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Building School Community Amidst Tracking Systems and Social Media

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INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL PROJECT
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Date: July 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2022
Abstract

Schools have long been the heart of a community. Building up students to feel welcomed, accepted, and safe is a tall order. This task has gotten more difficult as social conflict has seeped its way within school walls. Societies have become more diverse in many ways as of late. Political, economic, and racial differences have widened gaps between individuals. As schools mirror this societal diversity, it has been harder for both societies and public schools to feel more communal. The public high school this case study is set in specifically experiences division through tracking systems and, more recently, social media impacts. This paper will look if it is possible to rebuild community in a public school setting where students are both being separated by academic potential and being influenced by social media.

*Keywords*: school community, tracking systems, social media, fake news, community building, civics
# Building School Community

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Educational Context

The school this project is based on presents many challenges. It is a demographically diverse school that encompasses many courses such as a Gifted Program, International Baccalaureate diploma, Advanced Placement classes, English Language Learning classes, Special Education classes, and “on-target” classes. Although most people champion the word “diversity,” I have observed the isolated, competitive, and unwelcoming culture our school has developed. For the sake of anonymity, the school in this curriculum will be called Diversity High School.

The Social/Political Climate

I believe that this curriculum can serve some significance for my workplace and for students. Today, it feels like the two extremes of political ideologies are at odds with each other. It is rare to find a student or citizen willing to listen to another person’s viewpoint. My hope for this curriculum is that students will get the chance to engage with their peers and take the opportunity to listen to someone else’s stories and viewpoints.

School Culture

Since starting my teaching position at Diversity High School, I have experienced a system called “tracking.” This occurs when students are separated by their academic ability for classes. At my workplace, there are several programs that coexist because of the tracking system. The most advanced learners are in the Gifted Program. Another cohort of students take classes to complete an International Baccalaureate diploma. Some students opt for Advanced Placement classes for college credit. Lastly, there are “on-target” classes where
most students’ priority goal is to meet the state graduation requirements to finish high school. Sprinkled into the “on-target” classes are English Language Learners (ELL students) who are mixed in with native English-speaking students.

Because of these separate cohorts of classes, it can feel like teaching in two different schools but in one building. I have had conversations with several past students who have graduated from Diversity High School. A common sentiment is how disconnected the school culture feels. Many of them never had a class with other students who were in a different cohort. When I look out at the student body during school assemblies or ceremonies, it is easy to pick out the divisions of students whether it is by their academic level or race. Consequently, I believe that the different tracking cohorts have created a school culture that has caused clear and tangible factions among our students. My aim for this project is for students to get the chance to engage and get to know their peers with whom they share the school building.

The Classroom Culture

The harmful school culture has manifested itself in the classroom. I have taught at this high school for four years and have observed student engagement with each other through different methods of activities and curricula. Much of my curriculum utilizes Project-Based Learning. This gives students the task to work together to problem-solve a real-world complication. In the past few years, after utilizing lots of group work, I have noticed the pessimism that most students show when it comes to working with other people. Many times, students will ask to change partners or groups because of an issue they have with another student. Other times, students have asked to switch groups because they do not know anyone.
In addition, students go through the entire school year and do not attempt to learn the names of the people that they sit next to. Despite using so much group work, it is frustrating to observe a culture where students do not try to get to know each other and would rather stay isolated.

Lastly, mixed within these diverse and disconnected classrooms are English Language Learning Students (ELLs). These students are enrolled in core content classes (Social Studies, Math, English, Science) and are expected to participate and be graded on the same standard as native English-speaking students. Out of about 30 students in a classroom, about 5 are categorized as ELLs. Additionally, during the 2021-2022 school year, Diversity High School saw an influx of students from Latin America. These students migrated with very low English skills and with gap years in their previous education. This demographic only adds to the dilemma of having a detached classroom culture. Again, my desire for this project is that it will give students the opportunity to listen to their fellow classmates, no matter where they come from or what experiences they have had.

