

# Technology

## Social Media as a Collaborative Community Builder



## Voices

For Joe Mazza, 34-year-old principal of the Knapp School, an elementary school in Lansdale, PA near Philadelphia, a family tragedy serendipitously launched an interest in social media as a tool to build collaborative school-community engagement. On January 18, 2011 a huge gas line explosion in Philadelphia took the life of Mr. Mazza's 19-year-old brother-in-law, Mark Keeley, a gas company employee. A self-described "tech geek," Mr. Mazza, a University of Pennsylvania doctoral candidate, and his family launched a Facebook page, backed by a Twitter campaign, to persuade his late brother-in-law's favorite band, Mumford & Sons, to play a concert in Philadelphia in his brother-in-law's honor. According to Mr. Mazza, the effort attracted 20,000 Facebook "likes" from more than 80 nations. Mumford & Sons later appeared in Philadelphia for a concert held in the mayor's City Hall conference room. Comments Mr. Mazza, "This event occurred because of the global collaboration engendered by Twitter and Facebook."

Before tragedy struck, Mr. Mazza, a Facebook user, was experimenting with Twitter by following family members and his favorite Philadelphia sports teams. Bringing the Mumford & Sons concert to Philadelphia, however, opened his eyes to potential

- 1 Social Media as a Collaborative Community Builder
- 3 Social Media as a Community Engagement Tool: "We Use Technology to Put Us All in the Same Room"  
*Joe Mazza, Principal, the Knapp School, North Penn School District, Lansdale, PA.*
- 9 Resources
- 12 Knowledge Network Members



professional use of social media to forge school-community collaborative engagement that would benefit Knapp School students, parents, teachers and administrators.

Mr. Mazza remarks, “For me, transitioning social media from personal to communitywide professional use represented a huge technology learning curve. I suspected social media would be effective in building community engagement but I had to better understand the technology and then, in stages, learn to put it to effective use.” The experimental stages, he admits, did not result in an instant epiphany or an overnight success. “I’ve been in this job for five years and I’ve been experimenting and refining for that length of time. Fortunately, we’ve had real success and excellent participation from all segments of our community. Ultimately, we’ve been able to transform a tragedy into a new form of community engagement and information gathering and sharing that has real value. Sometimes those social media tools get a bad rap but the positive possibilities for us as educators outweigh any of the negatives.”

### **Joe Mazza, M.Ed., Speaks**

Joe Mazza developed his affinity for cutting edge technology in the early days of universal personal computer use. “When I was growing up the Commodore 64 personal computer was in vogue. My dad gave me the opportunity to learn to use the Commodore during time allotted in the evening, or I’d sneak into the den and use it after the family went to bed. At first I was mainly interested in playing games. But game-playing evolved into projects, presentations and keeping up with the latest advances in the technology.”

His affinity for technology and a passion for lifelong learning “is what I bring to the process of community engagement via technology,” he remarks, “along with the conviction that all effective technology-

supported community engagement strategies are underpinned by strong face-to-face relationships.” He adds, “As the main collaborator, I’m responsible for making collaboration a core cultural characteristic of our school.” The nature of that collaboration, he explains, “runs the technological gamut from basic technology to using the telephone and email to Skype, Twitter and social media to connect with parents collaboratively and transparently. For me it’s about using the tools in which I’m skillful and in which I’m confident to complement what we already do in terms of building community.”

At the Knapp School, where children speak more than 20 languages – “some get off a plane on Saturday and are in school on Monday speaking not a word of English” – communication between stakeholders, he insists, is a must, not a luxury. In addition to a steady stream of English language learners, the Knapp School has about 100 students with IEPs. “No matter what a child’s needs are we never leapfrog face-to-face relationship building in favor of technology. We talk to a child’s parents and find out as much about the child and the parents as possible so we can blend and shape our offerings according to their needs.”

He advises his community partners to “find your passions and utilize them to do good.” Technology, he concludes, “seems to be one of those passions where there are many opportunities for collaboration. Remember that face to face communication must be at the heart of everything we do in building relationships with our stakeholders.”

We invite you to share Mr. Mazza’s insights with your colleagues and the families you serve. Following our lead article, you’ll find selected resources that relate to this month’s theme and an introduction to a number of pertinent organizations in the FCTD network.

