the potential to enhance learning and teaching methods — then a good place to start is reforming teacher-education programmes to better prepare pre-service teachers to take advantage of various technologies and successfully integrate them into the classroom their practice.

Alam and McLoughlin (2010) assert that learning and ‘pedagogy 2.0’ portrays different roles for both students and teachers” (p. 18). In 1970, Freire made popular the notion of learning as a participatory social process for both teacher and student. His idea proposes that teachers take on the role of facilitator while

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students become participants. In the spirit of providing choice in the classroom and leveraging social media's potential, teachers act as mentors and guides as they establish environments that nurture creativity, collaboration, and connectivity between classmates and the outside world, while simultaneously co-creating dynamic, personalized units of study. Redecker, Ala-Mutka, Bacigalupo, Ferrariand, and Punie (2009) concur, stating that teachers' traditional pedagogical skills and roles have to change from the 'sage on the stage' approach to becoming guides and mentors in order to facilitate self-regulated student learning. This change in teaching philosophy is foundational as teachers learn how to use social media in their classrooms. And as teachers evolve their range of existing teaching strategies to include a more participatory style of learning and social media, so, too, will they move into a stronger position to pursue their own learning agenda and become informed experts in policy development.

Education reform has historically followed a "top-down path whereby teachers have not been involved in decision-making" (Jhurree, 2005, p. 475). This harkens back to Spillane's recounting of how 1990s math reform in the United States hit a bureaucratic wall when school district leaders could not fully appreciate teaching math through problem solving. How could such people be expected to create policies to delineate the new math in classrooms when they, themselves, do not understand or believe in it? Jhurree echoes that frustration, saying, "Teachers tend to feel that policy makers do not understand the classroom dynamics and hence they do not know what works and what does not at the grassroots level" (p. 475). Earning the trust of teachers who wish to introduce social media into their

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classrooms means including them in the policy-making process, alongside the policymakers, from the start (Cuban, 2001).

Moll and Krug (2009) observe other issues that arise when social media is introduced to pre-service teachers once they are in the position to participate in the policymaking process. These include the awareness of a school's "current acceptable uses of electronic systems, safety and security, privacy and confidentiality, and intellectual property and copyright policies in place locally, provincially, and nationally" (p. 113). Including teachers in the policymaking process transforms them into more informed contributors to education reform, including the creation of policies to govern the use of social media in classrooms. Involving teachers, school administrators, the community, and students maximizes their ownership of the policy in question and allows for a potentially smoother, more committed implementation of any such policy by the teachers. Jhurree caps the list of challenges facing the development of policies to incorporate social media in classrooms with processes to ensure a successful policymaking process (including pilot projects, hands-on training, the motivation of teachers, and funding), required laws and regulations can serve as facilitators in the promotion of easy and equal access to ICT and at the same time as watchdogs to deter unethical, illicit and illegal of use of ICT (p. 481).

Challenges Facing Social Media Policy Developers

A decade of growing social media usage has not motivated school administrators and trustees to produce policies ahead of this technology's seemingly unstoppable permeation into classrooms. Instead, the first generation of policies appear to have been in reaction to media stories of inappropriate

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relationships between students and teachers, and educators sharing their opinions, online, from home. A 2009 study of 46 organizations' social media policies revealed that just 37% of corporate social media policies are created proactively (Boudreaux, 2009). Bearing in mind that Boudreaux's study is now five years old, and that the proliferation of technology and the influence of social media has only accelerated, it is easy to assume that more organizations have, or are in the process of, creating such policies. Kind, Genrich, Sodhi, and Chretien (2010) note a similar issue in medical schools: "While social media use rises, policy informing appropriate conduct in medical schools lags behind" (p. 1). The creation of social media policies for schools can be arduous, especially when they "left to their own devices" (Vanderlinde, van Braak, & Tondeur, 2010, p. 435), as was the case in the state of Missouri. Issues that arise from bringing technology-based strategies into classrooms, alone, could be enough for school administrators to halt any such policymaking initiative in its tracks. According to Jenson et al. (2007), they include "infrastructure, human resources, learning policies, public policy questions, and an increasingly commercial education environment" (p. 9). Such policies are occasionally referred to as acceptable use policies, which Conn (2002) says fulfills the role of both oversight, and administration of any consequences of misuse.

Franklin and van Harmelen discuss in *Web 2.0 for learning and teaching in higher education* (2007) aspects to consider before creating a social media policy for educational purposes. According to the authors, many elements need to be examined, including the choice of "types of systems for institutional use; integration with institutional systems; accessibility, visibility and privacy; data ownership; control over content; data preservation; information literacy; and staff

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and student training” (p. 3). The irony of their comprehensive list is that, in the end, they recommend that schools minimize creating policies that might constrain experimentation with social media technologies and appropriate pedagogies so schools may monitor ongoing developments pertaining to social media’s use in classrooms and make changes to their policies as needed.

Taking a different approach, Ward and Parr (2011) argue that it is not clear what the intended benefits of incorporating social media in classrooms are, or the reasoning behind trying. They observe that the idea that simply bringing social media into classrooms will result in it being embraced by teachers is flawed, especially when social media is presented as a silver bullet to an issue many teachers do not see as a problem: the need to change how they teach and students learn. Ward and Parr’s article, *Digitalising our schools: Clarity and coherence in policy*, argues that a lack of policy has resulted in teachers’ lack of success in education reform as it pertains to ICT integration in classrooms, it is interesting to note that their observations do not include how the students would embrace such uses of technology in school. The apparent disconnect between students and teachers, and how each group may help the other learn and teach using newer forms of ICT such as social media, is very un-Freirian. There is a fitting Confucian saying: If people want to achieve better outcomes from their work or study, they must first make their tools better. I would add that not only do people need to make better, or more productive, tools; they must also understand how to use them properly. That takes time, practice, and the freedom to make mistakes. This is where effective policies can help.

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The North American policymaker, according to Jenson et al., has evolved from “managing market forces to managing goals in light of global trends like competitiveness, globalization, and interoperability” (p. 8). Stemming from this shift in policymaking, Jenson et al. maintain that the time has come to adjust policymaking processes in order to effectively connect with intended policy users and their needs by means of informed consultation. The bigger problem is that these issues speak to the need for “strategies on how and why choices are made, who makes them and to what effect” (Jenson et al., p. 9). Too often the reverse happens: technology changes rapidly, forcing a scramble to respond to issues, only to have implementers face problems triggered by implementation. Minogue (1983) describes this reactive form of policy development in education as the messiness of world politics.

As either reactive or proactive, Jenson et al., (2007) describe two kinds of policy approaches: progressive and conservative. Progressive policies are considered flexible, guiding the development of something (for example, an organization or initiative). This can become “dysfunctional if it is too far out in front, uninformed, short-sighted, pressure-group driven and non-inclusive” (p. 6). Conservative policies, on the other hand, find themselves entrenched in established institutional practices and power relationships in favour of stability. These, too, become dysfunctional when, while trying to protect existing practices, they work against changes in reality of an organization or initiative.

According to Wilson (1997), policy development typically proceeds in distinct phases:

1. “Technical issues are imposed upon senior policymakers’ agendas;

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2. Policy is developed in consultation with the implementers, who explain the cutting edge features of their work and the social problems it will solve;
3. Subsequent phase includes critical issues—institutional, political and power distribution, questions of winners and losers, and the balance to be achieved between these issues” (Jenson et al., p. 7).

Jenson et al. assert that policies addressing issues such as those faced by schools still adapting to the likes of social media are of the progressive type, in that they are designed to help guide schools through the implementation of this technology in a classroom. According to the authors, progressive policies are most successful when they have been crafted based on research, and knowledgeable discussions and consultations with stakeholders. According to Wilson, contemporary policymaking has been stuck in phase one for years. As it has been nearly 18 years since Wilson made his observation, it was reassuring to find, during my literature review, examples of social media policies for schools that advance the necessary evolution of these policies.

Overcoming Social Media Policy Challenges

With the establishment of a single, across-the-board policy overseeing all of a school’s various technologies under one acceptable use policy being problematic, Carr (2011) suggests, in its stead, that administrators try to anticipate potential concerns and issues so as to “develop policies in advance that spell out expectations and consequences while passing legal muster” (p. 39). Rather than shut down student and teacher access to social media networks and other digital tools, he argues that focus be brought to teaching people how to use them in a

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productive manner. For example, policies should serve to remind employees (and students, depending on their online activity) that whatever they share online, even on sites and pages deemed private, is done so as a representative of the school or board they work at or attend. This introduces the possibility of superimposing existing codes of conduct policies on activities performed online while in a classroom environment.

Similarly advocating productive use, the *Pan Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health* (2010) suggests “that the following factors may help address policy challenges and facilitate acceptance, adoption and implementation of policies” (p. 23), in general rather than specific to social media:

- “Coordination and communication among stakeholders at all levels;
- Consideration of stakeholder views, concerns, priorities and decision-making processes;
- Recognition of potential benefits to other sectors;
- Training for those who have a role in developing, implementing and evaluating the policy;
- Adequate resources to implement and evaluate policy components;
- Support of the policy as a priority in the face of competing agendas.” (p. S23).

While governments maintain an important stewardship role in the development and implementation of policies (including the provision of resources, funding, evaluation and sometimes approval), the successful adoption, implementation, and monitoring of policy entails the direct involvement and

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cooperation of the stakeholders affected by the policy. But while involving as many different stakeholders as possible is a shared conviction, another challenge lies in how such policymakers approach change and their policy intentions.

An innovative step towards the successful integration of social media policies in schools is to facilitate a school's capacity to develop its own, local policy (Vanderlinde, van Braak, & Hermans, 2009), rather than relying on a province – or state–wide policy. The rationale lies in the idea that such policies need to be grounded in a school's (or board's) values, shared vision of teaching and learning, and social media integration. A social media policy should describe an "overall philosophy of technology use and explore how technology will improve teaching and learning" (Baylor & Ritchie, 2002, p. 2). Furthermore, a local social media policy must be related to specific curriculum content and the improvement of student learning (Staples, Pugach, & Himes, 2005) that is largely a local responsibility. The potential victims of a more localized approach to social media integration may be the student who, once integrated into one school's system and policies, moves to another province, or state, and into a school with a policy that endorses a completely different approach to social media in the classroom. Then there is the issue of resources and social media policy implementation. Although not the focus of this thesis, it is worth noting that while some may argue in favour of localized policy development — as not all schools are created or funded equally — only the more affluent schools may be able to invest in equipment, resources, and teacher training. Schools and boards with fewer resources would then be forced to adopt scaled down approaches, if they do at all.

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Returning to what is widely agreed to be the primary stakeholder on matters pertaining to academic policy, Zhao and Frank (2003) claim that by giving teachers opportunities to help one another and to interact, schools may be able to increase technology implementation in classrooms. They are quick to admit, though, that leveraging through the social context is a double-edged sword. As help is most important when coming from a colleague, those with few colleagues may not be able to access the type of help they need. Additionally, social pressure can be as strong a force working against technology as in favour of it. The authors propose that change agents be very aware of the social structures and school cultures in which they operate, that they may more readily and deliberately address shortcomings and pitfalls.

Further to involving teachers in the policymaking process, Tettegah and Hunter (2006) suggest that an important step is "to utilize a committee consisting of school personnel, parents and students, within the school district that represents the many ways in which technology will be used in the schools" (p. 123). Including as many stakeholders as possible in a policymaking process addresses the issue of equity. For example, it is important that as many of the parties that may be affected by the policy being developed be included in the policymaking process in order to avoid creating a policy that does not address, say, resource restrictions in some schools. Inclusion of representatives from the various schools within a school board or district would also assure a more uniform use of social media across different schools with different stakeholders, students, and resources. During the process of this literature review, I found that the types and number of stakeholders seemed to grow with each new book or article I found. Policy development is a

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“collaborative process” (Vanderlinde et al., 2010, p. 35). This is critical for any educational change and is important for the successful incorporation of social media into teaching and learning (Katz & Williams, 2002).

If a school is in a rush to complete a social media policy, one expedient method is to borrow from those who have gone through the process. Established policies can provide “a blueprint for others to adopt and adapt” (Kind et al., 2010, p. 1). If a school can afford to be patient, it might start by following Palfrey’s (2010) suggestion and allow for a little social science perspective. He maintains that policy matters regarding youth privacy in the digital realm need to be considered and studied further. He suggests that policymakers ought to consider several approaches when addressing the privacy concerns of youth in an online context, including what youth consider private and public, and challenging the concept of teaching media literacy and privacy issues using scare tactics.

From teachers to students, Eynon and Malmberg (2011) write that an ICT policy should not be about trying to ensure all young people use the Internet in the same way, but instead use the information to help inform educational practices in school and more effectively target certain initiatives — that all young people are supported to make the most out of using the Internet (such as the aforementioned *Bring Your Own Technology* policy, wherein students bring their own devices to school). Interestingly, their survey was focused on the use of the Internet outside formal educational settings. Having a stronger evidence base for knowing what uses of the Internet certain groups of young people are likely to be engaged in outside of school can help practitioners determine how best to use the Internet in their own

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classroom and to how best to support young people in the online activities they engage in during their own time.

Trying to incorporate a potentially overwhelming number of criteria, or stipulations, into a single policy will only take longer to develop, implement, and gain the acceptance of key implementers such as teachers. Schools that try to adopt too much at the same time may find that none are fully implemented properly (Zhao & Frank, 2003), thus schools should limit the number of stipulations they try to implement and, instead, devote ample resources to those they choose. I would extend this logic to propose that schools limit the number of stipulations within a policy so that they can devote more to what they wish to implement while leaving room for adaptation in a realm where things are constantly changing. For example, instead of listing which social media outlets are permissible, simply define what a social media outlet is considered to be. This leaves room for the policy to adapt to emerging forms of social media.

Innovations, whether they are technological (computers), innovative uses of technology (social media), or innovative policies, cannot be implemented oblivious of the stakeholders, curricula, and pedagogies they will directly affect, nor the internal social structures and pressures within affected schools. By the same token, Zhao and Frank (2003) write that attempts at reforming whole systems are too ambitious due to their extreme difficulty, and thus “suggest an *evolutionary* rather than *revolutionary* approach to change in school computer use” (p. 833).

