

MyNotebook.com App Summary

NY Times Headline: Private school launches an open source social network for parents, teachers and students

Tweet: Parents, do you know what your digital footprint looks like? Find out @mynotebook.com

The Problem and the Solution

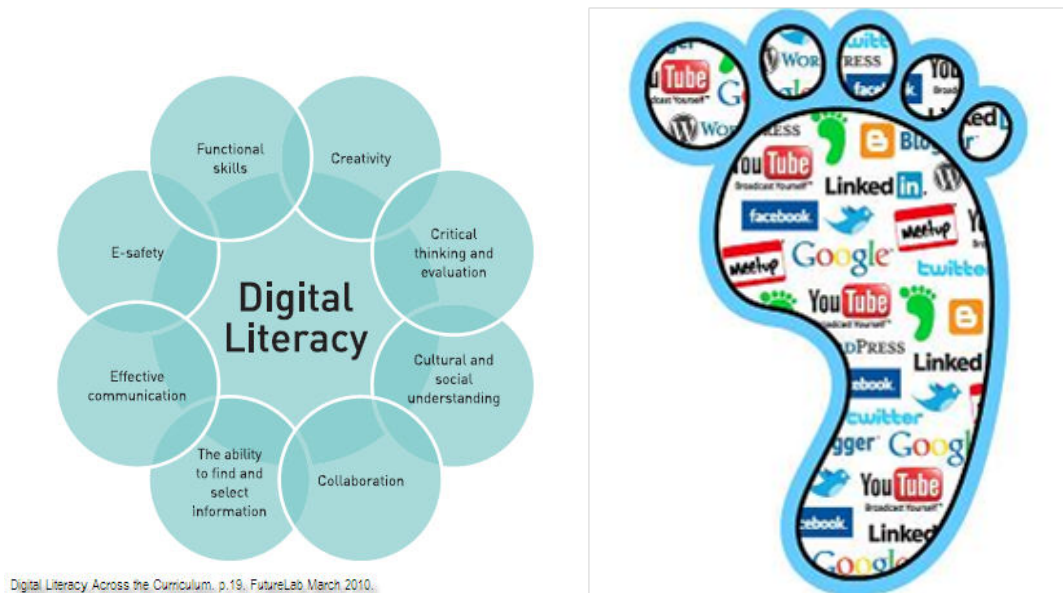
Today's young people have grown up in a technology-saturated society, where there is increasingly little distinction between someone's private and public life. Consequently, young people have a higher likelihood to engaging in unsafe online practices, such as sharing sensitive information like passwords, engaging in cyberbullying, or posting inappropriate images online.

Parents and teachers have both expressed exasperation about how to tackle this problem. In the past, educational efforts have focused singularly on highlighting the consequences of these types of decisions. They rely on ultimately unsuccessful scare tactics and punishments to try to change behaviors. Many of these measures, such as bringing in outside speakers to talk with children and students about the dangers of cyberbullying, fail to meet students on students' terms, making it easier for young people to dismiss the messages. Parents are similarly unprepared or too afraid to have much-needed conversations about online safety and positive behaviors at home.

Young people brush off these concerns without fully comprehending the seriousness of the world they live in. College admissions officers and potential employers all scour the internet to better understand the public image of young people applying to college or for a job. Individuals who haven't thoughtfully filtered their online identity could be at a serious disadvantage as a result. Furthermore, even more enlightening individuals have found ways to have their cake and eat it too – they filter their online profiles, but then use more anonymous technology like snapchat to engage in riskier, seemingly anonymous behavior.

Mynotebook.com brings teachers and parents work together to help middle school students proactively develop key skills needed to avoid these dangerous behaviors by creating a safe online learning community that equips students with needed digital literacy skills and helps them develop positive digital footprint so they can maximize their success in life and online.

21st Century Skill Sets



Collaboration

Mynotebook.com's model is specifically founded on collaboration. Even in the development phase, it would bring together engineers and educators to design the social network and its tools. Similarly, the platform will be open source and therefore available to anyone who wishes to replicate, customize, or improve the platform for their own community.

On the school level, parents, students, and teachers will all collaborate together to help young people develop positive behaviors. For example, imagine on the first day the social network launches, the teachers helps all her students register their profiles. She walks through how to make safe usernames and passwords with her kids and gives them tips on how to store that information. Then she demonstrates what her profile looks like and even

Googles her name, so her students can observe her digital footprint. After talking with them about the need to build positive digital footprints, she gives out the homework assignment for tonight: each student must Google search their parents and talk with their parents about what they learned. Parents, who have already signed up and registered for mynotebook.com, then discuss their experiences on the parent group page and share best practices about how those conversations could go more smoothly in the future. Ideally, once effective lesson plans have been developed on a school basis, we hope that new schools could be continually added to network and that micro-communities of students, teachers, and parents all continue to engage in collaborative projects and share best practices regarding building core digital literacy skills.

Tools and Design

Mynotebook.com will be built using any number of open source platforms, such as Joomla, Livecode, and Buddy Press.

Students, teachers, and parents will be able to communicate to and between one another through class pages, affinity/interest groups, videos, and their individual profiles.

The design will be similar to Facebook, but specifically build to help students experiment, practice, and reflect on the skills they need to engage in social networks positively.

Incentives

Stakeholders will be incentivized to participate for a number of reasons:

- For teachers, mynotebook.com provides an opportunity for innovate educators to improve their curricula, utilize best practices, and meet a critical need of their students.
- For students, the incentives will be directly tied to their curriculum. Homework assignments will be designed around utilizing the social network to develop their skills. Rather than listening to a speaker, they will be learning skills in a hands on, experiential fashion.

-For parents, the incentive is simply the urge to want to know their children are safe as well as developing the skills needed to engage in conversations with their children about digital safety and literacy on their own.

Mynotebook.com becomes a repository for class projects, and immediately shareable with parents, teachers, administrators, and students who join the network. Teachers from different classrooms or even schools would then collaborate on larger scale projects that leverage the skills that students develop and put them to use.

Costs and Logistics

The development costs range from \$0 – \$30k. In other words, development is extremely cheap. The majority of costs associated with making a social network comes in the form of marketing and advertising. Since our plan is to pilot the site in one school first, marketing costs are eliminated. Over the long term, resources, such as personnel and money, will be needed to support the expansion and maintenance of the network.

Implementation

To be implemented, all that is needed is a pilot school and at least one teacher willing to use the site. My sense is that a private school may be the test case to begin with. Over the intermediate and long term, partnerships between schools will need to be established in order for the network to grow. I think it can be rolled out for private schools very quickly and then go into charter schools. It will be more difficult to get a school district to adopt the platform, but since it's open source they may be able to replicate if they wish.

Government Involvement

The government can support these efforts by simply speaking out and using the bully pulpit. The Dept of Education should launch a PSA campaign similar to "Let's Move" that educates young people about how to develop positive digital literacy skills and a positive digital

footprint. Similarly, in the next round of Race to the Top funding, the Dept of Education can encourage localities and states to update their standards on digital literacy or implement them should they not exist.

Metrics of Success

Our measures for success will be:

- The # of students, teachers, and parents using the platform
- The # of lesson plans and projects that get created through the platform
- Student and parent responses to before and after survey's regarding digital literacy