## Social Media as a Community Engagement Tool: “We Use Technology to Put Us All in the Same Room”

An interview with Joe Mazza,  
Principal, the Knapp School,  
North Penn School District, Lansdale, PA.

As educators, declares Joe Mazza, principal of the Knapp School in Lansdale, PA, “we hear often that parents are the first and most important teachers in a child’s life, which is certainly true. So why aren’t parents and schools in a state of constant collaboration?”



Joe Mazza

Mr. Mazza asked himself that question five years ago when he arrived at Knapp following early-career stints at public schools in the Chicago suburbs. His response to his own question was, “We don’t make sufficient use of the available technology to foster two-way community engagement.” In the intervening years Mr. Mazza has created an environment at Knapp in which students, teachers, administrators and parents utilize all available social media tools, including Twitter and blogging, to enhance engagement and share information.

“We use technology to knock the walls down and put us all in the same room,” declares Mr. Mazza. “Some older schools like ours were not constructed with collaboration in mind. They were built to accommodate traditional classrooms which consisted of rows of desks facing the teacher. Today, thanks to many digital tools, including social media, the traditional boundaries of classroom, school and community demand new communication structures with new tech-

nology as the sinew. We harness these technology tools to bring us closer together.”

A new generation of teachers, administrators and parents has grown accustomed to using tools such as Twitter in their personal lives, Mr. Mazza notes, “so employing Twitter as a tool for collaboration and engagement between community and school is a natural step in the evolution of technology utilization. According to Twitter 90% of the 460,000 daily Twitter signups are adults aged 18-35 years old. These signups are significant for schools as they are the majority age of our students’ parents.

“We have parents of children with special needs who use Twitter as well as email to communicate,” he says. “We share the information gleaned from conferences like the recent ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) gathering on Twitter. Even parents without a Twitter account can access conference information using “timekiwi” which is embedded on the front of our Family Engagement Wiki.” Time kiwi (<http://timekiwi.com/>) creates timelines and photo organization for Twitter users and bloggers “This access enables parents to benefit in near real-time from the resources shared in conferences or other pertinent education-related events by checking our website and being immediately connected to resources such as Discovery Channel storm chaser Reed Timmer (<http://dsc.discovery.com/tv/storm-chasers/teams/reed-timmer.html>) who might be standing in the midst of a tornado. Thanks to the experiential learning that’s now accessible to students of all ages and abilities, a child with special needs who has difficulty grasping the concept of a tornado, for example, can be virtually placed in a Discovery Channel Storm Chasers’ video and educated about what a tornado is and isn’t. This experience will help make the concept and experience of a tornado real for that child.”

## Suddenly Last Summer

Mr. Mazza came to Twitter only in the summer of 2011. “My Twitter account was originally used to help organize a concert in memory of my late brother-in-law who was killed in an accident in January 2011. But I didn’t begin learning in earnest how to use Twitter until last summer.” By July and August 2011, he recalls, “I was following certain people and began using Twitter for professional development purposes. I’d find an article relating to our school’s goals, for example, and send it to our teachers. I became a mix of 21st century and old school in terms of how I put information into the hands of parents and professionals.” In September, he recalls, “we brought Twitter to school. Via Twitter we sent out news, reminders for back-to-school night, planning details for the first parent night and announcements about teacher trainings. In addition to being able to rapidly disseminate information to our Knapp community, Twitter enables me to follow individuals on Twitter, providing me with access to blogs produced by principals and district superintendents, teachers and parents, as well as authors whose books I’ve enjoyed.”

Twitter also proved to be essential in organizing the Knapp School’s monthly “Home-School Meetings” involving teachers, administrators and parents. (<http://knappwiki.wikispaces.com/Home+%26+School+Meeting+2.0>) Noting that teachers can’t always take part in the meetings on-site because of work or other commitments, Mr. Mazza explains that the social media tool allows them to participate virtually. “Teachers can log on for a few minutes to make an announcement, talk about a field trip or issue necessary reminders and thus feel like they’re part of the meeting, imparting information instead of always being on the receiving end. Tuning in online means these individuals don’t have to take time away from after-hours work obligations or from their families. Instead, they can spend a few minutes contributing and then return to work or to family

life, following the meeting while multitasking.”