Literature Review Conclusions

Creating policies that regulate the use of social media as teaching and learning tools can be a complicated matter. Nevertheless, creating policies to

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delineate its use in classrooms should not be taken with the swiftness of a revolution, no matter how strongly one might support it, but rather with the patience of evolution. The salient points of this literature review describe a technological phenomenon that has permeated popular culture and the social lives of youth. From the dawn of the Internet to the evolution of social media, academic institutions have been at the forefront of implementing such tools as new forms of education. Primary and secondary schools “have been slow to adopt this new technology for educational purposes” (World Class Teachers, 2013, para. 2); however, social media’s growing ubiquity among North American youth means schools can ill afford to not consider policies that bring it into classrooms. Reasons for the delay in social media policy evolution can be found in the arguments in favour of using social media as a teaching and learning tool in younger classrooms, as well as the of arguments against it.

Foremost, those in favour of bringing social media technologies into the classroom state that today’s student needs digital and technology-based skills to respond to shifts in the global economy and society (Anderson & van Weert, 2002; McMillan Culp et al., 2005). According to Chao (2001), the economy of the United States is making an “unprecedented transition” into information-based sectors (p. 7). Burkhardt, Monsour, Valdez, Gunn, Dawson, Lemke, Coughlin, Thadani, and Martin (2003) cite Chao’s claim that by not providing opportunities to teach and learn 21st century skills with new forms of digital technologies, “we will create ‘a disconnect’ (Chao, p. 7) between the innovative jobs being created and the skills of the workforce” (Burkhardt et al., p. 9). Deciding who will develop the policies to

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oversee the prevention of this disconnect is a complex matter between levels of government and school boards.

Obstacles slowing this revolution include the educators and administrators who would implement these policies and eventually use tools such as social media in primary and secondary school students. They, unfortunately, are often the ones who know the least about social media, and are the last to participate in the policymaking process. That can be attributed to a lack of teacher education, one of the major hurdles facing social media use in primary and secondary school classrooms.

As outlined in the section above, 'Arguments Against', the lack of social media use in classrooms as a teaching and learning tool reveals that many North American primary and secondary teachers do not know how social media is used by their students, how it can be used in a classroom setting, or how to teach their students how to use it in a responsible and safe way. In addition, exposing youth to the dangerous potentials of social media, such as cyberbullying and inappropriate relationships with adults, does not sit well with parents or educators, despite the fact that most youth are well integrated into online interaction with peers. Effective, practical integration of social media in classrooms requires time, patience, and skill, not a sudden and painful shift of the floor beneath them for the sake of catching up with a technological trend.

In my opinion, that last point is the most important reason why pre-service teacher education should be the first step in delineating social media's use in primary and secondary schools. The responsible use of any new technology as a learning tool is the duty of schools and its teachers. Whether we like it, or not,

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social media is how most youth communicate, learn from, and even bully one another.

Beginning with pre-service teachers, social media should become a part of teacher training, so that they may be better equipped to use it in their classrooms effectively. By starting with pre-service teacher education, teacher-educators help future educators prepare to use, and participate in the process of creating policies for, social media. Only by preparing the next generation of educators can teacher-educators prepare them and their students for the next step in the evolution of communication technology and how it can be employed as a teaching and learning tool. With the benefits and perceived need to teach youth of the responsible use of social media and similar technologies described in this review, I arrive at the next salient point I wish to take this literature review and the core of this thesis: Policies need to be created to delineate social media's use as a teaching and learning tool in the classroom.

My argument for approaching the development of policies to oversee social media's use in classrooms as an evolution and not a revolution stems from the very complexity of the matter. Given the speed with which technology is constantly evolving, and the need for policies to adapt to change, I support Franklin and van Harmelen's (2007) recommendation that schools resist creating policies that constrain experimentation of social media and pedagogy. Instead, create policies that allow for adaptation to evolving technologies like social media, and their role in pedagogical change, so that said policies can more easily evolve with technologies.

Other points have surfaced in the literature that I have chosen to keep outside the scope of my research. For example, while this literature review has

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explained how the creation of education policies must include the participation of those who would one day implement them (e.g., primary and secondary school teachers and administrators), the implementation of those policies is a subject to be considered and researched further, especially given that policies evolve as they are created and implemented (Majone & Wildavsky, 1978). As schools seek responsible ways to employ social media in primary and secondary classrooms, this thesis will analyze existing social media policies in an effort to help them do so responsibly.

What's Next?

Taylor (2004) writes that it is what we do with our research that can make a difference. She contends that educational scholars can also be policy activists, themselves, or they could partner with policy activists as 'critical friends'—using activists to help design and carry out research in order to associate it with a cause. Alternatively, we may (and do) “work as researchers with 'insiders' in the bureaucracy, or with teachers in schools, or with unionists and community activists in the public sphere” (p. 447).

During my literature research and review, I have discovered no established, or official, policy standard or guidelines which an academic institution has employed to help draft their own ICT, or social media policy. My intention, at this juncture, is to continue my search for such a set of standards, while simultaneously attempting to develop such a set of criteria that a school might use to help create their own policy based on their values. In the next chapter, then, I introduce the terms 'discourse' and 'analysis' before explaining a selection of types of discourse

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analyses and critical discourse analysis (CDA) — the form of analysis I have conducted on four social media policies.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

As methodology is the rationale, or philosophical assumption(s), underlying the system of methods one decides to apply to a research problem, it is necessary to explain the approach I employed for this thesis research.

Discourse & Analysis

What is 'discourse'? This is not such an easy question to answer, and, ironically, is the topic of much debate and discourse, in and of itself. So let's start simple enough. The term 'discourse' comes from the Latin *discursus*, which denotes conversation, or speech. According to most dictionaries, 'discourse' is defined as a discussion of a topic in speech, or writing. These meanings of the word are micro-conceptualizations of the term. Discourse, in fact, can take many forms, or concepts, such as an "intellectual framework; a stretch of language; or a conversation or debate" (Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996, p. 3). Cook (1990) writes that discourse can equally be novels, short conversations, or even groans.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) describe seven criteria that must be satisfied before a written or a spoken text can be considered a discourse. These include:

- "*cohesion* — grammatical relationship between parts of a sentence essential for interpretation;
- *coherence* — the order of statements relates to one another;
- *intentionality* — the message has to be conveyed deliberately;
- *acceptability* — the product being communicated needs to be accepted by an audience;
- *informativeness* — new information has to be included in the discourse;

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- *situationality* — circumstances in which the remark is made;
- *intertextuality* — the discourse must refer to the world outside the text”
(p. 32).

Over time, not all of the above-mentioned criteria continue to be regarded as equally important in discourse studies. For instance, Renkema (2004) writes that depending on the research being conducted, only some of the above criteria are valid. One can look at ‘discourse’ in the *micro* sense — spoken, written, visual (memes) — or raise the microscope to a broader, more *macro*-conceptualization of the term — ‘discourse’ as a social practice (e.g. discourses of peace, food, medical, or policy discourse).

Fairclough (1989) uses the word ‘discourse’ to mean “the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes, in addition to the text, the process of production of which a text is a product, and the process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource” (p. 24). The way in which a text, such as a policy, is developed and eventually interpreted is socially determined (Pini & Gorostiaga, 2008). For Pini and Gorostiaga, the analysis of policy is just one piece of a critical discourse analysis puzzle, since it would also include the social conditions of how the policy was developed and eventually interpreted. This speaks to Foucault’s (1990) position that creating and interpreting policy is, itself, steeped in matters of power. Furthermore, as society and power are in a constant state of flux, policies, or ‘regimes of truth’ as Foucault described them (according to Walton, 2010, p. 136), are never static.

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Gasper and Aphorpe allege that discourse analysis of texts, such as policies, can work to break them down. It can also look for ways to move forward, to act, or produce. Taylor (2004) adds that there are, in fact, many types of discourse analyses that work to provoke action or change something; and these diverse versions of analysis use a variety of social theories (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000). Expounding on the way in which discourse analysis is theorized, Fairclough (2003) identifies approaches as those that either focus on the features at play within the language of discourse (textual, or otherwise), including those forms of analysis that look at the historical and social contexts of texts.

When we look at, or discuss, the study of how language is perceived and used, or “language-in-use”, we are talking about discourse analysis (Gee, 2011, p.8). As we can see, it would seem there are as many approaches to discourse analysis as there are types of discourse. I will explain two of the more common approaches in the following order: ‘descriptive discourse analysis’ and ‘critical discourse analysis’ — as I feel the former makes it easier to understand the latter. Both as descriptive and critical, conceptualizing discourse analysis is important to understanding how I have examined social media policies created and implemented by primary and secondary North American schools.

Descriptive Discourse Analysis

Gee offers an analogy to help explain that the goal of ‘descriptive discourse analysis’ is to “describe how language works in order to understand it” (2008, p. 9). He proposes that it is akin to a physicist trying to “describe how the physical world works in order to understand it” (p. 9). In doing so, the analyst and physicist attempt to shed light on why their respective realms of study work the way they

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do. Discourse analysis has been perceived as “argumentation analysis when, through precise examination of a text and its subtexts, it pulls out discursive movements of logic, style and even community” (Gasper & Apthorpe, p. 2).

The discourse analyst tries to reveal and describe patterns in the data they’ve collected (Brown & Yule, 1983). Doing so allows them to ascertain the linguistic forms employed (as expressed by an ‘everyday person’ versus a ‘specialist’) and perhaps the environment in which they occurred. In composing this thesis, a descriptive discourse analyst might employ grammar and syntax rules to examine each and every sentence contained herein. Should I have plagiarised any material, this kind of analyst would most likely be able to identify the difference in writing style, or expression, between sentences, paragraphs, and sections. Brown and Yule suggest that only by separating the product (the sentence) from the process (the behaviour of the speaker/writer) may one look at words grouped together and understand what the American linguist, Noam Chomsky (1968), meant when he said,

If we hope to understand human language and the psychological capacities on which it rests, we must first ask what it is, not how or for what purposes it is used. (p. 62)

My research thus involves looking at the product (social media policies) and not the process of creating them. So, before we can understand the language or psychological/social/political capacities upon which my selected social media policies rest, I will first examine what they are and what is contained (and not contained) therein. Before I move to critical discourse analysis, it is worth recalling discourse as social practice considering that my thesis is about social media. Wodak

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and Meyer (2001) explain two relations between discourses (micro) and social practices (macro). One is in the Foucauldian sense, where discourse is a way to represent social practices through the things people say (discourse) about social practices. People (either as individuals, or as representatives of an organization or institution) directly or inadvertently characterize and define the things they communicate into categories — whether it's politics or popcorn — and thereby define and lend influence, or power, to that conversation. Another is discourse as a social practice — as something people do to, for, or with others. Taylor (2004) argues that the “combination of linguistic and social analysis is what makes critical discourse analysis a potent policy analysis tool” (p. 436).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Van Leeuwen (1993) proposes that critical discourse analysis should be concerned with two relations: the Foucauldian sense (discourse as an agent of control and power), as well as the instrument of a society's concept of reality. Saarinen (2008) concurs when she asserts that ‘text’ and ‘discourse’ “not be recognized as dualistic terms, such as either describing or constructing the world” (p. 722). Instead, the two terms should be understood as holistic — that while texts can be physical things (words on paper, or bits and bytes in a computer), they can also illustrate a state of affairs, and thus also construct and/or facilitate realities or types of social practice.

While descriptive discourse analysts do not seek to gain an in depth understanding of how or why a language structure works the way it does, CDA does. Beyond simply unearthing the components of human language, as Chomsky (1968) stated, ‘critical analysts’ have other goals, including describing how human

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language works, looking for deeper meaning behind what's being said or written, and why. In this way, discourse functions as power by constructing social problems in certain ways (Scheurich, 1994). By uncovering such deeper meaning and purpose, critical analysts are able to supersede simple comprehension of a text, such as a policy, and move into the sphere of interceding, or at least revealing how one can get involved in social or political issues (Gee, 2008). My analysis of social media policies attempts to do what Gee and Foucault agree should be done — examine these policies in relation to other policies — as well as for what they do not address. In this specific case, this means examination of contemporary social media use and issues in schools. An example of what is often not delineated in such policies, and policies in general, is the lack of defined consequences should the policy not be adhered to.

According to Fairclough (1992), Muntigl (2000), and Meyer (2001), CDA possesses other theoretical and methodological significance (e.g., CDA as it relates to texts constituting one important form of social action). Looked at from a methodological point of view, policies are, themselves, clues about social processes, structures, and relationships. CDA explores how texts, in effect, build how practices (social structures, social relationships and individual identities) are formed while showcasing how they, together with the texts, are shaped by power (Fairclough, 2003). Policymaking is not only a power struggle; it is also viewed as a struggle for meaning (Yeatman, 1990), while policies are seen as the result of conflict and “debate between contenders of competing objectives, where language — or more specifically discourse — is used tactically” (Fulcher, 1989, p. 7). This approach has been valuable in revealing the politics of discourse in policy arenas and in exploring

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the relationship between policy texts and their historical, political, social, and cultural contexts.

Also relevant to the idea of CDA as a situated political practice, Luke (2002) makes a case for CDA moving 'beyond a focus on ideology' critique and documenting other forms of text and discourse 'that may mark the productive uses of power in the face of economic and cultural globalization' (p. 98). Policies as texts exert various levels of social control as they are created and, ultimately, implemented (Saarinen, 2008).

Influencing the Researcher and CDA's Trustworthiness

Schools should be integrating the positive attributes of social media into their classrooms (immersive distance learning, international virtual classrooms, and global perspectives). From my experience as a former teacher in primary and secondary schools, I have learned from colleagues, albeit anecdotally, that many educators do not integrate social media as a teaching or learning tool in their classrooms because they either cannot (due to a lack of policy or permission to do so), or will not (due to a lack of knowledge and experience with social media). I believe they should try, and the purpose of my thesis is to support the effective introduction of social media into primary and secondary classrooms while demonstrating how the process and policies required to make it happen need not be cumbersome, nor intimidating.

Glynos, Howarth, Norval, and Speed (2009) explain how a researcher's beliefs will have a two-prong effect on their work: their beliefs will "shape their choices of research objects and constrain the different ways in which they conduct their studies" (p. 34). Glynos et al. find that it is often the blend of a researcher's

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assumptions and subsequent discoveries that opens doors to deeper understandings and explanations. In addition, Sbisá (1999) suggests that when presumptions (my beliefs) come together with research, it introduces new information, such as personal values and social ideals, to the research. While these new variables can be useful from the agent's (my) point of view, they can serve to be persuasive. Malterud (2001) refers to this researcher challenge as *reflexivity* — how a “researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (pp. 483-484).

