

Title of Session: Global Project Based Learning: Social Networking

Moderator: Linda Ullah

Title of File: 20080327gpblsocialnet

Date: March 27, 2008

Room: GPBL Group

BJB2: Are you here for the GPBL discussion, Crystal?

CrystalG: yes

BJB2: great!

CrystalG: am I the only one?

LindaU: Great.. let's get started..

LindaU: Well, there is you, me Jeff and BJ..

BJB2: Linda is the discussion leader.

LindaU: and I'm prepared for a controversial issue.

LindaU: Are you all ready---could get emotional... (

BJB2: should we start with intros?

LindaU: Okay.. Intros.

CrystalG: since when is global learning controversial

BJB2: I am in Pennsylvania and teach communication

LindaU: I'm Linda Ullah. I work for the New Technology Foundation coaching new small New Tech high schools-- (PBL/Technology schools) as part of a school reform movement in NC.

LindaU: Yes, PBL is controversial in some places.. not to mention GPBL.. but I have a hot topic tonight.. (after intros..)

CrystalG: I am in Oklahoma, finishing up my master's, just moved from VA, a science teacher

JeffC: I'm in Oregon, on Helpdesk here, and about to head out the door and feed the kids (will lurk).

LindaU: Masters in what

CrystalG: secondary education

LindaU: Jeff--we need you in this discussion..

JeffC: ok... I'll stick around as long as I can.

JeffC: but the virtual burritos I fed the kids aren't very filling.

LindaU: Okay.. Lately I've been reading about and reflecting on the place of social networking sites and tools in education.

LindaU: It seems to me that if districts didn't spend time blocking these sites, they could provide valuable opportunities for multi-school learning experiences.

LindaU: So, let's begin with your gut level thoughts before I lead you through some articles.

JeffC: true... but most districts operate on a tech foundation of paranoia.

CrystalG: what sites are blocked...at my high school in va I wasn't aware of blocking of these sites

JeffC: myspace and facebook to start with... they're both blocked in my district.

LindaU: Some districts block Facebook, My Space, chat tools (even Tapped In)

JeffC: my district takes a "just say no" approach... rather than teach students how to use it... safely... they just ignore it.

JeffC: and yeah... I've had trouble connecting to tapped in recently... even though I've spent years getting the district to unfilter it.

LindaU: What is the rationale for blocking these sites?

CrystalG: ok, I see that I was thinking less social sites...

JeffC: something bad might happen

CrystalG: like a teaching revolution? :)

LindaU: Okay.. what about cell phones?

JeffC: not allowed in the class

LindaU: and Skype and Oovoo?

CrystalG: no cell phones allowed during school hours...too much cheating on tests...

LindaU: Interesting.. cheating on tests is the rationale.

LindaU: How can they be used as learning tools?

CrystalG: cheating on tests occurs...they take a picture of the test and send it to their pal

JeffC: there are many socially responsible sites on myspace... the darfur project, etc. for example.

JeffC: or are you specifically talking about cellphones?

CrystalG: yes

BJB2 . o O (and learning from lyrics has a myspace site that is amazing)

JeffC: I was asking Linda

CrystalG: what is Oovoo

LindaU: ah.. I was hoping someone would ask.

LindaU: <http://www.oovoo.com/>

LindaU: Check it out and think how it could be used for multi-school projects... awesome tool!

JeffC: right... I have a number of educational "friends" on my myspace page:

JeffC: <http://www.myspace.com/jbcoops>

BJB2 . o O (btw, take a look at this article on facebook: http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080320/wr_nm/facebook_tech_life_dc)

BJB2 looks at oovoo

JeffC: oovoo looks interesting, but will never get past K-12 IT departments.

LindaU: So now schools are expelling students for study groups just because they are online? I just skimmed the article.

JeffC: oh yeah... the Ryerson Facebook Fiasco.

CrystalG: very interesting....wonder if you could get permission if coordinated lesson with another school in another country..for example

JeffC: well... supposedly they were also posting answers, when specifically told not to.

LindaU: So, here is a philosophical question-- what is the goal of education?

JeffC: to make money for the university or school district?

LindaU: Is it to help students learn or to grade and punish kids?

BJB2: Crystal, time zones can be a problem with real time communication between countries

CrystalG: to prepare students to use their skills to the benefit of the global community

CrystalG: yes, that is true, but would it have to be real time....???

BJB2: I think the purpose of education is rhetorical in Tapped In...

JeffC: 19th, 20th or 21st Century pedagogy Linda?

LindaU: Ah... so if these tools are part of the world in which the students will live and work.. I wonder if they should learn productive uses for these tools?