Meeting results are communicated via Twitter, and not only by Mr. Mazza or other participants. A reporter from the Philadelphia Inquirer covered the school’s March 27th meeting. “The Lansdale Reporter, our local newspaper, re-tweets much of what we share. In fact I recently sent a 140-character tweet with a picture which will be seen not only by our school’s 60 teachers or our 620 students or our 2000 parents but also by thousands of other individuals. Role modeling collaboration is a big focus for us because collaboration is one of the key skills that kids will need to be successful in life.”

## Kids and Twitter

At Knapp, Mr. Mazza says, his elementary school students are beginning to catch the Twitter bug. “The opportunity for kids regarding Twitter is very basic at the elementary school level,” he explains. “We’ve been exposed to some first



graders in Canada through Aviva Dunsiger, a first grade teacher there. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qW9O-vwcxdQ>) Those who follow her on Twitter can see her students tweeting out questions and answers from their books. They’re doing book chats based on the books they recently read. Some of our second graders have responded to her on several occasions regarding specific books they and her class have read. Using social media to have a book chat with another class in another country is pretty cool, our kids think.”

Admittedly, he concedes, “we’re in the infancy of having our students make use of Twitter. We’ll get there. Twitter will filter to the students, but our teachers are certainly learning from fellow teachers and others about how best to use this technology. A generation



ago kids had pen pals. Today, thanks to their teachers, our students are Skyping with kids from other countries, as was one of our teachers this morning when he was communicating with Estonia. Not only does this open doors, it also develops global and cultural competencies, which is very important in a melting pot school like ours.” Knapp Elementary currently enrolls 600 students from 22 different countries.



According to Mr. Mazza, among the reasons why many school officials are dismissive of Twitter is that they rarely see it utilized as a tool for learning. At Knapp, however, “I see teachers sharing student learning on Twitter throughout the day. They write to each other about potential lessons and seek out peer opinion from in-house teachers and those in their Personal Learning Network. When they experience the world connecting with them during their lesson using a certain hashtag – a label that aids Twitter searches – that’s a strong inducement to continue using Twitter.”

When asked about the use of Twitter at high school and college levels, Mr. Mazza says, “I envision a notation on a syllabus that might read as follows: ‘This is our class’s hashtag. Throughout class – and outside of class – I expect students to tweet about the week’s course content.’ This will expose the students to the expectation that they will use social media to communicate with and to learn from each other. We’ll see much of this as teachers and leaders become more

proficient at using the technology. I can only use it here as a school principal but I can imagine how powerful it would be for a college professor. There’s no way I wouldn’t try to harness that power in a college or graduate level class.”

Mr. Mazza points to a growing commitment to technology use among educators throughout the country. “Knowing that there are thousands of principals and teachers out there doing the same work I’m doing is important. Maybe they have a different approach than I have and it’s working, or they’re looking through a lens that’s much different from mine. Either way I can benefit from what they know. Firmly believing you don’t know everything (and you don’t have to) is important to professional learning.” He was pleased, he says, to see evidence of technology’s growing influence among educators at the recent ASCD conference.

“ASCD was once attended only by leaders and superintendents. Now I see many more teachers and technology coaches. This is the first ASCD where social media was huge. The hashtag ASCD12 was ‘blowing up’ all weekend. Every few seconds there was a new tweet – someone was sharing a resource, anecdote, hashtag, reflection or someone new to follow.”

Conference attendees, Mr. Mazza explains, were able to track the sessions in which they weren’t participating by following that Twitter hashtag. In other words, a conference attendee can sit in on a session but monitor several more via Twitter. “It’s called the back channel. This shows the power of social media in that it enables users to access so many information sources. There were 400 sessions at the ASCD conference. An attendee can’t possibly absorb all of them. However, instead of enjoying just four or five sessions I have notes from 28 sessions that I was able to share with my staff and parents as well as my administrative colleagues. As more and more educators

catch on to Twitter, the level of sharing via social media will be much more evident at upcoming conferences.