Yanow (2000) agrees, stating that a researcher's growing familiarity with the topic being studied can often induce a growing ‘alienation’ from their initial beliefs and expectations (p. 8). However, instead of this being a cause for concern, such estrangements can be the source of new insights and levels of comprehension. When it comes to researching discourse or policies, the element of persuasion becomes either ‘persuades that’ (persuades about a view of the world) or ‘persuades to’ (calls for people to act) (Muntigl, 2002). So, just as a policymaker or stakeholder may provide different interpretations of the specifics of the policies they develop and implement in order to support and defend their own view of reality (Bacchi, 2000), my intention is to facilitate the creation of effective social media policies for their classrooms. According to Gee (2008), “people who take a descriptive approach often think that a critical approach is “unscientific” because the applied discourse analyst is swayed by his or her interest or passion for intervening in some problem in the world” (p. 9). So, how can a critical discourse

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analysis be deemed trustworthy if a discourse analyst's personal interests or passions can sway research findings? Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Isaac and Michael (1997) argue that the trustworthiness of any qualitative research is important to judging its worth. They posit that trustworthiness needs to satisfy four naturalistic criteria: *Credibility* (confidence of truth), *Transferability* (findings are applicable in other contexts), *Dependability* (consistency of results), and *Confirmability* (findings stem from the data and not the analyst's bias). I examine how this thesis satisfies these criteria.

Lincoln and Guba state that the *credibility* of a researcher's topic of study can be validated by spending enough time immersed in the field they are researching in order to adequately comprehend what it is they are studying. In my case case, social media in educational settings is the field, and policy development on social media usage in classrooms is the issue. Isaac and Michael add that the integrity of observation involves not only prolonged engagement with the subject matter, but aims to sort extraneous research material (in this case, policies) from more atypical forms of similar data. I submit that my experience over two decades as a reflective professional in the mass media and public relations sectors, in addition to studying education policy, teaching in primary and secondary school settings in two provinces, and my academic work with university-level policy educators, all combine to lend a sufficient level of credibility to my exploration of the topic.

On the subject of *transferability*, the challenge of developing a policy delineating the use of something as precocious as social media in a classroom is similar to the challenges countries in East Asia face as they approach creativity as a major theme of educational reform for the next century (Chu-ying & Hui, 2010).

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The situation is analogous to the challenge being addressed in this thesis, in that those countries and education leaders face the problem of trying to involve teachers in the policy making process — a process that seeks to define creativity, itself, and develop a means to evaluate it in the classroom. That global effort is motivated by the belief that creativity and innovation will become the new 'knowledge economy' and that a lack of it "will be an insufficient supply of highly creative knowledge labour" (Chu-ying & Hui, p. 51). In this thesis, I explain the need for North American youth to be as digitally aware as possible if they are to be adequately prepared to use the next generation of communications tools appropriately and effectively. With social media's ability to connect North American students and schools with their peers around the world, policy makers should hasten the creation of guidelines to help teach students how to use communications tools that foster collaboration and creativity, lest educators fall behind the 'knowledge economy' race.

The issue of the *dependability* of my research is Lincoln and Guba's, and Isaac and Michael's, third criteria. This facet of trustworthiness lies in the hands of both myself and the reviewers of this thesis. Lincoln and Guba propose two methods to establish the dependability of research. The first involves the researcher coming at the problem from different directions in order to observe any consistency among the findings from the different approaches. The other is an abbreviated form of audit whereby external reviewers help authenticate the validity of a body of research, any interpretations of the data (policies), and its conclusions. While it would be interesting to perform this analysis from several angles, I trust that the authors' second method of measuring the dependability of a this thesis can be

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satisfied by means of the four reviewers charged with evaluating it — a supervisor (policy expert), thesis committee member (research expert), and two other professors' (one from within Lakehead University and another from York University) — will be sufficient to meet this requirement.

As for *confirmability*, Lincoln and Guba are largely concerned with documentation, meaning how the data I have included in my research is documented, how it may be applied to other situations, and making certain (as much as possible) that I have not influenced my conclusions. Isaac and Michael suggest that confirmability is the most demanding criteria of the trustworthiness. They assert that only a thorough inquiry by external auditors into the entire process of researching and writing this thesis can determine whether its findings are trustworthy, or not. To that, I put forth that my thesis supervisor and committee members have been in frequent contact with me during the time it took me to complete this thesis. They participated actively, and critically, in every aspect of my research and writing as it happened.

Having looked at descriptive discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, it becomes clearer how analyzing certain texts, or discourses, can help me to understand why some texts, namely policies, are created in the first place and how they help shape the way people see, and act within, the world. If I accept that policies as texts do influence how people see the world, then policy texts also contribute to the innumerable actions that affect society (Saarinen, 2008).

Critical Policy Discourse Analysis

Critical policy discourse analysis is a method by which to investigate the ways that policy influences actions in the world. How? Policy texts, or policies, are a

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part of the process that shapes people's actions. Discourse analysis, as we now know, can assist in the tracking of changes in policies. It can also uncover issues and explain them, and identify and explain developments that led to the policy's implementation, as well as the ideologies and perspectives within them. Saarinen's (2008) interpretation of Ball (1993) and Bacchi (2000) states that "discourse analysis helps in constructing and making visible policy processes, their development and the values and power relations behind them" (p. 725).

In my analysis of various social media policies, I focused on a more macro-level textual analysis. While one might opine that analyzing policy texts at a detailed, linguistic level are not necessary, Scollon (1998) supports this approach, saying it is easy to be "pulled down into the vortex of linguistic analysis" (p. 269). He suggests that a detail-rich analysis is not always necessary, nor even feasible, and that attempting it may cause the researcher to lose sight of the macro-level aspect of the text, such as the social processes involved in, and affected by, the policy. A fascinating level of analysis that will not be attempted in my research is contrasting policy discourse with examinations of scenarios wherein policymakers, administrators, and academics engaged with these policies. It is not the process of creating the social media policies I have collected that is being analyzed in this thesis, so much as assessing how they have addressed social media, as well as identifying discursive themes. Ball (1993) echoes my chosen scope of analysis, saying that language plays an integral part in constructing the world, and access to the process of text production and reconstruction is limited. Gasper and Apthorpe (1996) suggest that a "danger in such usages is loss of distinction between discourses and practices" (p. 4). It is just as well, I suppose, considering the same

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pair of scholars write that “typical policy planning processes are wicked” (p. 6). I invite future researchers to examine this aspect of the issue.

Prologue to Analysis

Before analyzing the policies I have collected, I would like to heed a warning from Burr (1995). She states that when policies are used as data, as is the case in my proposed thesis research, two mistakes are often made. First, Burr warns that policies should not be taken as given — as things that ‘really’ exist ‘in the world.’ This is entirely Foucauldian. The philosopher Michel Foucault explains that policies as discourses do not identify themselves with objects (such as, in the case of this thesis research, social media, or a social media policy), but instead try to embody them, and in doing so actually conceals the object’s real identity. As thoughts are constructed to form policies, words are combined to include certain thoughts (within policies) while others are omitted (Foucault, 1977), potentially resulting in the creation of a policy that misses the true attributes of the issue the policy is developed to regulate. Burr’s second warning pertains to policies when they are dismissed as ‘mere rhetoric’ and have little to do with actual policy practices. Saarinen (2008) offers a social constructivist perspective, proposing that researchers could see the role of policies differently, “that the language used within a policy does not necessarily describe social processes and structures” (p. 719), nor the actions of real people, but, instead, shapes the problem in particular ways and supports process, structures, and actions. In 1979, Berger and Luckmann wrote that discourse analysis of policies does not explore the implementation of policies. However, it does explain which policy problems and goals are brought to the fore, and which are left aside. According to Saarinen (2008), the authors propose that

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“what is ‘real’ is dependent on what is construed as ‘real’ in our society” (p. 719), and so we must take into account the ideas, values, and expectations of the people within an organization as that will dictate their perception of the organization and how they will implement any changes in tasks or policy.

The Policies

The crux of my thesis research is the analysis of distinct social media policies — all from primary or secondary institutions. Collecting and selecting them involved scouring academic institutions’ and organizations’ websites, academic journals, as well as directly contacting school and district representatives. Given the aforementioned freedom that schools and districts have in developing their own social media policies, it was important to establish certain criteria before selecting policies to include in my analysis. Those criteria are as follows:

1. The policy pertains to social media (in one form or another, perhaps not labeled as “social media”);
2. The policy delineates the use of social media in a primary or secondary school, district, or board;
3. The policy was created by/for an academic body (school, district, board, teachers group).

My search began in the summer of 2011 with the assumption that the ubiquitous use of social media by youth would have produced countless policies. This could not have been further from the truth. When I began my search in 2012, I started with Canadian schools, boards, and provincial bodies with the intention of focussing my research on Canadian schools’ policies. My initial research consisted of

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online policy searches using variations and combinations of terms such as 'social media', 'policy', 'guideline', 'rules', 'protocol', 'procedure', 'school', 'board', 'Canada', and a province or territory name. When my online search failed to turn up Canadian policies that satisfied my search criteria, I proceeded to contact random, individual primary and secondary schools and boards around the country by phone. This, too, yielded little more than acceptable use policies that oversaw computer hardware use in schools (i.e., computers and printer use by students, faculty, and staff), but nothing about social media.

While the lack of primary and secondary schools' social media policies in Canada was disappointing, it fuelled my goal to help Canadian schools and boards create such policies through my research and thesis. Without appropriate Canadian policies for my original research purposes, I expanded my policy search to include the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australasia. I would like it noted that since my original policy search in 2012, I did learn of several Canadian academic institutions and organizations that had produced social media policies. These Canadian policies, which I elaborate on during the Discussion chapter of this thesis, come from various levels of academic administration, including a provincial teachers association, a school board, and a national group of schools. As I will explain, these home-grown policies are likely indicative of the recognized need to develop guidelines in the face of potential use of social media in classrooms, and the ethical and pedagogical issues that must be considered.

During my expanded, international search for social media policies, I began with online searches of primary and secondary schools before contacting academic professionals and administrators via, appropriately enough, the professional social

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networking outlet LinkedIn. Much to my dismay, while these people were aware of, or had access to, a draft or final version of a social media policy, they would not release it to me. As the academic administrators and politicians in Missouri revealed, the means to create these policies requires a tremendous amount of time, people, and resources. Overseas school administrators, while sympathetic to my motives and research, were quick to explain that after investing as much time and money as they had into developing their own policies, they were reluctant to give up their intellectual property. Ironically, the ethos of sharing and openness that social media purports seemed absent to those charged with creating policies to delineate its use in classrooms. At this stage of my research — with no Canadian policies, only a handful of policies from around the world, and three-dozen American policies — I agreed with my supervisor's suggestion to focus my attention on the three-dozen American-based policies that satisfied my search criteria. Time was of the essence, and I had spent several weeks searching for policies to analyze. With the intent of retaining a qualitative, not quantitative, approach to my thesis, I distilled the American policies based on the type of academic institution or organization the social media policy oversaw.

As I organized the 36 policies I had collected, I sorted them into distinct academic social media policy subsets, including policies that were unique from the rest, those that were very similar to others, and policies that were the product of a different level or form of academic group. There were also a larger number of policies from the United States. Given the lack of policies collected from outside the United States, I elected to focus this thesis on American social media policies. These policies were then further distilled into four types of American social media

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policies for primary and secondary schools, and districts. Each exemplar policy represents a distinct form of primary or secondary school and were representative of similar policies in their respective subset:

1. a religion-based primary school's policy
2. a secondary school's policy
3. a school district's (comprised of 30 primary and secondary schools) policy
4. a state-wide teachers association's policy

While two of the four policies do not identify themselves as social media policies, per se, each of them oversees electronic communication, social media tools, and/or practices. This allows for an interesting juxtaposition: comparing and contrasting policies' differing guidelines and statements, as Pini and Gorostiaga (2008) did when they examined "similarities and differences among political statements from a variety of governments and agencies in order to characterize general elements and particularities of teacher education policies" (p. 430).

POLICY #1 – St. Thomas Episcopal School Social Media Policy (See Appendix 1)

This religion-based, Florida primary school policy focuses on the acceptable use of social media by its employees and young students. Recognizing the importance of the fast-moving world of the Internet and social media, this policy seems to invite its staff and educators to take the social media plunge, albeit responsibly. The policy guidelines are general and subject to the school's existing acceptable use policy, its mission, and a philosophy to protect the students. These umbrella policies come in the form of an employee manual, as well as parent and student handbooks. The policy outlines issues such as professional conduct, good

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judgement, and how to treat people (on the Internet and in the real world) as real people. What makes this policy distinct from the other policies I collected are specific sections dedicated to faculty and staff, students, and parents.

POLICY #2 — Arapahoe High School's Blogging Policy (See Appendix 2)

Arapahoe High School (AHS) is a public school just south of Denver, Colorado. While not described as a social media policy, *per se*, AHS's Blogging Policy is a 'set of general guidelines' for the use of weblogs, or 'blogs' (a form of social media), for the purpose of assigned schoolwork. It also provides examples of best practices from successful bloggers and samples of what the school believes to be appropriate blogging. During my search for schools' social media policies, AHS's policy was a rarity. Not only does the policy refer to blogs as an 'extension of the classroom,' but comparable texts identified themselves as electronic media or electronic communication policies, and only offered guidelines for employee actions, including the downloading of material from the Internet and online behaviour outside the work or school environment (i.e., on one's personal time). It was refreshing to finally find a policy that almost exclusively addresses the needs of students, and furthermore, students in a classroom setting.

POLICY #3 — Dayton Public Schools' Acceptable Use and Internet Safety for Informational and Educational Technology Policy (See Appendix 3)

Encompassing the Dayton, Ohio area, Dayton Public Schools (DPS) is an urban district of 30 schools and two specialty centers, including their International Baccalaureate career technology center, and a school for the visual and performing arts (www.dps.k12.oh.us/about-us). Within DPS's *Acceptable Use and Internet Safety for Informational and Educational Technology* policy is a section covering ICT and social media use. This particular policy barely qualified for my research because

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of its minimal attention to social media use by its schools as a teaching and learning tool. However, the majority of the policy explains how social media will be used to promote the district's schools, encourage two-way conversation between the district and its various stakeholders, and share news about the district. Its inclusion of "non-educational purposes" among its list of unacceptable uses of district computers and networks wins it a place in this study, and offers a contrast to the other three collected during my research.

POLICY #4 — Missouri State Teachers Association's (MSTA) Employee-Student Relations and Communications Policy (See Appendix 4)

Created in 2011, this policy stems from the issue and legal case recounted in the first part of this paper. The policy goes beyond simple guidelines to address several layers of employee and student use of "electronic communication." As the title of the document suggests, this policy is not just about how employees and students should conduct themselves online, but how they should behave when members of one group (employee, or student) communicates electronically with members of the other group. This policy offered me the opportunity to study a board-wide policy that also dealt with online relations between students and teachers on a greater scale than most other social media policies. An outcome of the legal proceedings between the MSTTA and the state of Missouri, this policy's code of conduct references individual schools' codes of conduct as well as local, state, and federal laws. Setting this policy apart from the similar policies is its acknowledgement of the importance of electronic information research skills and preparing students as citizens, future employees, and employers. Finally, the district states in this policy that it will not enact any rules pertaining to non-work

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related communications by its employees, nor how its employees may have online contact to current or former students outside of the work/school environment.