BJB2 . o O (teachers wouldn't be here if it was otherwise)

CrystalG: amen

JeffC: Seriously though... I think we're very much mired in atavistic thinking. Let me post an article by George Siemens that RogerMG shared with me, which gives a very good glimpse at what 21st education *should* be:

<http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/Paper105/Siemens.pdf>

BJB2 . o O (and asynch often works well if time zones are a problem)

LindaU: Jeff.. as cynical as your reply was.. there is truth in it.

JeffC: and GPBL is what should be a big part of 21st Century learning.

JeffC: relevant... and it gets the kids involved.

SethQ joined the room.

LindaU: Looks like I'll have to read the article after this conversation. thanks for sharing.

LindaU: Hi Seth.

SethQ: Hello

LindaU: We are exploring the place (or not) for social networking sites and tools in teaching and learning.

SethQ: Ah. I see

JeffC: one social networking site that might not be filtered is ning.

CrystalG: I believe we are doing our students a disservice if we do not use these tools because they must be able to use these tools wisely, the classroom isn't like when we were in school

LindaU: Okay.. take a look at <http://weblogg-ed.com/2007/kids-social-networks-learning/>

JeffC: <http://www.ning.com/> ... I'm in several educational networks there.

LindaU: Ning is new to me.. I'll check it out.

LindaU: What about YouTube? What is it's place in education (and a lot of districts do block it..)

BJB2: same with any other social site...if used appropriately, it's a rich resource and tool

CrystalG: I have used YouTube to start discussions...

LindaU: check out these movies:

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm-k31Kazc8>

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXa6rXRYWQs>

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1G0s6zm2Eo>

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RL4YQzGX2N4>

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0wgMINF33s>

LindaU: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueR2YeAQwJI>

LindaU: They were done by one of the classes I work with and posted on YouTube.

CrystalG: For me, teaching students to learn to use these tools responsibly is like teaching students how to balance, apply for, be responsible for a checkbook and we don't do that in high school either!

JeffC: youtube is blocked by my district

LindaU: Is there a cybersafety issue here...

JeffC: so was wikipedia... but I managed to get it unfiltered.

LindaU: Jeff. many districts block YouTube..

LindaU: and wikipedia fear of students getting false information...

JeffC: the biggest cybersafety issue is having a policy of filtering rather than a strong enforceable AUP, and strong support for getting students involved with safe and responsible use of the Net.

LindaU: Here is an Eductopia article on social networking and learning.

LindaU: So.. if we don't guide students to good uses of these sites and tools, who will?

JeffC: yeah... well... wikipedia and encyclopedia Britannica have been shown to have similar number of errors. but that shows the limited thinking of admin... they'd rather pay FOR EB (and think everything is fine), rather than use Wikipedia as a jumping off point for further research, all the while teaching skepticism and critical thinking skills.

BJB2 wonders what Crystal and Seth think

LindaU: I wonder if we don't use these tools with students and help them learn to use them for good educational purposes.. will we create a de facto "Lord of the Flies" cyber generation?

CrystalG: I believe that students need to be educated on how to evaluate web sites, and how to avoid unreliable sources

JeffC: teach that *all* sources are unreliable! including (especially?) textbooks! not just the net... teach the kids to think!

BJB2: the social networking sites have the good mixed with the bad....it's not just a black and white situation

LindaU: ah.. teach kids to think.. now there is a controversial thought.

LindaU: keep going, BJ...

BJB2 hates to say this, but I agree with Jeff's last comment

JeffC: I know... it's why I keep getting fired.

CrystalG: number one problem with students today is that they don't know how to think...they believe everything at face value or if it requires effort then they take the easy way out...whether advanced or general students

JeffC knows that Bj hates to agree with me!

LindaU: Why is that Crystal?

BJB2: it's not just a matter of evaluating a SITE...it's a matter of evaluating the content of each PART of the site....as Jeff said, to be critical thinkers

CrystalG: hmmm....the million dollar question...at the school I taught at most of the parents didn't really value education and so most of the students didn't either. Loved the challenge of making education fun and relevant...which worked!

LindaU: How can we use social networking sites, cell phones, chat rooms, video conference tools... wikis, blogs, to help students develop critical thinking skills?

CrystalG: I also think the current testing environment has desensitized our students....

LindaU wants Crystal to continue.

JeffC: desensitized or demoralized?

BJB2: Crystal mentioned using you tube videos for discussion starters.

CrystalG: its all about the facts, the SOL's but overall learning for personal development is not valued

CrystalG: use of the tech tools are great, but we must also have the technology to use them...and my experience has been lack of access to computer labs, laptops, etc.

LindaU: Goes back to my question.. What is the purpose of educating kids... Why do we have "school?" What is the goal of education?

