



## Using Social Media in Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Social media is becoming more eminently woven into the sociocultural fabric of global societies in the 21st century. From emerging platforms and ever-evolving multimodal features, to algorithmic changes and privacy concerns, social media is indubitably shaping the frontier of how people communicate, interact, and perceive the world around them. Using social media in schools is, of course, not a new phenomenon. However, given unabating advances in digital technology coupled with shifting user demands, social media is constantly in flux. Thus, staying abreast of social media trends and uses in the field of education is a critical endeavor and merits on-going conversations.

### KEYWORDS

Social media; teaching and learning; educational technology; 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

## INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE: USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS

Since its inception, education scholars have explored social media's capacities for augmenting teaching and learning outcomes, as well as identified potential challenges and concerns associated with its use (see Aguilar, Rosenberg, Greenhalgh, Fütterer, Lishinski, & Fischer, 2021; Carpenter, Morrison, Rosenberg, & Hawthorne, 2023; Greenhow, Campbell, Galvin, & Askari, 2018; and Greenhow, Galvin, Brandon, & Askari, 2020). This special issue of *Research in Social Sciences and Technology (RESSAT)* features a compilation of seven empirical and theoretical research articles that each uniquely touch upon the theme, "Using Social Media in Schools." The scholars who contributed manuscripts to this special issue represent colleges and universities from around the world, including Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Wilfrid Laurier University, Turan University, University of South Africa, Utah State University, East Tennessee State University, and the University of Tennessee - Knoxville.

The first article is a qualitative study in which the author critically examines social media's potential to influence students' perceptions of world events, which may lead to problematic in-class discussions. After highlighting potential negative impacts of social media, the author offers considerations for aiding students in becoming more critical consumers of social media content, including leveraging the Stanford History Education Group's Civic Online Reasoning curriculum and teaching democratic humility. Relatedly, the second article is a theoretical piece in which the authors contend that social media has the potential to be instrumental in educating for democracy, particularly when critical media literacy skills are taught in tandem.

The third and fourth articles both address classroom teachers' use of social in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the former is a qualitative inquiry study that examines the experiences of twelve educators from three separate schools in South Africa who were using WhatsApp Messenger to supplement their instruction during COVID-19 lockdowns. The latter is a quantitative study that offers insight into how K-12 social studies teachers in the State of Tennessee were using social media prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors endeavor to establish a baseline of data to support more complex understandings of teacher social media use trends post-COVID.

The fifth article is a quantitative survey research study that describes the relationship between participatory citizenship behaviors and social media use of 284 college students from Kazakhstan. The authors make data-driven recommendations for future research studies that aim to examine the connections between civic participation and digital media. In the sixth article, the authors report findings from their quantitative study which examined how demographics and professional identities affect #SSChat members' perceived 'sense of community' on Twitter. Lastly, the special issue concludes with a comprehensive theoretical literature review that addresses both opportunities and challenges associated with using social media in K-12 education.

We believe that this special issue of *RESSAT* represents a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation concerning the role(s) of social media in the field of education. It is our hope that teachers and education scholars will read these articles with considerable interest, and that they will inspire new ideas that will help advance our collective understanding of how social media continues to shape teaching and learning across the field.

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