This chapter has been dedicated to introducing discourse and the various forms of qualitative analysis that may be used to reveal facets of discourse and policies. Next, I explained how critical discourse analysis helps researchers and scholars identify discursive themes within policies, which is at the heart of my research. Finally, I introduced the four policies, each representing a specific group of social media policies in the American primary and secondary school system: a religion-based primary school's policy, a secondary school's policy, a school district's policy, and a state-wide teachers association's policy. In the next chapter, I apply critical discourse analysis methods to the policies by means of four core questions to compare and contrast various discursive themes.

Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF POLICIES

Fairclough (1992) suggests that all social policies must delineate both how people are to act and by what rules they must abide. Teaching students about the responsible and productive use of social media in classrooms will be challenging, at best, for educators and administrators without policies to guide such pedagogical reform. Beyond classrooms, such policies will also need to delineate the use of social media by teachers, students, and perhaps other groups associated with the schools, such as parents of students. Drawing from descriptive and critical discourse analysis, my analysis identifies common and distinctive themes among the policies I selected. As Brown and Yule (1983) state, such a review allows the discourse analyst to “attempt to describe the linguistic forms which occur in his [or her] data, relative to the environments in which they occur” (p.23).

Critical discourse analysis provides not only a glimpse into the environment in which these policies were created, it also speaks to the needs that these policies attempt to satisfy and the means by which they try to delineate the use of social media in the classroom. That latter reason for the creation of a policy is the Foucauldian motive of policies: policy as a discourse of control and power (van Leeuwen, 1993), and as a reflection of society. It is also the purpose of this analysis to examine the discourse of power and control as it pertains to the use social media as a teaching and learning tool in primary and secondary classrooms. Saarinen (2008) echoed Foucault’s idea, asserting that policies are a means of seeing how a group, or society, describes its world, illustrates a state of affairs, or constructs or facilitates a reality or practice. In the case of analyzing these four social media policies, the reality being described is the need to acknowledge social

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media's pervasiveness in the lives of students, as well as the attempt to delineate the practice of using social media in the classroom as a teaching and learning tool. My analysis of these four social media policies has also endeavoured to do what Foucault (1990) and Gee (2008) agree should be done: examine them in relation to similar policies.

Four underlying questions guided my critical discourse analysis of the policies:

1. What is the overall purpose of the policy and whom does it address?
2. Does the policy define what a teacher or student may, or may not, do with social media in a classroom?
3. How does the policy deny, limit, facilitate, or encourage social media's use in classrooms?
4. What additional, prominent themes exist within the policy?

Regarding the fourth question, additional themes begged certain questions during the analysis. For example, are specific forms of social media emphasized or absent, or is it vague? Does the policy specify which types of social media are not permitted? What issues are not addressed in the policy? Does the policy include repercussions for those who abuse their access to social media as a teacher or student?

One could assume there to be similar discursive themes among social media policies within a single country outlining its use in classrooms. However, homogeneity does not collectively characterize them. As I mentioned earlier, American schools are permitted to create their own policies as long as they adhere

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to their school district's core principles or policies. Likewise, school districts are permitted to establish their own policies to address issues unique to them as long as they, in turn, adhere to the state's overall education policies and laws according to Part 1 (Work Related Conduct and Communications) of the MSTA's Employee-Student Relations and Communications Policy. The purpose of identifying and analyzing discursive themes within these selected policies is to unearth what aspects of social media these policies address, or not. The overall mandate of this analysis is to help schools, districts, and boards that wish to create their own effective social media policies for their classrooms.

My analysis begins by examining each policy on its own using the four CDA-based questions outlined earlier. These queries helped focus my goal to identify dominant discursive themes. The next phase of my analysis explores the dominant and subtle themes in each of the four policies, as well as what they may have in common and how they diverge from one another. While avoiding being "pulled down into the vortex of linguistic analysis" (Scollon, 1998, p. 269), my hope is that this research will usher in a greater sense of clarity by school administrators and policymakers as to what themes are, and are not, manifested within social media policies by peer institutions. Following the analysis of the four policies, I discuss the bigger picture of social media as it pertains to these kinds of policies, as well as best practices among the four policies, before concluding with recommendations to schools, districts, and boards on what should be considered when moving forward with creating their own social media policies.

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Analysis of Policy #1 – St. Thomas Episcopal School Social Media Policy

Purpose and audience

St. Thomas' social media policy (see Appendix 1) appears to understand how social media, and learning how to use it responsibly, is something that its teachers, students, and parents need to be aware of. After highlighting the "importance of engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in the fast-moving world of the Internet and 'social media,'" the policy is divided into sections that identify three different stakeholders in social media use in classrooms — instructors and staff, students, and parents. This is quite practical, as each group's use of social media differs. In addition, the policy states that its purpose is to encourage these groups to create an atmosphere of trust and accountability when using social media whilst remembering that activity online is reflective of the reputation of the entire school community.

The language used in St. Thomas' policy gives one the impression that three different audiences' concerns were considered, separately. First in the policy is a section addressing teachers and staff. The second is students, and parents, third. This is not surprising given that most policies are directed at employees before the stakeholders the policy serve. The order of audiences this policy addresses is also representative of the amount of text devoted to each group, with the most attention directed at teachers and the least to parents. In all cases, however, the groups are not simply inundated with statements of what one is not permitted to do. Instead, a balance of warnings is evident against certain actions and types of behaviour. For example, "Don't participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours," and "do not post confidential student information" are evened with

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stipulations asking for honesty, quality, and common sense, such as “online behaviour should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration,” and “be sure you make it clear that the information [posted in a blog] is representative of your views and opinions” (p. 3). While the equivalent of two pages are spent outlining staff guidelines, only one is allocated to students and just half a page for parents. In the case of students and their parents, their separated guidelines are broken down into ten and six bullet points, respectively. Overall, St. Thomas’ policy supports the argument of using social media while educating each audience about their particular needs.

Defining what teachers or students may, or may not, do with social media

Regarding an individual’s freedom of choice to use social media, St. Thomas’ policy distinguishes itself from similar policies by acknowledging the freedom employees, students, and parents of students have to engage in social media activities, or not. It does so by differentiating social media use, one being a reflection of engagement as a representative of the school, and the other being personal use. St. Thomas encourages the use of social media by its employees and students as long as users keep in mind that “all existing policies and behaviour guidelines extend to School-related activities in the online environment as well as on School premises” (p. 1). Reminding employees that their roles include the protection of the “children entrusted to us” (p. 1), the policy emphasizes that respecting issues like students’ privacy and copyright should be understood before engaging in social media use. As for the personal use of social media by teachers and staff, students, and parents, St. Thomas’ policy offers specific guidelines for each group. For example, while the section directed at faculty and staff points out

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that “the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world” (p. 3), students are reminded about being safe and their responsibility to “represent yourself online [as] an extension of yourself.” Parents, in the final section of the policy, are warned not to “destroy or harm any information online” and that they “will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws” (p. 6). This acknowledgement of the different users of social media is rare among the policies I collected during my research. Based on my review of the literature for this thesis and professional experience, one possible explanation for this rarity may be that most social media policymakers assume that social media is used in similar ways by all possible users, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents; ergo, most social media policies need not create guidelines that distinguish different groups of users. St. Thomas’ policy’s separated sets of guidelines may also suggest that each group of potential users of social media were somehow been involved in the process of the creation of this policy as each of their unique concerns have been addressed. Whether or not that is actually the case is not spelled out.

The consequences of not using social media in accordance with St. Thomas’ policy guidelines are as Franklin and van Harmelen (2007) recommended (i.e., simple); however, they are not defined in this policy as they pertain to faculty, staff, students, or parents. In the case of faculty and staff, the policy asks these groups to be cognisant that existing policies governing behaviour on school premises extend to online activities, as well. Students, on the other hand, are warned that not abiding by the terms of use of social media in the classroom may result in the loss of the privilege to use any “online tools” in the future. Finally,

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while “Parents are highly encouraged to read and/or participate in social media projects” (p. 6), as St. Thomas writes, this can “open up communication between students, parents, and teachers” (p. 5). The policy does not identify consequences should a parent disrupt or abuse their participation rights. Instead, the policy “requests that Parents act responsibly and respectfully at all times, understanding that their conduct not only reflects on the School community, but will be a model for [St. Thomas’] students as well” (p. 5).

Limiting or encouraging social media’s use in classrooms

The use of social media in the classroom is not dissuaded in St. Thomas’ policy; however, the process of using social media websites and platforms in the classroom requires that formal procedures be followed. First, the policy states that several online resources and websites are already available for use by teachers as part of their lessons (none are identified). Nevertheless, a portion of the faculty and staff section of the guidelines entitled ‘Requests for Social Media Sites’ (p. 4) invites requests from teachers to use social media sites for the purposes of teaching and learning that are not already accessible. I applaud this stipulation, as it does not limit the kinds of social media sites available to St. Thomas’ teachers for use as teaching and learning tools. Instead, it allows teachers to select those social media outlets that best suit their individual skillsets and intended lesson plans. For example, one teacher may wish to employ a Twitter-based curriculum to teach brevity and efficacy in expression, whereas another teacher may want to make YouTube a part of an arts class in order to provide an outlet for video creation. The point is that St. Thomas has facilitated more options for its teachers, and has not limited the use of social media in the classroom to a select few social media outlets.

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One argument for why a school may specify which social media outlets are available to teachers in their classrooms is that those outlets have been judged to be the most secure (not open to public; or highly encrypted, password-protected social media sites), or that they satisfy privacy concerns more effectively than others. One final point about teachers' use of social media in classrooms is that, in this policy, teachers have the choice whether to use it, or not. They are simply reminded that such tools "are an extension of your classroom" and "what is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online."

Additional themes within the policy

The policy does not age itself by referring to social media as simply online activities performed on the likes of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. In other words, the policy does not identify any particular social media applications that may be in existence, today, but gone tomorrow. When policies do so, they limit their ability to adapt to new and emerging forms of social media and potentially render themselves inadequate or obsolete when required to be applied to the next generation of social media trend, application, or platform. By referring to itself as a series of guidelines, St. Thomas' policy not only makes itself applicable to different forms of social media, it also acknowledges that not every situation and issue that may come from social media use in the school can be identified and addressed. Instead, the guidelines ask that those who, after reading them, are still unsure about using social media — whether as a teaching and learning tool in a classroom, or as a means of communicating with others online — to err on the side of caution and speak to the school's principal before implementing any form of social media in their classroom.

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Analysis of Policy #2 – Arapahoe High School’s Blogging Policy

Purpose and audience

Arapahoe High School’s (AHS) Blogging Policy (see Appendix 2) is unique among the policies I collected because it focuses on the social media form known as blogging, rather than social media in general and its numerous incarnations. Blogging is, in essence, the activity of writing and publishing one’s own content on the Internet using any number of social media platforms. If a school wished to focus on only one form of online user-generated content in a policy, blogging is a very representative choice of form of social media. Blogging, after all, encompasses the essence of social media — interactive, contribution-based, and participatory. Blogs can be expressions of an individual or groups, be small or large in length or size, and can take many forms (text, video, audio). Insofar as AHS’s policymakers decided to simplify the policy by focussing on blogging, the policy is also quick to point out how its “guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive and do not cover every contingency” (Arapahoe High School, Appendix 2, para. 1) involving social media use in schools.

The language of this policy focuses on the proper and improper uses of its technology resources as they pertain to posting blogs that are an “extension of the classroom” (para. 1). The AHS policy does not speak to teachers, employees, or parents as much as to students. This is evident in the lack of attention given to issues such as privacy, copyright, and the school’s responsibility to protect students. Whether that issue should be addressed is a matter for debate, considering the nature of social media. The AHS policy, however, does provide a plethora of ‘do not do this’ points throughout its ten guidelines, including “NEVER

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post personal information on the web (including, but not limited to, last names, personal details, address or phone numbers, or photographs)” (para. 8). The policy goes a step further by informing students that anywhere they click and surf on the Internet when using their student account is linked back to their account and personal profile information. On that note, AHS suggests that students not publish too much about themselves when creating their personal profile, either.

The guidelines are, in effect, very simple, and work to the school’s advantage in two ways. First, the policy’s main audience appears to be the high school students, themselves, rather than the employees or teachers. Using easy to read words and short sentences organized into ten points, AHS has written this policy so it could be quickly read and easily understood by young, adolescent students, in addition to those not familiar with the concept of blogging (which likely includes some parents and teachers). Having taken into consideration to whom the policy is directed, I applaud AHS policymakers for creating a document with its intended audience in mind and, in the true spirit of social media, sharing it by making the policy available online, even though this has become standard practice of many school boards across Canada and the U.S. None of the guidelines go into great detail about the issue being defined, which encourages students and other users of social media to ask questions of a parent or teacher as the policy states in its opening paragraph. Also of note is that the section of ten guidelines is entitled *Safe and Responsible Blogging* (para. 2), which is a positive approach that allows the reader to, theoretically, apply the rules of social media use inside the classroom to outside of it.

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Defining what teachers or students may, or may not, do with social media

Arapahoe's policy makes a distinction between the use of its computers for academic (or business) purposes and personal reasons. AHS's policy repeats a notion that school computers may be used for personal reasons as long as users follow the rules. As for using AHS's computers for learning in the classroom, the policy's introductory paragraph establishes that existing policies delineating the behaviour of students through are considered an "extension of the classroom and therefore are subject to these guidelines as well as the rules and regulations of Arapahoe High School and Littleton Public Schools" (para. 1). Finally, students are not permitted to use the school's computers without logging on with their student username and password.

Blogs and other forms of social media identified as extensions of the classroom environment is, in my view, a step forward in delineating the use of social media in schools. Should a student not wish to follow the policy's guidelines, the policy requires that online activity not be performed while logged in using the student's school username and password (so that any and all non-academic, online activities cannot be traced back to the school). This approach is not, nor can it be expected to be, a guarantee of security against an invasion of a student's privacy. However, it does suggest to students many ways by which they can mitigate the risks of privacy and online surfing.