Potholes remain, however, he cautions. “Unfortunately, there weren’t many parent leaders in attendance at the recent ASCD conference. I want parent leaders to learn alongside the educators. Research says that’s what works. Those big conferences should be attracting parent leaders. Lucky for me I have parents who are Twitter users so I was able to share real-time information with them from the conference site.” However, he adds, “I’d rather those parents were there with me at the conference and learning with me in that venue. When parents and teachers are learning together, the kids win.”

## Twitter Training

Twitter training sessions, he notes, have expedited universal Twitter use within the Knapp community. “We are constantly learning, experimenting with new technology, taking calculated chances and letting our parents who are partnering with us know that we’re trying these new approaches and technology. Most importantly, we continue to offer training. We can’t expect parents, teachers or students to use these tools and technologies if we don’t provide the time and the hands-on training.”

Mr. Mazza says that he arranges training sessions to accommodate the maximum number of trainees. “We’re having our second Twitter parent night of the year April 17th. The first session attracted seven parents. With the assistance of a tech professional from our district IT department we covered Twitter A-Z. In the second session we’re utilizing the parents who attended the first session plus other parents to share hashtags and other aids that are applicable for parents. We’ll then explain how these aids and apps can be useful in a parent’s life such as in sharing their child’s daily school experiences throughout the day

with pictures and updates, for instance. A major part of the training is to show parents how Twitter can complement their daily life with the news sources, weather and personal interests the microblog provides its users. We tell the parent trainees, ‘If you leave here tonight and you don’t do Twitter here’s how you get the benefits of information gleaned from Twitter without an account, using the timekiwi, for example.’”

On April 13th Mr. Mazza and a colleague conducted a principal training in which principals and other administrators in his district participated. “Collaborative technology that enhances community building with educators and parents has a great deal of potential. Imagining the idea of our 18-school district and 2,000+ teachers on Twitter is chilling. Just the thought of the idea-sharing possible with that kind of educational experience and expertise. Every In-Service Day we’re not training teachers on how this tool works feels like a missed opportunity. It’s our job as leaders to teach others how to fish. Before social media tools, principals searched for articles, then emailed out or made copies of them to put in teacher mailboxes.

“In role-modeling lifelong learning in the 21st century, we know that when many kids depart in June they will be going home where their world is mainly digital. They’ll be using this and other technology on a daily basis, if not on an hourly or minute-to-minute basis. In September, they will return and when they do come back I want to make certain that they don’t walk into a technology time warp and land in 1957.”

## A Social Media Framework Built on Face-to-Face Communications

The enthusiasm that permeates Mr. Mazza’s community engagement methods has been built on a foundation of face-to-face communication, he stresses. “The face-to-face aspect of what we’ve constructed

has been vital to our success because technology connections between individuals cannot be effective in a school-community environment without the trust that's dependent on face-to-face relationships." Only when those relationships are strong will buy-in by all the stakeholders occur, he points out. That approach is especially important, he notes, in a school that serves many families in which English is often not spoken at all, as well as transfers from other school districts.

Today at Knapp, Mr. Mazza says, "we're testing out the best possible iPad apps for translation. We use a program called the Language Line (<http://www.languageline.com/>) which is conference call that connects us to the appropriate interpreter. Sometimes this system requires a couple of minutes to become fully operational. If we want to have an extended conversation we will use it. My goal is instead of hanging a pen on a chain at my office door I want an iPad on a chain so that participants in this program can type in exactly what they need in order to help more of these families that lack the confidence or the skills to tell us what they need."



Success, he emphasizes, did not come overnight. "It takes time for stakeholders to build those trust-based relationships necessary to persuade teachers, parents and others to attend our monthly meetings. Just because a desired level of attendance has been achieved for a given meeting doesn't mean that the meeting has been a success. A good meeting is a sharing session in which participants must feel valued. They need to

know that what they are sharing counts and is important and that they are helping their school grow and improve. That's when a principal knows that authentic family engagement is underway at a school."

