



# Shaping theFuture



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## Social Media Policy

by Julian Petzold



media listed above, I do use tons of technology for the tasks that are required of me.

Technology and social media have the ability to be very destructive mechanisms in the lives of people if they aren't used correctly. With guidelines and a few simple rules, the benefits of technology are immeasurable. So, considering that most technology will change before we even have the time to respond with an appropriate answer, how do we set policy for technology in our schools that is both appropriate and has a shelf life of more than six months?

### Policies

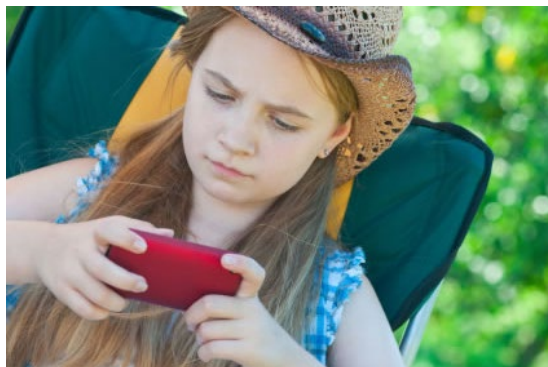
**I believe there are unlimited opportunities with current technology if we embrace it with creativity.**

I believe policies regarding technology and its use in our schools can really miss the mark when we try to consider all the current uses, trends, and avenues to which kids have access. Most Codes of Conduct already have all the ingredients for enforcing any misuse of technology. I have always used a simple policy: "All technology of any kind is to be used for schoolwork only, unless express permission is granted by a teacher." Nobody has to sign it. It's policy for the school and does not need signed approval to follow. The current challenges involving technology use and social media aren't going away anytime soon, so be careful not to set a policy and think your work is done.

I am in absolute favor of utilizing every tool possible to advance the education of our children. And technology is a major tool, so let's get going with it. Downloading an App on a Smartphone may be perfect for the assignment. Asking opinions for a persuasive essay on Facebook can gather helpful data. Making a movie on your Mac for a class project would be fun. The rule I use for students is: Just get permission first!

### Discernment

Getting permission helps students develop discernment regarding what is an educational use of technology for learning and what is personal activity. It also helps teachers gather ideas from their students about how to incorporate technology into instruction. Let's face it, most kids can help us in the



**F**ull disclosure: I don't have a Facebook page, have never Tweeted, and am not Linked-In to anyone. I blogged at one time quite a bit, but couldn't keep it going. I have never made a podcast...YET. I rarely text anyone, not even my bff. I won an iPod Touch a year ago, but I have few Apps on it (my kids put them there). I do have a Smartphone, and I agreed to write on this topic because I AM comfortable with the fluidity of technology and the possibilities it presents. I believe there are unlimited opportunities with current technology if we embrace it with creativity. I love to think creatively about how to improve life in general and schools in particular, so although I don't currently take advantage of the social

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## Review, Reflect, Resolve

What experiences have you had with social media?  
If you have a policy on social media, what does it mandate? If you don't have a policy, do you see a need for one? What would it say?  
What "resources" other than social media have created a stir in the past? How was it addressed?  
What would be the ideal use of social media in your school or classroom?



Other articles you might be interested in in this issue of **Shaping theFuture**:

[Research in the Schools](#) by *Kim Marxhausen* (Feature)

[How Flexible is Your Early Childhood Program?](#) by *Jill Zempel* (ECnet)

[The Best of Times](#) by *Gail Holzer* (ETnet)

“creativity with technology” department. The more we engage students in the discussion, the more we stand to learn. After all, they are the ones learning, and kids are a fantastic resource to every classroom teacher who will take a moment to ask for their advice or thoughts.

**The more we engage students in the discussion, the more we stand to learn. After all, they are the ones learning, and kids are a fantastic resource to every classroom teacher who will take a moment to ask for their advice or thoughts.**

However, some of my students may be like some of yours in that they lack proper discernment on using technology. My parents used to say to me, “Jesus sees everything you do.” With Facebook, Twitter, and texting, I’ve heard more parents express concern about what other people can see instead of what Jesus can see. Proper discernment will always be rooted in Holy Scripture, so let’s commit to taking kids right to the Word regarding using all these avenues. The technology at our fingertips can be a great avenue for relationships, prayer, care, and communication if we learn to use them productively. And remember, this isn’t new. Kids lacked discernment long before the internet.

Technology requires responsibility for proper use, and we need to keep responsibility where it should be. This can be a tricky area for policy, so you need to have the discussion about where the schoolyard begins and ends. I had a parent bring me a copy of something posted on Facebook at 8:39p.m. in order to have me address the concern the next morning. There was valid reason for concern, but the responsibility in that situation resided with the student and parent in that home — not my office. Fast forward a few months later; a parent brought me a 10:14a.m. Facebook post from an eighth grader. I provided a consequence in that situation because the student using his new smartphone to post to Facebook during math class wasn’t acceptable. Are there circumstances where students are cyber-bullying or sexting not while on school grounds but to or with fellow students? You need to be prepared to handle these situations in a clear and straightforward way. What if Jesus had a Twitter account? A Facebook page? A YouTube account? What information would He include and what would be acceptable?



### All Media is Social Media

I believe all media is social media. Really, there is no media without people to produce it, see it, read it, hear it, and experience it. This connection to social media may be effective now, but my guess is that it will evolve into something a bit different as technology continues to change the world in which we live. You and I are right in the middle of a technology revolution — and it’s going to forever change how we interact, communicate, teach, and learn. The policies you establish in regards to use of technology should be kept as clear and simple as possible so that you can oversee the guidelines at the same time as you explore uncharted waters.

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*Julian Petzold is Principal, Trinity Lutheran School, Clinton Township, Michigan.*

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## COMMENTS

**Do you have thoughts to share? Contribute here:**

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Your message



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