Limiting or encouraging social media's use in classrooms

Arapahoe's policy superimposes all applicable rules of conduct in the classroom onto activities performed online by stating that the online actions of students are tantamount to those taken in a classroom. The policy's definition of

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conduct, however, is limited to specifying types of language that will not be tolerated, including, “but not limited to, profanity; sexist or racist or discriminatory remarks; personal attacks” (para. 3). In another guideline, AHS asks students to ‘try not to generalize,’ meaning beginning sentences with “All” (e.g., ‘All teachers,’ or ‘All conservatives’). In terms of the various social groups included among the types of language deemed inappropriate in blogs, I wonder whether other social groups may feel a lack of representation. While the policy states that it “is not limited to” the inappropriate types of language listed, it is possible that some students may believe that homophobic or ableism-related remarks are acceptable. While I appreciate the effort the policy makers went to explain what types of language are deemed inappropriate, delineating what other types of language are within the scope of “not limited to” leaves the window open for the school to hand down judgements or consequences for as yet undefined types of language. For example, how far does the term “sexist” go in terms of being inappropriate? Is challenging it considered a shared value among community members that should be represented in a policy?

Additional themes within the policy

Arapahoe’ policy touches on several potentially volatile situations when it comes to using social media in school. For instance, given the early stage of development of many secondary school social media policies, the policy’s copyright stipulation does not address potential copyright violations of other types of files, or blog posts comprised of text pulled directly from copyright-protected material. In other words, the copyright policy and social media policy are not aligned. Photos are dangerous for many reasons, the least of which is the legal consequences of

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theft of creative property. The theft of words and thoughts are equally as important when dealing with students who may not yet fully comprehend concepts such as plagiarism, as well. Given that few people, let alone 21st century high school students, are aware of copyright laws, it's understandable that the policy point is brief — dealing only with images that may be included in blog posts. However, I feel that it states, too simply, that images used for school documents should be 'appropriate' for said documents, leaving the term 'appropriate' to be determined by a generation of social media users who regularly post less-than-appropriate, or even libellous photos online, every day. On the other hand, credit should be given to the policymakers for insisting that students not post any images that might identify them or other people. As the AHS policy, itself, is an online document, it would be simple to add hyperlinks to clarify terms such as 'copyright laws' and 'appropriate' (whether the additional source of information is a government website, in the case of the former, or a student handbook, for the latter).

Analysis of Policy #3 — Dayton Public Schools' Acceptable Use and Internet Safety for Informational and Educational Technology Policy

Purpose and audience

From a policy that appears to address students, I move to a policy that is much more directed at adults, or, more specifically, employees and teachers within the Dayton Public School District (see Appendix 3). While there are fleeting references to students within the policy, it is primarily directed at adult users as a warning against unacceptable behaviour between employees of the District and its students (e.g., cannot post photos of students online, or anything that may identify a student). The policy is just five pages of an 873-page District Policy Manual. As a product of the District's Board, this may explain why the policy seems to have been

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created to help deter potential liability issues that come with using social media in their classrooms. The policy appears to serve as a form of protection for the Board, its schools, teachers, staff, parents, and students, against the potential issues that social media can produce in a school environment.

Defining what teachers or students may, or may not, do with social media

The first sentence of the policy is indeed curious:

The Dayton Public School District realizes that technology can greatly enhance the instructional program, as well as the efficiency of the District.

It is peculiar because the policy endorses and encourages social media's use in the classroom as a teaching and learning tool. And yet, beyond this encouraging sentence, the remainder of the policy appears to do nothing but discourage its use in classrooms. For example, a large portion of the policy is a list of thirteen unacceptable uses of school computer networks. While one of the unacceptable uses is "accessing personal social networking websites for non-educational purposes" (p. 2) the policy lacks any real delineation of how teachers might employ social media in their classroom instruction. It appears that the policy misses an opportunity to shape and guide innovative classroom instruction using social media. Instead, it is merely reactionary. For example, failure to adhere to these thirteen rules results in "revocation of the user's access privilege" (p. 2). This approach to outlining the use of social media in an educational setting is in stark contrast to the previous two policies I analyzed; Dayton's policy focuses on what one should not do with this technology, as opposed to encouraging teachers, employees, and students on how to use social media in a positive and responsible way. In this respect, I feel the policy limits, if not completely discourages, social media's use in the classroom.

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Akin to responsible alcohol use, such prohibitive policies promote, in effect, social media abstinence.

There are facets of the policy that leave room for the use of social media in a classroom as a teaching and learning tool, but only if one looks hard enough. For example, it says that, "Staff and students should use only approved social media sites" (p. 2). Those 'approved sites' are not named in the policy. However, they are defined as being authorized by the District in light of their educational content and having been "vetted through the district's Software/Hardware Review Process" (p. 2). Staff or teachers wishing to use websites that have not been approved "as part of the educational process should contact the Office of Information Technology for assistance" (p. 2).

There are two issues at play, here. First, the Software/Hardware Review Process is not explained anywhere else in the 873-page manual (after performing an exact word search for 'Software/Hardware Review Process', 'Software Review Process', and 'Hardware Review Process'). Second, the fact that the District has approved certain social media sites for use by staff and students does not imply that their use is for purposes of instruction. This ambiguity appears to permit the use of approved social media sites on District-owned computers for any reason (personal, or academic), and not necessarily in the classroom as a teaching and learning tool.

The Dayton school district's effort to define what is acceptable may have been urged by its potential users. Perhaps staff and teachers participated in the creation of this policy and their lack of comfort or understanding of social media permeated throughout the committee meetings wherein the delineation of the

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District's social media use in its schools was being crafted. The policy says, for instance, that, "All technologies are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner" (p. 2). The message of this line seems clear: safety first, or instead of erring on the side of caution, do not play with social media at all if you can help it.

Limiting or encouraging social media's use in classrooms

While not seeing guidelines on the responsible use of social media, nor best practices as they may be employed in a classroom setting, the issue becomes whether one approach is, indeed, better than the one taken by Dayton. The lengths the District goes to control the use of social media in this policy is exemplified in the declaration that "A student who wishes to have computer network and Internet access during the school year must read the acceptable use and Internet safety policy and submit a properly signed agreement form" (p. 4). One might believe that this is a form of limiting such activity. After reading this policy, I wonder how reassured a parent would feel and whether they would sign such an approval form for their child? Parents' familiarity with social media would definitely come into play in such a decision, and those that are uncomfortable with social media (regardless of how freely their child may use it) will dictate whether they will allow their child to use it in school — a school that seems to discourage its use, altogether. On the other hand, Dayton should be commended for even drafting a policy on the topic in the first place, rather than ignore social media, altogether, as it may pertain to its schools and classrooms. Dayton is, at least, ahead of most districts in this regard.

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Additional themes within the policy

I have noted that while the existing policy was filled more with “do not”, as opposed to “do”, the Board does decree that:

The Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall develop a plan to address the short- and long-term technology needs and provide for compatibility of resources among school sites, offices and other operations. As a basis for this plan, he/she shall examine and compare the costs and benefits of various resources and shall identify the blend of technologies and level of service necessary to support the instructional program. (p. 3)

This tells the reader that the Board is not completely against trying to implement a policy more in tune with guiding teachers on how to use social media in their classrooms. It also acknowledges that social media has potential as a teaching and learning tool in classrooms, and that the District is amenable to weighing potential advantages of employing such a tool against the risks outlined in their present iteration of its social media policy. One can only hope that Dayton’s superintendent succeeds.

Analysis of Policy #4 – Missouri State Teachers Association’s (MSTA) Employee-Student Relations and Communications Policy

Purpose and audience

Founded in 1856, the Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA) has grown to include over 44,000 teachers in the state of Missouri. One could suppose that the number of guidelines delineating the rules of communication between so many teachers and hundreds of thousands of students would be abundant. Instead, the MSTA’s Relations and Communications Policy (see Appendix 4), which establishes the rules on how school district employees (not limited to teachers) should conduct

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themselves when interacting with any students, is contained within a pair of pages. The brief policy is divided into two sections: Part 1, "Work-Related Conduct and Communications;" and Part 2, "Non-Work-Related Conduct and Communications." Virtually the entire policy is dedicated to Part 1, while just a paragraph is needed to outline Part 2. Part 1 is broken up into three sections: 1.A, Electronic Communications; 1.A.1, Student Training and Guidelines; and 1.A.2, Acceptable Use. One reason why this policy seems brief is that several key issues are not addressed as is done within other policies. In contrast, MSTA piggybacks facets of this policy on existing "local, state, and federal ordinances, statutes, and regulations," as well as "standards of their profession" and "the code of ethics in their professional associations" (MSTA, Appendix 4, para. 1).

Defining what teachers or students may, or may not, do with social media

Part 1.A speaks to how teachers may use electronic communication tools in the classroom, and acknowledges that, "Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to the preparation of students as citizens and future employees and employers" (para. 4). Having spent the first portion of the overall policy reminding its membership of the potential repercussions of non-compliance of existing rules and laws by which MSTA's members are already bound, Part 1.A offers a dose of freedom to teachers. The policy comes across as trusting its members with employing existing common sense and professionalism when deciding to employ technologies like social media in their classrooms when it states "The District expects that faculty will blend thoughtful use of the new technologies throughout the curriculum and will provide guidance and instruction to students in its use" (para. 4). Of course, this leaves open the issue of offering teacher training

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on technologies such as social media, and does not address the fact that knowledge of contemporary communications technologies is not universal among MSTA teachers. Regardless, the potential for misuse of social media and any other communication technology in the classroom is mitigated somewhat when the policy reminds its membership that any resource used in the classroom must be “structured in ways that direct students to those resources which have been evaluated prior to use, and are in conformance with the district’s own educational mission, goals, and objectives” (para. 4). Again, the use of blanket statements — which puts the onus of responsibility on teachers and their understanding and awareness of the rules and laws pertaining to their profession, school district, and the state of Missouri — removes the need to duplicate existing guidelines and laws in policies such as this one. It is reassuring, however, to know that the MSTA condones and supports the use of social media in classrooms, as long as teachers know how to use it appropriately.

In section 1.A.1, Student Training and Guidelines, the MSTA requires that any student who wishes to use school district-approved “electronic communications and new technologies must first have the permission of their parents or legal guardians and must be trained and supervised by the [SCHOOL DISTRICT]’s professional staff” (para. 6). Satisfying that, the policy reminds students that using the district’s computers for, say, social media is a privilege and not a right, and that students must exhibit “good behaviour” as they would in a “classroom or other areas of the school” (para. 6). As good behaviour is not defined, per se, I will assume it means behaviour conducive to their respective schools’ or districts’ student codes of conduct, or equivalent guidelines. The consequences for not

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obeying these rules are not outlined, nor is a reference provided to a code of conduct or some other such policy. However, this policy is aimed squarely at school district employees rather than students. One can assume that students are held accountable to existing regulations and law, just as the MSTA's members are, and as defined, perhaps, by a student code of conduct and applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Limiting or encouraging social media's use in classrooms

From the outset, Part 1 is clear that MSTA's policy is not limited to electronic communication or social media. In fact, the term 'social media' is not used in the policy. Instead, it refers to "electronic communication tools," which I read as indicating social media. Instead, the policy refers to "conduct and communications in all forms" when requiring members to "maintain proper boundaries with students, and be compliant with existing relevant local, state and federal ordinances and laws" (p. 1). In the same paragraph, the policy defines how such laws include, but are not limited to, how teachers and employees may be disciplined or have their employment terminated for cause. Issues regarding investigations into inappropriate behaviour and even civil litigation further assert how serious the consequences can be for the MSTA, school districts, individual schools, and teachers, should this policy and other laws outside school districts and the MSTA not be respected.

In the third and final section (1.A.2, Acceptable Use), several issues are addressed, including how communications technologies should be used, who is on the Electronic Communication and New Technology Resources Committee, and confidentiality when using district work-related equipment or activities. First, it is

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refreshing to see that lengths are not taken to identify which social media platforms (or other forms of electronic communication) are permitted and which are not.

Instead, the policy states that it applies to “approved electronic communications systems and new technologies as they develop and are approved” (p. 1). And while the policy does not list which systems and technologies have been approved for use in schools, it does point to the possibility that the MSTA is somehow keeping tabs on what new forms of electronic communication are emerging so it can study and approve them.

This brings us to the second aspect of this section of the policy: a committee overseeing which new and developing forms of electronic communication are permitted. As this paragraph explains details about the aforementioned Electronic Communication and New Technology Resources Committee membership, it is interesting that students are not counted among its sitting members. It is also worth noting the significance of not involving a Committee’s or Association’s primary stakeholders represented. The last paragraph of section 1.A.2 explains that privacy is in no way to be expected when using electronic communication on district-owned equipment. While this warning is important to point out to those not familiar with online communication and social media (as privacy is never a guarantee when it comes to online activities), the focus of this stipulation is to point out that district equipment or activities “may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure appropriate educational or administrative use” (para. 8). Finally, users of school district equipment for the purposes of electronic communication are asked to report any ‘inappropriate’ activities, but stops short of

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defining what 'inappropriate' means. Perhaps it, too, is defined in an MSTA, or individual school district, code of conduct.

Additional themes within the policy

Having addressed work-related communications, MSTA's moves on to Part 2, Non-Work-Related Conduct and Communications. Whereas most electronic or social media policies do not tackle what students or employees do outside the classroom with their own computer devices, this policy makes a point of stating why it will not try. It does so by echoing the 'follow-existing-policies-and-laws' philosophy used throughout the rest of the policy and reminds MSTA members that they are all subject to laws regarding "conduct and communications already regulated by local, state and federal law" (p. 9).

The [SCHOOL DISTRICT] shall not implement any policies regarding non-work-related employee communications conducted by its employees in general, or which allow exclusive access with current and former students. It shall not prohibit employees of the district from engaging in any non-work-related activities or using non-work-related electronic communications or new technology platforms (para. 9).

This approach is in stark contrast to many other primary and secondary schools' social media policies in that it distances itself from delineating teachers' behaviour and communication with students outside the classroom. It does so by invoking individuals' existing rights as defined by the Constitution of the United States, including any "rights to freedom of speech, association, and religion outweigh the interests of the school district in the non-work-related activities of its employees" (para. 9).

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The overall purpose of the MSTA's policy appears to remind its membership that proper forms of interactions and communication with students, in or outside of the classroom, is already defined by existing codes of conduct and various levels of laws. This policy is not directed at students, and nor is it expected to be. This is, after all, a policy created by and for the MSTA's members, who number over 44,000 in the state of Missouri, and not the students they are charged with teaching. By relying on existing policies and laws, the MSTA satisfies its established goal to provide access to "electronic resources and communications of all types" in order to "promote educational excellence" that prepares its students to become "technologically literate citizens."