Mr. Mazza employs his blog to support the face-to-face approach plus the use of social media. "I've read a lot while doing the literature review for my dissertation. When I finish reading the articles I have a million ideas flying around my brain. But I can only pull a line or two out of each article. So what do I do with all this useful information? My blog is where I can hold forth on some of these ideas, things I've tried about which people have said, 'That's cool; I wish I knew about that!' I use the blog to support other principals, teachers, parents and community leaders who may not yet have used technology to meet some of their engagement needs."

In his blog posts, he notes, "I always revert to the same topic: face-to-face relationships. Such relationships identify what can be accomplished in a school setting. At Knapp, parents tweet other parents or teachers, piquing their interest in accessing our Wednesday night #PTchats or Parent-Teacher Chats." However, he points out, not all parents are technologically astute. "Those are the parents to whom I send the hard copy of our newsletter. Sometimes a visit to their homes is necessary to check in with them and show them the level of commitment we have for their son or daughter's education. There's no silver bullet here. The idea is to get to know who your stakeholders are and your audience and alert them that you intend to become acquainted with them in person as well as through other means." This approach, he says, "builds efficacy and helps parents become aware that they are part of something significant and that we as a school will utilize their skills." Topping this framework, he says, "is a vision and someone to remove the roadblocks. Here, that's me. Everybody around me is very capable and can do all



these things but they need to gain exposure to the technology and feel trusted; they have to feel they are cared about. There must be supports in place. There has to be time for professional development.” Mr. Mazza’s bottom line for principals: “Practice what you preach; be reflective, provide training and your partners will follow your lead.”

The most significant product of this effort, he notes, “is when a parent tweets to hundreds of people about how awesome a teacher’s class is because that parent’s child has had such a rich experience. And then the parent sends a photo of her child working on his/her own on a non-assigned project tied to class content in which the child was inspired to become involved. The parent tweets that photo to the child’s teacher. It shows proof that kids are making connections at home, that they’re happy and that they are developing a love of learning and of school. How powerful is that?”

For any principal aiming to replicate what Mr. Mazza has accomplished he urges the development of a lifelong learner’s mindset. “I continue to practice what I preach and therefore continue to learn. There is so much I don’t yet know. When you’re enthusiastic about learning you can’t wait to get to the keyboard (or the phone) to see what’s new. For example, I use Evernote (<http://www.evernote.com/>), free cloud-based technology that makes notes, web clips and images available on any computer an individual uses. It’s like a 21st century three-ring binder in which I maintain an ASCD section where I store the notes I took from all the conference sessions. I also have notebooks for all the topics in which I’m interested, all the different roles I serve as principal, and of course my graduate coursework. I try to keep everything in the cloud. I still have a lot of paper files and I’m hoping to get rid of most of them with the exception of personnel and safety files this summer.”



Students at the Knapp School using Puzzlemaker to create science crossword puzzles.

### Looking Forward: “It’s a New Day, a New Now”

Joe Mazza anticipates an era in which many other principals will be as enthusiastic about the implementation of new technology to build engagement.

“We’ll receive our first cart of iPads next week; each of our schools in the district ordered one cart of iPads, 25 per cart. These game-changing events emerge slowly but when they do emerge it’s in every school’s interest to make the most of them, even now when budgets are tighter than ever. It’s a new day. It’s a new now. These tools are very powerful. Whether via Twitter or reading an article in a newspaper, we need to stay current on what’s working in schools in our district and nationwide. We need to take a look at what the populations are of the schools that are doing the most with technology as a community building tool. We need to continue soliciting feedback from our families. Just because I’m doing something that works in my school doesn’t necessarily mean that my methods will be effective in another school. In the process a selection of strategic options that are usable might be developed.

“Through the eFACE Today blog and Parent-Teacher Chats on Wednesday nights we are constantly seeking to share ideas and solicit new ones. It’s important



for parents, teachers and administrators to listen and see new perspectives brought to life. When we take the time to see through each other's lens, partnership is possible.

"I have a lot of other responsibilities that must be attended to in addition to building community engagement. But principals need to invest their time in what's most important, and what's most important in my opinion is optimum parent-teacher collaboration for the benefit of those who matter most in a school environment: the students."