**Rationale for Project**

The idea for this curriculum has been a long time coming. I have observed the toxic culture of our school and classrooms over the years but as of late, the issue has felt more pressing. I would credit most of this to the past two years of having to teach public high school education online from the 2020 pandemic. The pandemic forced students to stay indoors into confinement. For most teenagers, this meant turning to their cell phones and caving into the tunnel of social media to interact with the rest of the world. Of course, there are positives to the communication technology that was available, but I believe that the 2022 school year largely manifested the negative social media impacts on teenagers.
Social Media Impacts

Since I have started teaching in the last ten years, social media has flooded into the learning culture. Whether a classroom in the suburbs, an urbanized core, rural America, or a developing country, almost every student has access to a cell phone and social media. There are positives to this tool. Students have access to information at the tip of their fingers, translation readily available, and easy access to study groups and language partners. But as this curriculum will address, social media should be “a tool to be used,” not something that uses the consumer. I think that this is where many teenagers and citizens of society fall. Social media usage has magnified issues that were unfathomable ten years ago. It impacts how teenagers see themselves and how they interact with their peers and the rest of society. This past year, online exchanges brought more conflicts into the classroom, I was shown written comments online that I am confident students would not say in person, while the ever-growing dilemma of students sitting at the desk scrolling through social media continues to be a problem for classroom engagement. Over my teaching career, social media has created false narratives, distractions, and conflict for my students.

Civics Curriculum

I have the special opportunity as a 12th grade Civics teacher to address the current issues in the world that are impacting my students. Most of the students are on the cusp of living by themselves, making their own choices, and carving out which values they are going to hold on to. Now more than ever feels like the time to set aside the textbook and address what is happening and affecting students' lives. The tool of teaching what is relatable and relevant is one of the biggest advantages when teaching Civics. This is another factor that led me to develop this
project. During the summer of 2021 I realized I wanted my students to have the chance to decipher what is credible and reliable online. I wanted them to have the opportunity to weigh the impact social media is having on their relationships and give them the chance to approach people to hear new perspectives. When they leave my class and high school, I hope they are a little more aware of the potential different experiences people around them have.

**Influencing Articles**

Because of the diverse complexity of my workplace and the current issues society places in front of my students, I was originally sparked to create a project that could address the lack of community. I was heavily influenced by two articles. The first comes from Margaret Wheatley in “Turning to One Another.” She writes on the power of listening, how it is healing to be listened to, and how it creates relationships (2009). Her article challenged me to think about the state of our society and culture. For the most part, people do not want to listen to each other. They do not want to engage with someone who has a different view from them. As a 12th grade Civics teacher and from weighing the issues of our society, I felt this article was a simple and practical place to start. If only we would listen to each other in all scales of our lives - societal, school wide, and in the classroom.

The second article that kindled this project is the article, “The Vicissitudes of Teaching About/For Empathy” by Michalinos Zembylas. This article is from a collection of chapters from the book Emotion and Traumatic Conflict: Reclaiming Healing in Education (2015). In the case study, a fifth-grade teacher in Cyprus was tasked with teaching her 11-year-olds about the 1974 Turkish invasions on the island. The curriculum is required in Cyprus but transmitted the narrative from the Greek-Cypriot community while ignoring the perspectives of the Turkish-Cypriot viewpoint. Ultimately the goal for the teacher was to break down barriers and influence
social change. The work was hard and awkward, and when students and families started doubting the purpose of the curriculum, the teacher and the observing researcher had to be reminded of the initial goal: the recognition of other perspectives.

In sum, the teacher followed a similar process throughout the unit with the students. Students would reflect on what they already knew about the invasion, then they would share what they had heard from their relatives who experienced the invasion. Next, students verbalized how it made them feel. Words like “unpleasant,” “sorrow,” “bloody,” and “guns” came up. Afterward, the fifth graders were allowed to draw pictures of what they perceived or felt about the history of the invasion.

