

Growing Professional Collaboration Online Using Social Media

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The world has changed (again). Ubiquitous information and communication technologies have dramatically transformed the way Australians interact with colleagues, friends and family. Education, business, government, retail, shopping and many aspects of daily routines have been transformed by the use of the internet, particularly social media tools like facebook, blogs and particularly micro-blogging sites such as twitter. This trend is likely to continue and indeed, accelerate. Social media is used by all generations and is here to stay.

Educators have the responsibility and practical need to assist students navigate the complexities of citizenship and increasingly, digital citizenship. It is important that deputy principals are familiar with digital technologies and social media tools, enjoying their benefits as well as understanding the challenges they present for colleagues and students. This is best achieved by using the tools.

The NSW Deputy Principals Association increasingly uses the internet to communicate matters of professional interest and network collegially. During 2010, it was evident that many deputies were making their first forays into using social media and others were further developing their already considerable expertise. Social media or Web 2.0 sites, particularly the association blog, conference ning, yammer and twitter have increasingly been embraced by a growing number of deputies, both professionally and personally.

NSW deputy principals profess a great desire and need to develop professionally, particularly with ubiquitous digital technologies. Ongoing, life-log learning is facilitated in a range of ways but practically, online distribution and the development of Personal Learning Networks (PLNs) is increasingly essential. Deputy Principals in NSW have a wealth of experience and expertise to share, especially with newer colleagues. The notion of a PLN is one that recognises learning is about connecting with others. 21st century digital technologies, particularly the internet, allow knowledge, tools and skills to be shared quickly and effectively - at point of need.

Although fledgling in some respects, there is evidence to suggest that much progress was made in 2010 by the Association, with the following achievements worth noting:

- an average of one new post a fortnight was made at *Deputy Principals Online* blog <http://deputyprincipalsonline.wordpress.com/> with '168 hits' being the most traffic on a single day. Topics covered in posts included: new administrative tools; microblogging; cybersafety and digital citizenship; professional development courses; Adobe and Microsoft training opportunities for schools; the experience of being a new DP; TED videos; how to use a ning, twitter, yammer and Adobe Captivate; many online tools listed and linked; Mark Treadwell and four others made guest posts; social media was explained visually; the importance of distributed technology in schools explored by a DERNSW team member; the DET blogED platform explored; Delicious, Google Reader and RSS feeds explained and more

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- 168 delegates or presenters joined the *Catalysts – Making it Happen* conference ning <http://nswdpa.ning.com/> where keynote and workshop materials were made available.
- At the DET microblogging site, 126 members of the DP community <https://www.yammer.com/deputyprincipals> posted 259 messages.

In 2011, it should be noted that:

- the annual conference will continue using the association ning to assist with communication, before, during and after the event.
- DET is trialling the microblogging site yammer and will make a decision about the future of the site after formal evaluation.
- guests posters are needed to keep the association blog active

Social media plays such a large part in our Australian community that all deputy principals need to be cognisant of the opportunities and challenges. Understanding digital citizenship and cybersafety will continue to be an area of need for DPs to effectively support students and colleagues. Developing effective PLNs would be another area of need for DPs with the obvious ongoing benefits of collaboration and sharing between members. It should be noted that DET and CLI have a formal PLN course now that is accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers. The NSW Deputy Principals Association may have to place more emphasis and funding on this area for professional development to support members in times of rapid change.

Links:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqSH5TMYlz4&feature=player_embedded (Starting a PLN)

<http://climoodle.cli.det.nsw.edu.au/> (Choose 'Schools' then 'Building a PLN')

<http://darcymoore.net/web-20-for-teachers/> (Web 2.0 for Learning Professionals)

<http://www.delicious.com/Darcy1968/pln> (PLN bookmarks)