Students from Knapp School participate during a virtual & interactive trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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## RESOURCES

### ARTICLES

#### How to Teach with Technology

By Sara Bernard

Edutopia (2011)

In this article, Edutopia presents a series of technology resources and lesson plan ideas for social studies, language and creative writing, math, and science topics. Among the featured classroom tools for writing are Skype, Photo Story narrative builder, Garage Band to create songs for student autobiographies and audio-guided tours for art, Google Talk to build rough drafts, Voice Thread to respond to recitations, the Sonic Odyssey game and creative drawing tools such as Doozla, Comic Life, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Flash.

Featured tools for social studies classes include Skype, the CoverItLive blogging platform, several filmmaking tools (Screen Nation, Make TV, Good Shooting Guide, Videography for Educators), Myspace and Facebook to create historical figure pages, podcasts for classroom wikis, and the geography games Free Poverty and Free Rice to encourage community involvement.

Technology-based activities for science and math include:

1. Conducting interviews with science experts, using iMovie (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/imovie/id377298193?mt=8>) and Movie Maker (<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-live/movie-maker-get-started>) in conjunction with Flip video cameras;
2. Creating video games with Games for Change (<http://www.gamesforchange.org/>) and World Wide Workshop Foundation (<http://www.worldwideworkshop.org/>);
3. Using popular movies and video games to teach students to identify the laws of physics and to

recognize when those laws are being broken for cinematic purposes;

4. Using Xtranormal (<http://www.xtranormal.com/>) to animate abstract concepts and build geography vocabulary;
5. Using Java Games (<http://www.addicting-games.com/>), Java Math and Math Blaster (<http://www.mathblaster.com/free-game.aspx?pid=googpd&cid=math%20blaster%20free>) for quiz materials, or Lego Batman (<http://videogames.lego.com/en-us/Batman/AboutTheGame/Screenshots/Default.aspx>) to teach algebra;
6. Sending text messages to post quiz questions;
7. Using cameras to identify angles in an outdoor scavenger hunt;
8. Teaching multiplication tables with an interactive whiteboard and cloned shapes,
9. Creating a Voki avatar (<http://www.voki.com/>) to explain concepts to students using a clue system.

The article includes links to many of the class projects created with these tools.

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/5261>

## WEBSITES

### Edudemic

Edudemic provides insights and advice on technology and teaching with a special focus on ways to utilize social media to improve education. Articles are updated daily. The site includes information on the use of Twitter, Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com/>) and other social media tools in the classroom, the role of video games in learning, online education and Android and iPad apps. Teachers may register for Edudemic Pulse (<https://www.tumblr.com/>), a free weekly digest for educators. The digest focuses on practices appropriate for use in the classroom by K-12 teachers.

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/5345>

### Technology Integration and Education

This site is designed for professionals to learn, share, and create a network of support with respect to classroom technology use. They can participate in, or simply follow, discussions via Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google and Yahoo. There are blogs, chats, and discussion boards through which members can share favorite websites, ideas, and pose questions to support technology efforts in their school systems. Resources include links to websites, podcasts, videos, and commercial products. <http://www.fctd.info/resources/5265>

### Easy Chirp

Easy Chirp is a free Web application (alpha stage) designed for Twitter users with disabilities. The Easy Chirp Web application was written by Web developer and Web Axe (<http://webaxe.blogspot.com/>) founder Dennis Lebre. Accessible Twitter features include:

- Compatibility with all major Web browsers
- Straightforward layout and navigation
- High contrast with large text sizes
- Keyboard-accessible links
- Visible DM, Favorite, Reply, Re-tweet, and Delete links
- Use with or without JavaScript
- Timeout option (from sign-in)
- Linked search terms in tweets
- Available “Everyone” page

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/4942>

### Family Connect

American Foundation for the Blind

Created by the American Foundation for the Blind and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, the site is an online

multimedia community providing informational support to families of children with visual impairments, from birth to adulthood. The site, which also serves professionals, features a mom-authored blog, video testimonials from families and articles authored by parents and experts on blindness, multiple disabilities, technology and education. The site's resources are searchable by age range or topic (family life, growth and development, education, social life and recreation and transition to independence). Links to local resources are available.

