

## BEYOND LIKES AND SHARES: CONNECTING, CREATING, LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Social media is often viewed as a distraction in the classroom, a space filled with endless scrolling, viral trends, and fleeting attention spans. Yet, behind the likes, shares, and short videos lies an untapped educational potential. When used thoughtfully and responsibly, social media platforms can become powerful tools that support teaching, learning, and meaningful student engagement.

In today's digital age, learners are already immersed in social media. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) have become part of their daily routines. Instead of competing with these platforms for students' attention, educators are beginning to meet learners where they are integrating social media into the learning process. This shift transforms social media from a source of distraction into a space for collaboration, creativity, and learning.

One of the strongest educational benefits of social media is communication. Teachers can use private groups or class pages to post announcements, share learning materials, and extend discussions beyond the classroom. Students, in turn, can ask questions, exchange ideas, and collaborate with classmates in real time. Learning becomes continuous, no longer confined within the four walls of the classroom or limited by class hours.

Social media also supports creative and student-centered learning. Learners can demonstrate understanding by producing digital outputs such as short educational videos, , blogs, podcasts, or photo essays. These platforms allow students to express ideas

in ways that match their interests and strengths. Instead of being passive recipients of information, students become content creators which an important skill in the 21st century.

Moreover, social media exposes learners to real-world issues and authentic audiences. Educational pages, advocacy groups, and professionals share content that can enrich classroom lessons. Through guided activities, students learn to analyze current events, evaluate sources, and participate in meaningful online discussions. This experience strengthens critical thinking and media literacy skills that are essential in an era of information overload and misinformation.

However, the educational use of social media is not without challenges. Issues such as cyberbullying, digital distraction, privacy concerns, and misinformation remain real risks. This is where responsible guidance becomes crucial. Teachers and schools must emphasize digital citizenship, ethical online behavior, and proper boundaries. Clear rules, purposeful tasks, and close monitoring help ensure that social media is used as a learning tool rather than a source of harm.

At the end of the day, social media is neither purely good nor bad, it depends on how it is used. When integrated with clear educational goals, guided by values, and supported by digital literacy, social media platforms can enhance learning experiences. They can make education more relevant, interactive, and connected to the real world.

As education continues to evolve alongside technology, the question is no longer whether social media belongs in learning spaces, but how it can be used wisely. Beyond likes and shares, social media holds the potential to shape learners who are informed, creative, and responsible digital citizens who are ready to learn, connect, and contribute in a digital world.

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