Summary of Analyses

The foundation of my analysis of the policies consisted of four questions:

1. What is the overall purpose of the policy and whom does it address?
2. Does the policy define what a teacher or student may, or may not, do with social media in a classroom?
3. How does the policy deny, limit, facilitate, or encourage social media's use in classrooms?
4. What additional, prominent themes exist within the policy?

What I have discovered through these questions is that the discursive themes throughout present-day social media policies in schools in the United States are varied and inconsistent. At the moment, it appears that these kinds of policies are still in their infancy, as they each seem to present different ways to delineate social media's use in classrooms. It is probably not too much of a stretch to

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presume that similar themes and issues are currently under consideration and debate in primary and secondary schools in Canada and the rest of the world that have yet to create such policies. While some policies promote the use of social media in classrooms, outright, others seem to dance around the topic. Perhaps schools and policy makers are doing the best they can with what they have. I applaud their efforts. Policies can always be revisited and revised. It is that first policy step that appears to evade many schools, today. Whether due to a lack of knowledge on the matter, poor direction from those who commissioned the policy, or deliberately created so, it seems today's social media policies are rife with issues and themes that are in a state of flux. In the next chapter, I review and discuss notable similarities and distinctions among these policies.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

Why do we need policies to delineate the use of social media in primary and secondary school classrooms as a teaching and learning tool? When it comes to schools, students, teachers, and social media as a teaching and learning tool, one thing seems clear: nothing is simple. Across the United States, and I would add Canada, Sostek (2011) suggests that “governments and school districts are struggling to keep up with the furious growth of social media -- and its grip on how young people communicate” (para. 5). It should come as no surprise, then, that the policies I have analyzed are saturated with behavioural do’s and don’t’s when it comes to delineating the use of social media in classrooms. These policies are necessary as present day rules and laws governing the virtual and boundary-less realm of the Internet are akin to the Wild West. Protecting youth from the near-lawless domain of social media, where children are playing and being exposed to fires they don’t yet understand (e.g. cyberbullying and sexting), must be a part of contemporary digital literacy education. Preparing students on how social media can be used safely and productively, and introducing them to its potential as a teaching and learning tool, should be a responsibility of professional teachers, among others such as parents. But before educators can step into the Wild West that is social media, they need policies to guide and protect them.

As mentioned earlier, schools’ social media policies can vary widely due to their freedom to establish policies that fall in line with their own values, beliefs, codes of conduct, and intentions for its use in classrooms. The truth is that the unique qualities of a school — religious affiliation, public or private school, geographical location, and gender (co-ed vs. single-gender) — influence and define

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values, power, and thus policies. The acceptable use of technology in the classroom is different for nearly every school. What is permitted at one school can result in expulsion or termination of employment at another. It is never as simple as “be responsible” or “don’t friend your teacher on Facebook” (Buck, 2012, para. 3). Notwithstanding laws governing free speech and association that may protect the content one posts online, a school may find reasons to use that content for disciplinary actions. From young students to seasoned teachers, social media activities can have negative consequences, whether they are felt today, or in the years to come.

Understanding the main reasons why certain schools would want to create their own policies to oversee the use of social media as a learning and teaching tool for students and teachers, it is interesting that not all of them seem to address the same audiences. As school administrators use policy as a power tool over users of social media in classrooms, not every policy takes into account what the policy’s rules may mean to everyone who is involved with the use of social media in classrooms. St. Thomas’ policy, for example, is an example of a comprehensive policy, in that it not only recognizes that the significance and influence of social media goes beyond the lives of its students, it also offers guidelines for teachers, employees, students, and parents of students.

In terms of stakeholders addressed across the four policies I analyzed, St. Thomas and Dayton City School District are the only two that directly communicate with all three primary stakeholders. Of Arapahoe High School and the Missouri State Teachers Association, their policies are very stakeholder specific, communicating only with students and teachers, respectively. Nothing should be

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taken away from these latter policies for not addressing every stakeholder involved in the learning and teaching process. After all, APH may very well have a social media policy for its teachers and staff in a document I was not able to find (e.g., a teachers handbook), and the MSTA is an organization of teachers for teachers with its school districts having the right and responsibility to develop policies representative of their individual schools' values and codes, whether those codes are shared by the school community or imposed upon it. Leicester (1992) separates values into two categories: "'Shared values' are those with which all groups freely agree" and "'Imposed values'" which "implies that adherence to them is backed by sanctions" (p. 31). It is impossible to assume that everyone in any community would share the same idea of what is considered sexist or racist, or even that each of those forms of oppression exists, in the first place. However, it is conceivable that the community, whomever is included within, would deem a comment written by a student to be appropriate, while the school would see it is as inappropriate, or vice versa. Is there any reason why AHS, or any school, could not simply identify "sexist" language to be completely forbidden regardless of what members, or even groups of members, of the community think?

One issue could be that certain members of the community may feel that the school has deemed the values of certain people to be inappropriate. Whatever terms are included or not in a policy's list of inappropriate terms, it is safe to assume such lists will never satisfy all members of a community, nor its members' values. Some members, for instance, may react against policies that delineate against such as sexism, racism, and homophobia in knee-jerk reaction, claiming that it is just censorship in the form of political correctness. The freedom to create

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policies based on a school's values leads us to the next theme revealed in my analysis. A sensitive area for policy makers, imbuing a policy with values helps define the prescribed enforcement of the policy and which external laws may be used to support compliance.

When schools and districts are given the power to produce their own, unique policies — albeit abiding by existing federal, state/provincial, or district/board laws — what did the four policies I assessed say about what a teacher or student may do with social media in a classroom, and why? First, there was one particular similarity about the way in which three of these policies were drafted. St. Thomas, APH, and the MSTA policies piggybacked their respective guidelines on existing policies, rules, or laws. Dayton Public Schools, on the other hand, appears to have been created as a stand-alone policy. The policy does, however, state that the school district will cooperate fully with authorities if an investigation into inappropriate online behaviour involving one of its students, faculty, or staff. That should go without saying, in my opinion.

As for the other three policies, and their use of existing regulations as the backbone of their respective guidelines, this demonstrates a clear and familiar purpose behind them. By connecting them directly to a student code of conduct, a teacher's guidebook, or state law, these three policies, in effect, notifies everyone involved that social media is an issue that's been addressed before, and at many levels of power, and that any one of these policies is simply an extension on them. And when policies such as these state that their rules governing the use of social media in the classroom is simply an extension of existing, and perhaps "higher" rules or laws, then I would suggest those policies gain more influence, or weight,

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over their intended audiences. In these cases, the policies are not completely brand new, unfamiliar, or intimidating. They are, instead, more familiar to students, for example, because the rules of these policies echo a student code of conduct with which they are already very familiar.

The existence of familiar codes or policies begs a question: If a policy states that a blog, for example, is a direct extension of the classroom — therefore the behaviours exhibited and expressed by students within their blog are to be delineated by the same rules outlined in their student code of conduct — why the need for the policy in the first place? What makes social media so special that it requires its own policy? I have covered reasons why a blog, or participation in social media as part of a classroom activity, is needed. These include, as stated earlier in this thesis, Tapscott's (2009) finding that youth are increasingly accessing Web 2.0's interactive capacities; Moll and Krug's (2009) observation that ICT "has become, within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society" (p. 108); and that Anderson and van Weert (2002) find that many countries now include mastery of ICT concepts as part of the core of education, alongside reading, writing and numeracy" (p. 8). Of the four policies I analyzed, only MSTA's policy stands apart from the three other policies by explaining the purpose behind the social media policy for its schools. The second shortest of the four policies, MSTA still finds room to make the point that "Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to the preparation of students as citizens and future employees and employers" (Part 1.A). By itself, that sentence could be applied to any number of subjects, including math; however, it is followed by "Access to the new technologies enables students to experience educational

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opportunities which were unimaginable a short time ago and which are changing continually.” This pair of sentences distinguishes the MSTA policy from the other three as the policy’s readers and, more importantly, its stakeholders, are informed that under no uncertain terms, this policy is as necessary as developing a policy to effectively oversee the use of social media as a teaching and learning tool.

My third analysis question sought to understand whether a policy limits, or encourages, social media use in the classroom. The four policies I analyzed — each representing a distinct form of primary or secondary institution or group — each facilitate, and therefore to a certain extent encourage, the use of social media as a teaching and learning tool. While each policy goes about this in its own way, it is refreshing to see that such institutions are taking steps to educate students about technologies that play with online issues such as privacy, risks and dangers to users, and legal problems that can come from comments made about others (Mitrano, 2006). Now that it appears that more schools are gravitating towards introducing social media into classrooms, such policies also need to include guidelines for teachers and students on how this technology can be used to facilitate and even advance pedagogy. This is not the case with all four policies. St. Thomas’s policy spends a great deal of time explaining how social media should be used as a two-way communication tool between the entire school district and its various stakeholders. Except for the sentence stating “By accessing, creating or contributing to [social media outlets] for classroom or school use, you agree to abide by these guidelines” (p. 1), the policy is largely a series of guidelines for the what the school deems as appropriate use of social media by students, staff, and parents. The same can be said for Dayton’s policy. Of course, it is useful to have a

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policy that delineates non-educational use of social media for its stakeholders, as well. Teachers unfamiliar with social media may use these kinds of policies to understand to power of social media outside the classroom, and the necessary limitations of using such a tool in the classroom, before trying to incorporate it into a lesson plan. And while Arapahoe's policy only discusses how it contends that students should use blogs for the purpose of class assignments, its guidelines are easily transferrable to personal use and other forms of social media, such as micro-blogging, or contributing to online conversations by other means of communicate (video, audio). None of the other polices limit what forms of social media, or social media outlets, may or may not be used. Instead, they focus on users' behaviour, regardless of online form or function.

Establishing a sense of power over the online behaviour of a school's students, teachers and employees is key to controlling the use of any new pedagogical method or tool. Each of the policies I have examined has a different way of defining and influencing online behaviour. Arapahoe's definition of proper behaviour takes the form of showcasing what the school claims are examples of good blogging (i.e., social media) etiquette. This, in addition to reminding students that online behaviour is the same as behaviour in real life — "an extension of the classroom" — and thus subject to the same rules as defined by an exiting code of conduct. None of the other policies offer examples of good social media behaviour. What I find noteworthy is that while these policies acknowledge that social media can be used in the classroom, all but Arapahoe's policy state that social media should be used in the classroom (in the interest of preparing the next generation of digital learners).

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In a stark contradiction to that refreshing position on social media's use in classrooms, St. Thomas and MSTA's policies grant the teachers the freedom to choose whether they use it or not. In this, I am disappointed. While acknowledging that some teachers may have reasons not to engage in social media in or outside of the classroom, I am perplexed why a policy would in one breath state the importance of preparing students for the 21st century by means of introducing them to social media in the classroom, and in the next breath give the choice to teachers not to prepare students for the 21st century, effectively. Perhaps this reveals a political balancing act on the part of the policy makers. Yes, there are other ways to prepare students for the future; however, these policies are about the use of social media in the classroom. It is curious that these policies open the door for teachers to elect not to use social media in their lessons when so much effort went into creating a policy to delineate its use in classrooms.

There are plenty of possible reasons why educators remain reluctant. I speculate that it could be the idea that social media content is raw, unfiltered content. Indeed, it can be, if left unmonitored. However, parents and teachers play a role in separating the bad from the good, and imbuing children and students with the skills and judgement to make the right choices with emerging technologies. Their resistance may also be attributed to discomfort with unfamiliar technology. Platt (2011) interviewed three teachers who use web technology very well in their classrooms. During one interview, a teacher admitted that "the students know more than we do" about technologies like social media, while all of them "agreed that students often know more technically than teachers often give them credit for" (p. 73). I believe this truth should be explored through the application of a Freire-style

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pedagogy so as to learn about social media from, and with, their students. As a former teacher, I suspect it may also have to do with the potential consequences a teacher may face if they, or any of their students, misuse social media.

Nothing penned to a policy is useful without defined consequences and the ability to enforce rules. In essence, policy is powerless without enforcement. This is why three of the policies (St. Thomas; Dayton; and MSTA) state to various stakeholders that those not abiding by the terms of the policy may lose their right, or privilege, to use social media and/or other forms of the academic institution's ICT equipment. While AHS's policy does not declare that the inappropriate use of a blog will result in the privilege of using this social media tool being revoked, it does state that its policy is subject to the "guidelines as well as the rules and regulations of Arapahoe High School" (para. 1). Whether stating consequences for misuse, outright or not, piggybacking on existing collective bargaining agreements, handbooks, and state laws — and the progressively severe, and enforceable consequences therein — can endow a seeming innocuous policy with some teeth. The ramification of a policy without stated, enforceable consequences is the potential that one adheres to its stipulated rules. Piggybacking on established laws may also elevate the perceived danger or risk of using social media in a classroom and frighten away would-be adopters of this new pedagogical tool. Thus, schools should create their own social media policies, and do so in cooperation with as many of the policy's future participants and stakeholders as possible.

Social media is constantly evolving. I would venture to say that this is one of the reasons why I had such difficulty finding social media policies for schools in Canada and around the world. After all, given the limited resources schools tend to

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cope with, it is no wonder that committing time, money, and people (including policy makers who may not fully grasp this digital communication trend) to create a policy and that may seem obsolete inside of a couple of years may not be a school's top priority. But, as school officials are quick to insist, students are a school's top priority. And students need to be aware of its wonderful power and potential danger. Teachers need to be able to educate students so that they can learn about this evolving form of digital literacy so they can wield it properly, and protect themselves, effectively. The four American social media policies I have examined, using critical discourse analysis, represent the growing number of types of policies being created around the United States, the world, and right here, in Canada. These policies illustrate how not all policies are created equal, given their purpose, their intended audience, and the values of the policy makers. But they are, themselves, evolving.