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/5170>

## GUIDES

### **Social Safety: An Online Networking Guide for Parents and Teachers of Young Adults with Cognitive Disabilities**

University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana (2010)

With the increasing popularity of social networking, many parents, educators and disability advocates are concerned about the online safety of young people with disabilities. This website, designed by students at the University of Illinois, helps youth with cognitive disabilities, ages 14-22, understand and safely select, navigate and participate in social networking websites. The site provides YouTube videos and other resources that address the safe use of social networking services, including the protection of personal information, cyberbullying, and "stranger danger". This site is thorough and well-researched and of value to parents of children both with and without disabilities.

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/5263>

## BLOGS

### **The Innovative Educator**

By Lisa Nielsen

This is a blog written by Lisa Nielsen who advocates the use of cell phones, iPads and social networking sites in the classroom. She promotes the use of

technologies that encourage students to think and act for the future. There is an emphasis on the difference between 'learning' and 'schooling'. Many of the resources and links posted may be blocked in schools, but the premise of this blog is that the very tools that are blocked can greatly enhance students' learning. Resources here may be used outside of school to enrich the learning experience. There are links to videos, podcasts and additional materials, including a parenting book and teen guide, which can be downloaded from the blog site.

<http://www.fctd.info/resources/5256>

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# KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

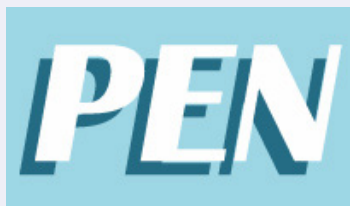
## Parent & Educator Partnership

The goal of Parent & Educator Partnership is to improve meaningful participation of Illinois parents in their children's education. Their work includes: (1) Developing, equipping, and supporting parent leadership; (2) Providing training and information on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); (3) Assisting local school districts in developing school, family, and community partnerships; and (4) Supporting the Illinois State Board of Education in State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator #8. Their work is accomplished in part by providing the following: (1) Website for parents and educators to access information; (2) Lending Library for free checkout and returns; (3) Toll-free support line and online contact form; and (4) Training on IDEA, collaboration, and family involvement.

For further information, contact:  
Parent & Educator Partnership  
25 S. Washington Street, Suite 106  
Naperville, IL 60540  
Phone: 877-317-2733  
Fax: 630-428-4055  
Email: [kjones@sased.org](mailto:kjones@sased.org)  
<http://www.fctd.info/organizations/12703>

## Parent Education Network

Parent Education Network (PEN) is a statewide coalition in Pennsylvania of parents of children represent-



ing a range of disabilities and ages. PEN believes strongly that knowledgeable, skillful parents impact effectively on early intervention, special education, and ongoing services for children with disabilities. PEN's Parent Training Projects promote mutual respect between parents and professionals for the knowledge, skills, and abilities each contributes to develop appropriate educational and service delivery outcomes. PEN's services are available to both parents and professionals.

For additional information, contact:

Parent Education Network

2107 Industrial Highway

York, PA 17402

Phone: (800)522-5827 (800) 441-5028(Spanish)(717)600-0100

Fax: 717-600-8101

Contact: Kay Lipsitz, Director

Email: [pen@parentednet.org](mailto:pen@parentednet.org)

<http://www.fctd.info/organizations/544>

## Parent Educator Resource Centers

The Parent Educator Resource Center (PERC) project is coordinated by the



West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Education. The purpose of each center is to build a partnership between parents and educators to ensure that children receive the highest quality education and achieve success. A team consists of a parent of a special needs child and an educator. Services are provided based on the individual's strengths, resources, and needs. General services include information, resources, and training for parents on issues such as parenting skills, problem solving, educational planning, behavior management, and home learning activities. PERC



also connects families with appropriate services and strengthens family involvement and positive school-to-home partnerships.

For more information, contact:

Parent Educator Resource Centers

Office of Special Programs Extended and Early Learning Building 6, Room 304, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. Charleston, WV 25305

Phone: (304) 558-2696 (800) 642-8541x53272

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### Parents for Public Schools

Parents for Public Schools is a national organization of community-based chapters working to strengthen public schools through broad-based enrollment. Invigorated by a diverse membership, their proactive involvement helps public schools attract all families in a community by making sure that schools effectively serve all children. They are motivated by an understanding that quality public education is vital to America's future.



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