Leveraging Social Networks For Educational Purposes

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Social networking is shaping our lives on a daily basis. We blog, Twitter, Facebook, post photographs to Flikr or Picasa, and use GoogleDocs with colleagues to collaborate on projects. We rely on technology for our day-to-day activities. However, when we enter a school building, we shut down those activities until the school day is complete. The reasons vary, but the primary reason is teachers do not know how to tap into the power of social networking for educational purposes. A new culture of learning is developing. Information networks allow for the sharing of vast amounts of data on any subject or content. These networks are social in nature in that there are rules and norms for participation. The networks provide for unlimited access to resources that are not available in the classroom allowing users to learn about anything their heart desires. If we really want to reform our education system, how do we leverage what the students are already doing and make it work in school?

This poster session will discuss the pros and cons of using social networking for education. A computer will be set up to display samples of social networking that has been used successfully in classrooms – other than Facebook and Twitter. The session will discuss ways to introduce social networking to build personal learning networks, communicate with students and parents, and use tools that students are already using when they leave the school building.

Keywords: Social Networking, Professional Learning Communities, Professional Development, Distance Education

References:


Presenter Background:
The presenter has been teaching face-to-face and distance education courses for more than 15 years. During that time, the presenter has been using social networking modes, such as Facebook, instant messaging, and Twitter for education and community building. The presenter holds a PhD in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in distance education. Current research interests are related to improving engagement of students in distance education courses, creation of professional learning communities, and using social networking tools to improve teacher and student learning.