Two years ago, the Canadian policies I found did not delineate the use of social media in schools. They were acceptable use policies for ICT in a school, or board. The term 'social media' was scarce among such policies. Nevertheless, there is room for cautious optimism in Canada's classrooms. For example, while a September 2013 draft of Thunder Bay's *Lakehead Public Schools Information / Communication Technology Use Policy* (Lakehead Public Schools, 2013a) does not include guidelines for the use of social media in its classrooms, the school board's December 2013 Annual Report of the Director of Education made known that "a formal social media strategy will be developed" (Lakehead Public Schools, 2013b, p. 20), and that it recognizes "that our student population uses social media and integrating this practice into learning helps build the confidence needed to move

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ahead” (p. 13). Not referring to ‘social media’ in a policy about technology in the classroom may have its usefulness — allowing the policy to more easily adapt and respond to tomorrow’s evolution of participatory communications tools without having to constantly change its terms of reference. On the other hand, policies without enough, or any, emphasis on the unique facets and qualities of social media had no place in my research. Unfortunately, this meant omitting Canadian policies of the day and turning my attention to the plethora of such social media-specific policies in the United States. There are far more ethical and pedagogical issues to be considered and addressed when policy makers try to draft guidelines for using social media, and not simply technology, in the classroom for the purposes of teaching and learning.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

Social media policies in schools are inevitable as students increasingly use social media to communicate, learn, and interact. My thesis reflects on the issues inherent within policies delineating the use of social media in classrooms as a teaching and learning tool. If teachers are not leveraging the proven and potential power of social media, then something is missing in primary and secondary schools' scope of education. In addition, social media as a teaching and learning tool should not be quickly dismissed anymore than it should be forced onto unprepared or unwilling teachers. Social media policies are part of the answer. However, policy makers do not have it easy. After all, they are trying to hit a mark that is relatively new to classrooms, constantly evolving, and may involve stakeholders who know little or nothing about it. To put it in colloquial terms, they had better get cracking.

As the realm of social media continuous to develop, so, too, do the demands on digital literacy education and preparing the next generation of adolescents and adults for the next generation of communication technology and tools. Livingston and Brake (2009) advise that,

as long as definitions of media literacy remain contested and schools remain reluctant to incorporate media education into teacher training and classroom curricula, children's knowledge will lag behind the industry's fast-changing practices of embedded marketing, use of personal data, user tracking and so forth, most of which is opaque to young people as they navigate the options before them. (p. 8)

Defining, regulating, and overcomplicating the issue of how any new communication tool can, or should, be used in a classroom will only inhibit a school

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or board's ability to adapt such policies to the next stage of evolution in communication technology, and curb the creative potential of its use in classrooms by teachers and students. I suggest schools and boards cease efforts to cover and manage too many issues in one policy and, instead, minimize oversight of social media, a form of communication that is popular today, but will change, tomorrow.

The four questions I applied to the policies I analyzed are intended to serve policy makers as a compass in their efforts to evaluate or create social media policies for classrooms; to help them harness social media's pervasiveness and power. As a recap, the questions were:

1. What is the overall purpose of the policy and whom does it address?
2. Does the policy define what a teacher or student may, or may not, do with social media in a classroom?
3. How does the policy deny, limit, facilitate, or encourage social media's use in classrooms?
4. What additional, prominent themes exist within the policy?

Social media is transforming the education landscape (Alam & McLoughlin, 2010). Thus, teachers, administrators, and policy makers should not keep their proverbial heads in the sand about social media. "Highly restrictive Internet policies in the school environment provide only a false sense of protecting kids," write Jim Bosco and Keith Krueger of the Consortium for School Networking Social (Varlas, 2011, paragraph 23). Schools must adapt to such pedagogical transformations with policies to prepare and protect the students and teachers within our ever-changing classrooms. Today's and tomorrow's students are expected to work with evolving

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digital technologies, information communities, and each other to share established knowledge and generate new ideas. Social media policies in schools need to keep pace with the evolution of social media so students can do all that in order to communicate and learn with the tools that exist, digital or otherwise. Policies that administer safe and effective uses of this technology in classrooms should lead the way to teaching such 21st century skills and how to conduct and protect oneself online. Such policies needn't be complicated.

Some policymakers seek to balance empowerment (i.e., encouraging the use of social media in classrooms) and accountability (i.e., consequences of misuse) in social media policies by creating numerous policies (Boudreaux, 2009). I would argue that the creation of numerous policies to oversee the use of social media in primary and secondary schools is not necessary. One way in which a school or board may create its own social media policy might be to not approach the policymaking process as a complicated affair — one that requires tremendous amounts of time, money, and energy. Rather, one could follow Franklin and van Harmelen's (2007) recommendation that schools minimize "implementing regulations that might constrain experimentation with the technologies and allied pedagogies while they continue to monitor developments" (p. 35). This is to say that schools and boards might try and keep social media policies simple by building, or piggybacking, on existing policies governing behaviour in the school. Echoing Freire's idea of how teachers should conduct themselves in the classroom, policies should be ready to adapt to meet changing circumstances, values, and technologies. The social media policies I have looked at reveal what Marcroft

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(1998) observed, that policies can “vary not only from school to school, but from place to place, [and] time to time” (para. 7).

Research into the issues and potential of social media in primary and secondary classrooms would provide schools with a critical advantage so as to stay ahead of the learning curve and develop pro-active, and not reactive, social media policies for schools. While Livingston and Brake (2009) say policymakers have much to do “if children are, overall, to gain substantial benefit from social networking, there is also much left for researchers to do” (p. 9). The scope of my research in this thesis is restricted to investigating discursive themes through compelling questions so as to help policy makers understand what issues are and are not being included in contemporary social media policies for primary and secondary schools. Avoiding the use of social media in schools is not an option, in my view. Simply keeping social media out of classrooms is no more effective than promoting sexual abstinence to prevent pregnancies or the transmission of sexually transmitted infections. Teacher education programs should introduce the next generation of teachers to existing social media policies, methods on how to incorporate social media into a variety of subjects within the classroom, and how to assess the effectiveness of new teaching and learning tools such as social media so as to possess the necessary skills to prepare the next generation of students for today’s and tomorrow’s communication technologies and trends. In my view, social media is the necessary addition to digital literacy curricula and teacher candidate programs.

Based on my policy analysis, I advocate that policy makers embrace today’s decentralized, Wild West nature of academic policy making. While it might seem

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easier to accept a social media policy that has been handed down from a centralized body of government (e.g., a provincial Ministry or state Department of Education), I believe there is an advantage to North America's decentralized approach to academic policy making — wherein as long as existing provincial, state, and federal laws guide or be included, schools, districts and boards may establish their own social media policies. This approach facilitates the creation of more personalized policies that speak to specific student/teacher populations, values of distinct schools, boards, and districts, and, of course, differences in resources, socio-economics, and communities. And as was the case in the Wild West, it will be the best-prepared pioneers of social media use in classrooms who will adapt and flourish as they bring order and purpose to the near-lawless land of social media policy in education.

I invite researchers to look at social media issues and trends, as well as social media policies created by other organizations and academic institutions, in order to help equip policy makers with a critical advantage and the tools to get, and remain, ahead of social media's evolutionary pace so as to develop policies for schools that are not only ready for today's teaching environment, but tomorrow's learning requirements, as well.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

POLICY #1 — St. Thomas Episcopal School Social Media Policy

PURPOSE

St. Thomas Episcopal School understands the importance of teachers, students and parents engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in the fast-moving world of the Internet and “social media” – such services as “Facebook”, “Twitter”, “Shutterfly”, Wikipedia, “blogs”, and many other online tools through which people connect and share information. With this in mind, St. Thomas Episcopal School has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for instructional employees, students and the school community when participating in online social media activities. Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in a blog, wikipedia, discussion forum, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion it is his or her own decision. However, to the extent that employees, faculty, parents and members of the school community represent St. Thomas Episcopal School to each other and to the wider community, participation in such social media should be done responsibly with a mind toward how both the location where one chooses to participate and the content one posts reflect on that person individually and on the School. Moreover, issues concerning the proper respect for the privacy of our students, confidentiality of sensitive information and respect for copyrights and trademarks are all important to understand before participating in an online social environment.

The St. Thomas Episcopal School social media guidelines encourage employees and students to participate in social computing and strive to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability, keeping in mind that information produced by St. Thomas Episcopal School, our faculty, staff, students and their parents is a reflection on the entire School community and is subject to our Acceptable Use Policy, the School’s Mission and the obligation to protect the children entrusted to us. By accessing, creating or contributing to Facebook, Twitter, blogs, discussion fora, wikis, podcasts or other social media for classroom or school use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before making use of such social media. If you have any doubts or concerns about how these guidelines apply to you or your situation, or how they might apply to some new form of social media in the future, please err on the side of caution and direct your questions and concerns to the Director of the School before you make use of such media. In the online world, an ounce of prevention is worth far more than a pound of cure.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Consult the employee manual and/or parent and student handbook. Be aware that all existing policies and behavior guidelines extend to School-related activities in the online environment as well as on School premises.

Use good judgment. Think about the type of image that you want to convey on behalf of the School when you’re posting to social networks and social media

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sites. Remember that what you post will be viewed and archived permanently online once you hit the “publish” button. On sites where you publicize your professional affiliation, make sure that your profile adheres to established criteria.

Provide value. Think about what you have to offer the community, whether it’s thoughtful, relevant blog posts, newsy tweets, or homework help, and focus on providing that consistently. Look for opportunities on these social sites to offer recommendations or services to engage patrons and provide value to your community. Don’t be an Internet “troll” by posting or passing along mass email forwards and urban legends (funny stories, videos, non-school photos and other “SPAM”).

Accept responsibility. If you’re wrong about something, admit it and move on. It’s not the end of the world to have made a mistake, and in the long run it’s better to be honest about it and apologize than to deny it or cover it up. People on the Internet are still people.

Copyright and Fair Use

- Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. See <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- Hyperlinking to outside sources is recommended. Be sure not to plagiarize and give credit where it is due. If you are re-posting photos, videos, poems, music, text, artwork or other copyrightable material, take the extra step of identifying the creator of the materials to the extent reasonably possible.
- When hyperlinking to other sites and media, be sure that the content to which you are hyperlinking is appropriate and consistent with these guidelines.
- Be aware that photographs taken by professional photographers cannot be scanned and used on the internet without the photographer’s permission – even if they are photos of you and for which you paid. Most photographers will charge a little extra for “digital rights” to photos.

Profiles and Identity

- Remember your association and responsibility with St. Thomas Episcopal School in online social environments. If you identify yourself as a School employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues, parents, and students and consistent with the image, purpose and Mission of the School. Remember how you represent yourself online should be comparable to how you represent yourself in person.
- No identifying personal information, such as full names, addresses or phone numbers should appear on blogs or wikis or other social media.
- Be cautious how you setup your profile, bio, avatar, etc. The same guidelines apply to this information as well as the substantive content you post.
- When uploading digital pictures or avatars that represent yourself make sure you select a school appropriate image. Also remember not to utilize protected images.

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Social Bookmarking

- Be aware that others can view the sites that you bookmark.
- Be aware of words used to tag or describe the bookmark.
- Be aware of URL shortening services and verify the landing site they point to before submitting a link as a bookmark.
- Attempt to link directly to a page or resource if possible as you do not control what appears on landing pages in the future.

FACULTY AND STAFF GUIDELINES

Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Digital Images & Video Personal Responsibility

- St. Thomas Episcopal School employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy and that of the school, our students and their families. Once materials have been published online, they may be out of your control.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face and should be carried out consistent with the standards applied on school premises and in furtherance of the School's Mission.
- When posting to a blog, discussion forum, or Twitter or Facebook account, be sure you make it clear that the information is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of St. Thomas Episcopal School. Remember that blogs, wikis, discussion groups, and podcasts are an extension of your classroom. What is inappropriate in your classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. By virtue of identifying yourself online as affiliated with St. Thomas Episcopal School, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the School community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at the School and School's Mission.
- Don't participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumors or false information. Strive to speak the truth - and when you don't know, sometimes saying nothing is the best choice.
- When contributing online do not post confidential student information.
- Before posting videos and photographs of students to any online forum, including Facebook, Shutterfly, a blog or any other media, notify the Director in advance of posting them, letting him or her know the content of what you intend to post, where you intend to post it, and the identity of any St. Thomas staff, faculty or students depicted in the media. Photographs, videos and other digital content identifying St. Thomas students or their families should not be posted online without prior approval from the Director.
- Such materials should ONLY be posted to social media that provides reasonable protection against general public access and has tools in place to limit access only to identified or invited persons.
- Use of student time for social media should have an articulated and defined instructional purpose consistent with the School's Mission.

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Disclaimers

- St. Thomas Episcopal School employees must include disclaimers within their personal blogs and other media in which they either identify themselves or are likely to be identified as affiliated with the School that the views are their own and do not reflect on St. Thomas Episcopal School. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent St. Thomas Episcopal School positions, strategies, or opinions."
- This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt St. Thomas Episcopal School employees from a special or personal responsibility when posting online.
- Where online media are open to content and participation (such as comments) from students and parents, teachers are encouraged to carefully review and moderate such comments or disable their use.

Instant Messaging

- School employees are required to get authorization to have instant messaging programs downloaded on their school computers.
- School employees also recognize this same authorization is required for access to instant messaging programs that are available through web interfaces with no download.
- Avatar images and profile information should follow the same guidelines as the above Profiles and Identity section.
- A written request must be submitted to the Director for approval.
- When submitting a request to the Director please provide a statement identifying the program and explaining your instructional purposes for using the program.
- Requests for Social Media Sites
- St. Thomas Episcopal School understands that technology is constantly changing and that many sites have pedagogical significance for teacher and student use.
- If you would like to request that another online site be accessible to use for teaching and learning, please submit a request to the Director for review, identifying the online tools you wish to use, and your instructional purpose in using them.
- Requests will be reviewed by the Director and the School Board, if necessary, and these social media guidelines will be updated periodically throughout the school year as needed to keep up with emerging technologies and challenges in the online environment.
- A description should be provided of the intended use of the site and what tools on the site match your needed criteria.
- A link to the sites privacy policy should be included if possible, and printed and attached to your request if reasonably feasible.

STUDENT GUIDELINES

Due to the wealth of new social media tools available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences far beyond the

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classroom. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone. Below are guidelines students in St. Thomas Episcopal School should adhere to when using Web tools in the classroom or in any way related to classroom or School activities.

Also understand that as a St. Thomas student you represent the School even when you are not posting to social media during classtime, and you should follow these guidelines anytime you post material that could identify you or your relationship to the School.

- Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
- Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
- Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides your teachers and parents.
- Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate for a school setting.
- Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. Be aware that it is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
- Be aware that pictures, videos, songs, and audio clips may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the images, videos, songs or other clips.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
- Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.
- If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell your teacher right away.
- Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in the project and/or access to future use of online tools.

PARENT GUIDELINES

Classroom blogs and other social media are powerful tools that open up communication between students, parents, and teachers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a huge impact on learning. St. Thomas Episcopal School encourages parents to participate in such projects when appropriate, but requests that Parents act responsibly and respectfully at all times,

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understanding that their conduct not only reflects on the School community, but will be a model for our students as well.

Parents should adhere to the following guidelines:

Parents should expect communication from teachers prior to their child's involvement in any project using online social media applications, i.e., blogs, wikis, podcast, discussion forums, etc.