LindaU: Good point.. but.. many (not all) of our students have access to some technologies...

LindaU: Take cell phones for example or iPods...

JeffC: I think the goal should be to get them involved with their own education... view what is out there in the real world and help them determine how they want to fit in... give

them choices and ways to make good ones... support them.

CrystalG: if you differentiate your instruction then you could address the technologies available to each student individually

JeffC: oops... I said should... not *is*.

LindaU: Cell phones do amazing things.. take pictures.. download music... connect to the Internet.. allow text messaging.. How can these be used in the classroom?

CrystalG: interviewing people for a research project

CrystalG: quick search for meaning of vocab

BJB2: cool idea, Crystal

BJB2: or collecting histories of a community

BJB2 . o O (storytelling)

CrystalG: download podcasts that they have created

LindaU: Thanks BJ.. Here is an article on cell phones in education:
<http://www.technewsworld.com/story/54192.html>

LindaU: Can we bypass the classroom lecture and put them into podcasts.. (open source) and use the classroom for doing research and projects?

JeffC: really have to run now... will stay logged in.

CrystalG: why not? like everything else, too much of a good thing is not a good thing...but sometimes would be great

CrystalG: interesting article Linda

LindaU: Good point.. these are just tools.. and need to be used as such where and when appropriate.

BJB2 wonders if Seth has any comments?

LindaU: Seth.. do let us know what you are thinking...

LindaU: Here is an article on Flickr in education.

LindaU: <http://www.techlearning.com/showArticle.php?articleID=172302903>

CrystalG: Love flickr...just discovered it and plan to use it next school year when I am back to teaching

CrystalG: especially the mapping feature....

LindaU: My big I wonder is what keeps teachers and administrators from embracing the potential of these tools.?

CrystalG: time

LindaU: okay.. expound on time as a deterrent to using social networking sites/tools in education

CrystalG: too much content...so the process of learning is shortened not appreciated or enabled

LindaU: Could these tools help us use learning time more effectively?

LindaU: What about online games?

CrystalG: I use online games

CrystalG: for review

CrystalG: to activate prior knowledge

LindaU: Okay.. we seem to be in agreement that there is value in these resources.. How do we get the naysayers to see the value?

CrystalG: we need to publicize our successes with it to the media....they love positive feedback

LindaU: But there are articles out there... How do we get people to read them, discuss them, reflect on them?

CrystalG: if we can demonstrate that these tools will improve test scores...they will jump in feet first

CrystalG: or get grants to implement...

LindaU: I just finished teaching a PBL class.. and when it came to integrating technology into their project plans I had one teacher in the course flat out tell me he would NOT do that.

CrystalG: what?

LindaU: Ah.. the old catch 22--will these increase test scores... hmmm..

BJB2: teacher mentoring might work in some cases

BJB2 . o O (or get the schools to create group rooms in Tapped In)

LindaU: he would not use technology in his classroom (and this was an online class)

CrystalG: his reason was???

LindaU: Okay, BJ.. I've introduced hundreds or more teachers to Tapped In.. but very few have continued to use Tapped In beyond the time I've made them use it.

LindaU: Why?

CrystalG: I believe we can increase test scores using these tools...student motivation has positive end results

LindaU: I had to even get the college where I used to work to unblock it for me.

BJB2 chuckles...another million dollar question.

LindaU: But the research doesn't support this..

BJB2: part of the problem is that most casual users don't 'get' the potential of Tapped In

CrystalG: why? time...overloaded teaching loads...

CrystalG: research doesn't yet....

LindaU: and what do test scores really measure (but that's another discussion)

CrystalG: amen, sister

LindaU: I can point to research that shows that if used support learning they don't lower test scores..

LindaU: I can argue that engaged students are learning...

CrystalG: the best way is to prove it is in your own classrooms...they notice when you get results as a teacher

BJB2: Linda, do you want to continue this discussion in May?

LindaU: But research does not support a direct correlation between technology integration and better test scores.

BJB2 . o O (engaged teachers also are learning)

CrystalG: but that is the world we live in today...textbooks are becoming obsolete in many ways

LindaU: hmmm.. bj.. interesting thought.. teachers as learners...

LindaU smiles broadly

BJB2 winks

LindaU: Any final thoughts.. ?

BJB2: you promised an engaging discussion and so it was!

BJB2: Thanks

LindaU: I hope I made you all think about the use of social networking sites and tools in education.

CrystalG: absolutely

CrystalG: thanks

LindaU: Go forth and make people think about these things..

BJB2: have a great trip, Linda

LindaU: please..

BJB2: and we'll see you in May

LindaU: Good night all.. I'll be back in May....