

# Let's Get Social!

## How to Effectively Incorporate Social Media into Your Classroom

Like many educators, you may be wondering how your classroom can benefit from the power of online networking. How do you promote academic discussion among students in such a boundless environment? What tools can you use to engage 21st century learners?

Through proper guidance and digital education, any classroom can discover the rich and meaningful opportunities that an online discussion can provide. Use this guide to get your bearings and plot a successful path toward a more "social" school year.

### Explore Free Tools

Engaging your students using platforms like Edmodo will advance a collaborative educational environment and the development of good Digital Citizenship habits. Here are a few tools we recommend:

#### Edmodo

This virtual learning platform allows educators to continue class discussions online, poll students, assess understanding, and award badges based on performance.  
Learn More: [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)

#### Kidblog

Wish you could bring blogging and online publishing into your curriculum? Now you can, using this kid-friendly portal.  
Learn More: [www.kidblog.org](http://www.kidblog.org)

#### ClassChatter

This tool helps promote dialog between student and teacher by offering a secure space to blog, chat, and submit assignments online.  
Learn More: [www.classchatter.com](http://www.classchatter.com)

#### Schoology

Organize your schedule, host virtual chats, track student performance, and collaborate with colleagues using this award-winning learning management system.  
Learn More: [www.schoology.com](http://www.schoology.com)

### Tips to Help You Get Started

- 1 Define Your Objectives:** Before you dive in, make certain that integrating online networking and social media into your lessons will help you to achieve your academic goals.
- 2 Read the Rules:** Review your district's AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) and the Terms of Use for the website you choose to use so that you understand, and are in compliance with, the related policies.
- 3 Learn the Ropes:** Understand how to facilitate proper online communication while promoting Digital Citizenship among students. (See 10 Ideas for Rich Academic Student Discussion, pg. 2).
- 4 Choose Your Tool:** Finding the proper conduit can be difficult but there are a number of tools that serve the specific needs of the classroom (and many of them are free!)

### PBS LearningMedia in the Social Sphere



The resources available on PBS LearningMedia ([www.pbslearningmedia.org](http://www.pbslearningmedia.org)) can be a valuable addition to your use of social media in your classroom. This **free** service is packed with multimedia resources and discussion questions that you can use to build students' content knowledge, promote inquiry, and facilitate real and meaningful discourse in a live group setting or online.

# 10 Ideas for Rich Academic Student Discussion on the Internet

Ready to get social? Use these guidelines from education technology expert Michael Gorman ([www.21centuryedtech.wordpress.com](http://www.21centuryedtech.wordpress.com)) to promote meaningful dialog among students in your next online gathering.

**1** Keep discussions to Bloom's higher-level topics including the orders of creating, evaluating, and synthesizing.

**2** Use discussion as a formative assessment for checking both individual and group understanding. This does not mean it always has to be graded for accuracy... but more as a way for the teacher to plan. Many times in this method, the question might be lower on Bloom's Scale to show remembering and understanding.

**3** A discussion can be graded, although it might be best to grade for participation. In this manner, the teacher may post and then ask students to reply to that post with a required number of sentences. There could also be a requirement to comment on a stated number of posts from other students. When grading a discussion, be sure to define specific requirements.

**4** A class discussion is not an emulation of social media, it is an academic forum. This should be stated within the discussion question until it becomes acceptable classroom practice.

**5** Students should practice proper Digital Citizenship.

**6** Mix up media in discussions... do not always have them text-based. Use documents, PDF files, movies, music, sound files, Power Points, website links, and images to promote the standards and concepts. This could be a great place to incorporate resources from PBS LearningMedia.

**7** Keep on topic while trying to provide discussions that will support the standards and the 21st century skills you wish to emphasize and plan to assess.

**8** Use a rubric if providing a discussion for understanding. Make sure your students are aware of the rubric and that they use it when posting comments or replies.

**9** As a teacher, be sure to model by practicing what is required, while also commenting on what students write.

**10** Encourage students to create their own discussions so they begin to own the process.

## Bloom's Taxonomy

Review Bloom's Taxonomy here: <http://bit.ly/PnSKf3>

## Ground Rules

- ▶ Proper English grammar
- ▶ Proper spelling of words
- ▶ Complete sentences
- ▶ No use of text lingo (example: "lol")
- ▶ Any copied and pasted resources or references should be at least cited by name and link
- ▶ Students should stay on topic - no outside or sidebar conversation
- ▶ Thoughts and ideas should be concise and to the point (no rambling)
- ▶ Avoid "yearbook" comments: When stating positives and agreements, students should offer specific reasoning
- ▶ Exercise proper Digital Citizenship (see below)

## Digital Citizenship

- ▶ Proper peer critique should be employed with an emphasis on caring (example... do not be critical; instead use "I wonder" statements)
- ▶ Empathy for others should be practiced with an understanding of an individual's writing before commenting
- ▶ No use of text lingo (example: "lol")
- ▶ All comments should be academic
- ▶ Personal identifying information should not be used
- ▶ No plagiarizing... give credit
- ▶ There should be no bullying or put-downs

## Suggestion

Include the 21st century competencies of Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Creativity. Do not try to include all of these skills; instead pick one and break it down into its individual components. Example: instead of Creativity - use one component such as divergent thinking.