- Parents will be asked to sign a release form for students when teachers set up social media activities for classroom use.
- Parents will not attempt to destroy or harm any information online.
- Parents will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws.
- Parents are highly encouraged to read and/or participate in social media projects.
- Parents should not distribute any information that might be deemed personal about other students participating in the social media project.
- Parents should not upload or include any information that does not also meet the student guidelines above.

APPENDIX 2:

POLICY #2 – Arapahoe High School’s Blogging Policy

AHS Blogging Policy

This is a set of general guidelines for the use of weblogs (“blogs”) at Arapahoe High School. Blogs are considered an extension of the classroom and therefore are subject to these guidelines as well as the rules and regulations of Arapahoe High School and Littleton Public Schools. The use of school computers is limited to assigned schoolwork; personal blogs that do not pertain to classwork at Arapahoe High School should not be accessed from school computers. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive and do not cover every contingency. If you are ever in doubt about the appropriateness of an item - ask a parent or teacher.

Safe and Responsible Blogging

The most basic guideline to remember when blogging is that the blog is an extension of your classroom. You should not write anything on a blog that you would not say or write in your classroom. Use common sense, but if you are ever in doubt ask a teacher or parent whether or not what you are considering posting is appropriate. If you are going to err, err on the safe side. Here are some specific items to consider:

1. The use of blogs is considered an extension of your classroom. Therefore, any speech that is considered inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate on a blog. This includes, but is not limited to, profanity; racist, sexist or discriminatory remarks; personal attacks.
2. Blogs are used primarily as learning tools, either as extensions of conversations and thinking outside of regular class time, or as the basis for beginning new classroom discussions. Either way, be sure to follow all rules and suggestions that are offered by your teachers regarding appropriate posting in your class.
3. Blogs are about ideas – therefore, agree or disagree with the idea, not the person. Freedom of speech does not give you the right to be uncivil. Use constructive criticism and use evidence to support your position. Read others’ posts carefully – often in the heat of the moment you may think that a person is saying one thing, when really they are not.
4. Try not to generalize. Sentences that start with words like “All” (e.g., “All teachers,” “All administrators,” “All liberals,” “All conservatives”) are typically going to be too general.
5. Blogs are public. Whatever you post on a blog can be read by anyone and everyone on the Internet. Even if you delete a post or comment, it has often already been archived elsewhere on the web. Do not post anything that you wouldn’t want your parents, your best friend, your worst enemy, or a future employer to read.
6. Blog safely. NEVER post personal information on the web (including, but not limited to, last names, personal details including address or phone numbers, or photographs). (Note: The advice to not use your last name is for your protection. Teachers may choose to use their last names for their

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- posts/comments.) Do not, under any circumstances, agree to meet someone you have met over the Internet.
7. Because your login to the blogging site (e.g., Blogger) is typically linked to your profile, any personal blog you create in class is directly linked to your class blog and must follow these blogging guidelines. In addition to following the information above about not sharing too much personal information (in your profile or in any posts/comments you make), you need to realize that anywhere you use that login links back to your class blog. Therefore, anywhere that you use that login (posting to a separate personal blog, commenting on someone else's blog, etc.), you need to treat the same as a school blog and follow these guidelines. You should also monitor any comments you receive on your personal blog and - if they are inappropriate - delete them. If you would like to post or comment somewhere and not follow these guidelines, you need to create a separate login to the blogging site so that it does not connect back to your class blog. You may not use that login from school computers. We would still recommend you follow the portion of these guidelines that address your personal safety (e.g., not posting personal information, etc.)
 8. Linking to web sites from your blog or blog comments in support of your argument is an excellent idea. But never link to something without reading the entire article to make sure it is appropriate for a school setting.
 9. Use of quotations in a blog is acceptable. Make sure that you follow the proper formatting and cite the source of the quote.
 10. Pictures may be inserted into a blog. Make sure that the image is appropriate for use in a school document and copyright laws are followed. Do not post any images that can identify yourself or others.

Successful Bloggers

The following are some traits of successful bloggers:

- Their posts (or comments) are well written. This includes not only good content, but – because these are school-related blogs – also follows writing conventions including spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Their posts (or comments) are responsive. They respond to other people's ideas – whether it is a post by a teacher, a comment by a student, or an idea elsewhere on the Internet. The power of blogs is in their connectedness – they are connected to a larger community of ideas. Participate in that community.
- Their posts (or comments) include textual references to support their opinions. Adding quotes or links to other works strengthens their response.
- They participate frequently. To be part of the dialogue, you have to participate fully and consistently.
- They are respectful of others. It's okay to disagree; it's not okay to be disagreeable. Be respectful of others and their opinions, and be civil when you disagree.

APPENDIX 3:

POLICY #3 – Dayton Public Schools’ Acceptable Use and Internet Safety for Informational and Educational Technology Policy

The Dayton Public School District realizes that technology can greatly enhance the instructional program, as well as the efficiency of the District. The Board recognizes that careful planning is essential to ensure the successful, equitable and cost-effective implementation of technology based materials, equipment, systems and networks.

The use of computers and other District network or online devices/services support learning and enhance instruction, as well as assist in administration. Electronic networks allow people to interact with many computers and other resources; the Internet allows people to interact with hundreds of thousands of networks and individuals around the world.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Social Media Usage

ICT and social media are recognized technologies that enable the District and students to share information in a timely, relevant manner across numerous platforms. As mediums continue to evolve, the District recognizes the importance of finding new ways to reach families, students, the community and other stakeholders, while remaining mindful of its obligation to uphold regulations regarding student privacy, Internet safety and Board policies.

Social media is to be used within the district as another tool for effective two-way communication. Any site representing the District as a whole will be created and maintained by the Public Information Office or other Superintendent designee; no other entity shall purport to officially represent the District in this capacity.

Social media shall be used:

- To promote the District in a positive manner;
- To share District news and information in a timely and relevant fashion;
- To encourage two-way communication between the District and the public;
- In ways that are not in violation of policies regarding student safety.

Social Media Interactions

To maintain a more formal staff-student relationship, district employees shall not “friend” current students on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (except when that employee is a relative or legal guardian of the student). In addition, district employees will not “instant message” or text message current students, and will not respond to student-initiated attempts at conversation through non-district-approved media, whether personal or professional accounts.

Assume that nothing posted online, in any capacity, is private. When putting something online, use the “Front Page Test” - would this post/picture/information be embarrassing, slanderous or threatening if it ended up on the front page of tomorrow’s newspaper?

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Social Media Privacy

Use of Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites: It is recommended that students and staff keep privacy settings to "Only Friends," or to personally approve friends and followers.

DPS employees are not permitted to post pictures of students with personally identifying information. Students are not to be "tagged" in photos.

Other district guidelines and policies regarding disclosure of student record information must be adhered to when using a personal account, including posting of student photographs, names of students and personally identifiable information.

Social Media Usage

Staff and students should use only approved social media sites. Approved sites are authorized by their educational content and have been vetted through the district's Software/Hardware Review Process. Staff who seek to use these and other restricted sites as part of the educational process should contact the Office of Information Technology for assistance.

All technologies are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner. Failure to adhere to this policy and the guidelines below will result in the revocation of the user's access privilege. Unacceptable uses of the computer/network include but are not limited to:

1. violating the conditions of State and Federal law dealing with students' and employees' rights to privacy, including unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal information;
2. using profanity, obscenity or other language which may be offensive to another user or intended to harass, intimidate or bully other users;
3. accessing personal social networking websites for non-educational purposes;
4. reposting (forwarding) personal communication without the author's prior consent;
5. copying commercial software and/or other material in violation of copyright law;
6. using the network for financial gain, for commercial activity or for any illegal activity;
7. "hacking" or gaining unauthorized access to other computers or computer systems, or attempting to gain such unauthorized access;
8. accessing and/or viewing inappropriate material;
9. unauthorized downloading of freeware or shareware programs and all copyrighted material, including music and videos;
10. sending or forwarding chain letters or "spam" to a large group of users;
11. storage of "personal files" including pictures, jokes, videos, games and other recreational software and
12. use of personal e-mail accounts of any e-mail account for personal communication.
13. when using social media:
 - a) do not create content (posts, message responses, Tweets ©, photo manipulations, etc.) that portray the district or an individual in an obscene, defamatory or libellous way.

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- b) be transparent and honest in your online interactions. Do not post anonymously. If you are identified as a district employee, be sure to mention your views and opinions are your own and do not represent the district as a whole.

The Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall develop a plan to address the short- and long-term technology needs and provide for compatibility of resources among school sites, offices and other operations. As a basis for this plan, he/she shall examine and compare the costs and benefits of various resources and shall identify the blend of technologies and level of service necessary to support the instructional program.

Because access to online services provides connections to other computer systems located all over the world, users (and parents of users who are under 18 years old) must understand that neither the school nor the District can control the content of the information available on these systems. Some of the information available is controversial and sometimes offensive. The Board does not condone the use of such materials. Employees, students and parents of students must be aware that the privileges to access online services are withdrawn from users who do not respect the rights of others or who do not follow the rules and regulations established. A user's agreement is signed to indicate the user's acknowledgment of the risks and regulations for computer/online services use. The District has implemented technology-blocking measures to prevent students from accessing inappropriate material or materials considered to be harmful to minors on school computers. The District has also purchased monitoring devices which maintain a running log of Internet activity, recording which sites a particular user has visited.

"Harmful to minors" is defined as any picture, image, graphic image file or other visual depiction that:

- taken as a whole and with respect to minors appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex or excretion;
- depicts, describes or represents, in a patently offensive way with respect to what is suitable for minors, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual contact, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts or lewd exhibition of genitals or
- taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value as to minors.

A student who wishes to have computer network and Internet access during the school year must read the acceptable use and Internet safety policy and submit a properly signed agreement form.

Search and Seizure

Students and employees should have no expectation of privacy with respect to the use of any district Information Communication Technology. Violations of District regulations, disciplinary code or the law may result in severe penalties, including, but not limited to termination of employees or expulsion of students.

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Routine maintenance and monitoring of ICT systems may lead to discovery that the user has or is violating the District Acceptable Use Regulations, the Student Code of Conduct or the law. An individual search is conducted if there is reasonable suspicion that a user has violated the law or the disciplinary code. The nature of the investigation is reasonable and in the context of the nature of the alleged violation.

District employees should be aware that their personal files might be discoverable under state public records laws.

APPENDIX 4:

POLICY #4 – Missouri State Teachers Association’s Employee-Student Relations and Communications Policy

Employee-Student Relations and Communications Policy

Introduction

Public school district employees, while engaged in work-related activities for educational purposes or work-related district sponsored extra-curricular activities, shall at all times maintain appropriate professional conduct and demeanor with students in all interactions, electronic communications, activities, and conduct with students pursuant to the standards of their profession, the code of ethics in their professional associations, and in compliance with all local, state, and federal ordinances, statutes, and regulations.

Part 1: Work-Related Conduct and Communications

Employees’ work-related conduct and communications in all forms shall be appropriate, maintain proper boundaries with students, and be compliant with existing relevant local, state and federal ordinances and laws. Existing laws include, but are not limited to, those regulating: termination of employment for cause for educator employees under contract; criminal conduct and investigations and procedures; civil litigation; Department of Elementary and Secondary Education licensing and discipline regulations and procedures; and the Department of Social Services child protection and welfare regulation and procedures.

Part 1.A: Electronic Communications

The [School District] Board of Education recognizes that electronic resources and communications of all types are a vital part of a modern and competitive education for our students in the 21st century. [School District] supports providing access to these resources for our students and staff. Its goal in providing access to these resources is to promote educational excellence in our schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation and communication to prepare our students to become technologically literate citizens.

Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to the preparation of students as citizens and future employees and employers. Access to the new technologies enables students to experience educational opportunities which were unimaginable a short time ago and which are changing continually. The District expects that faculty will blend thoughtful use of the new technologies throughout the curriculum and will provide guidance and instruction to students in its use. Access from school to electronic resources and the new technologies should be structured in ways that direct students to those resources which have been evaluated prior to use, and are in conformance with the district’s own educational mission, goals, and objectives.

District employees utilizing electronic communications and new technologies are responsible for appropriate behavior in their use, just as they are in the classrooms or other areas of their educational duties, as governed by local, state, and federal ordinances, statutes, and regulations.

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Part 1.A.1: Student Training and Guidelines

Students utilizing District approved electronic communications and new technologies must first have the permission of their parents or legal guardians and must be trained and supervised by the [SCHOOL DISTRICT]'s professional staff. Students utilizing electronic communications and new technologies are responsible for good behavior in their use just as they are in a classroom or other areas of the school. The same general rules for behavior and communications apply. Access to the District's approved electronic communications systems and new technologies is a privilege, and not a right.

Part 1.A.2: Acceptable Use

Access to the District's approved electronic communications systems and new technologies as they develop and are approved, shall be made available to students and employees exclusively for instructional and administrative purposes in accordance with a [School Board] appointed Electronic Communication and New Technology Resources Committee. The majority of the committee shall consist of certified staff. Members shall be comprised of: teachers and technology specialists with specific knowledge and understanding of the application of new educational resources and the functions of the platforms of communication, and who have varied subject matter and grade level backgrounds; other educators who are not required by the State to be certified teachers; and administrators. The Board shall appoint new members to the Committee as it determines it to be timely and efficient. The Committee shall meet at least twice a year to evaluate new programs and methodologies and shall report directly to the school board. The committee's recommendations, if approved by the Board, shall apply to electronic communications and new technologies that continue to be resources that promote educational excellence in our schools. The Committee shall have an ongoing obligation to select resources that also require maintenance of their high standards of professional behavior as stated in the Introduction portion of this policy. Both the Committee's selections and the Committee members' individual professional behavior shall be in conformity with existing local, state, and federal ordinances, statutes, and DESE and DSS regulations.

Electronic mail transmissions and other uses of electronic communications and new technology systems by students and employees on work- related equipment or work- related activities shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure appropriate educational or administrative use. Users of the District's approved electronic communications systems and new technologies must report all inappropriate use of the communications to a designated School Compliance Coordinator for review and possible confidential investigation or referral.

Part 2: Non-Work-Related Communications

The [School District] shall not implement any policies regarding non-work-related employee communications conducted by its employees in general, or which allow exclusive access with current and former students. It shall not prohibit employees of the district from engaging in any non-work-related activities or using

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non-work-related electronic communications or new technology platforms. The balancing of the individual employee's Constitutional rights to freedom of speech, association, and religion outweigh the interests of the school district in the non-work-related activities of its employees, subject to conduct and communications already regulated by local, state and federal law.