The next step was where the work really began. Students began to collect interviews and stories from family members that experienced the invasion. Sometimes relatives would write down their stories, while others would record them. With each story, students would reflect on what they learned about the event, how they felt, and what further questions they had. Further questions would then lead to a time of research. The breakthrough for the class came when one student shared that they had relatives of Turkish descent. She shared that her great-grandmother was Greek and married a Turkish Cypriot. Because of the threats from Greek Cypriots, the family left, and the student was not allowed to see her relatives. This opened the door for the class to start thinking about empathy. On and on the process went. Students would collect stories from family members, analyze what happened and how they felt, and seek answers to further questions through research. As the work progressed, the teacher started to ask how the students would feel in the different accounts they heard. Sentence stems like, “If I was in this story, I would feel…” helped students verbalize and internalize their compassion.
By the end of the unit, students were reflecting on all the stories they heard from both sides of the conflict. In a reflection piece, a few students wrote, “… I know you Greek Cypriots killed my father and normally I should feel hatred for you. But I don’t because I don't want another war…. I feel angry at Greek Cypriots, but I don’t hate them… I know you experienced similar pain, so we should learn to live together in peace” (Zembylas, 2015, p. 177).

This article was powerful to me. If students could get to the point of feeling empathy for the other side of a traumatic war invasion, surely my own students could get over their differences in how they perceive each other. For months I mulled over not only how I could get students from different cohorts together, but also how I could get the students to realize that this work for building community is essential to civic engagement. Both articles struck me to do something to address the current state of polarization I had been observing among my students, workplace, and society.

**Literature Review**

Before introducing the activities and process of the curriculum, a few articles that situate this project into research are addressed. Research for this curriculum stretches across multiple fronts. Institutionalized tracking programs, social media effects, and school community values all tie together to rationalize this project. In this next section, I will report on findings that relate to these realms and hope to connect them to the reasoning behind why a project like this is needed at my workplace.

*Tracking System*

This first section explores the effects of a school tracking system. As mentioned before, a tracking system groups students by academic level into a pathway of classes. Students usually
test to be placed in a higher cohort. The school this project is set in has four productive cohorts - Gifted, International Baccalaureate Diploma, Advanced Placement, and on-target learning. Some merits of utilizing a tracking program are that students can be challenged at their level and can learn at a faster rate. Little is required of differentiation by the teacher and students can cover more material at a quicker pace.

However, the negative effects of using a tracking system can be long-lasting. The major problem with tracking is that once a student is placed, they rarely have a class with a student in a different cohort. Students start their pathway of classes and very rarely interact with a student on a different learning level than themselves. Throughout an entire high school career, students may have classes with their same classmates year in and year out. Consequently, this places students in small echo chambers of similarities. These likenesses not only come in the form of academic ability but may also show similitudes in race, socioeconomic status, experiences, and ideologies.

The impact of this tracking phenomenon is shown through research. In the study, “They Just Hang Out with Their Own:” Organized Racial Inequality in a Rural Southern High School (Riel 2020) the author shows how the placement of students usually looks demographically within a tracking program. She writes, “Within public schools today, students continue to be organized into academic tracks that propel views of highly tracked students, who are often White, as gifted or intellectually superior” (p. 169). Collaboratively, Oakes and Tyson (Oakes, 2011; Tyson, 2011 as cited by Riel) continue to describe the impacts of tracking systems of students organized by reporting:

Tracking of students into different academic routes facilitates differential enrollment and curriculum between students by race. In particular, it organizes Black students into
positions in school that are less valued and rewarded, referred to in opposition to 'good' tracks, such as being college-bound, honors, advanced, or gifted. (pp. 171-172).

This statement mirrors the reality of the subject school. Most students in the Gifted Program and the International Baccalaureate candidates are Asian students. White students round out the second-largest demographic. On the other hand, the students in the on-target classes are mostly Hispanic and Black. A comparison in data of the total school population demographics and only the Gifted Program cohort is shown below in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

**Figure 1**
*Total school population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2021-2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Subgroup</strong></td>
<td><strong># Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>1,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**
*Gifted Program cohort*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2021-2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Subgroup</strong></td>
<td><strong># Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 shows the total population of the school demographically. Statistically, a little under half the total population of the school identifies as Asian. White students round out the second-highest group as about one-fourth of the school, followed by Hispanic students who
make up about one-fifth of the total population. Figure 2 shows the Gifted Program cohort only. The Gifted Program makes up about one-third of the entire school population (606 students out of 1,657 total students). Out of the 606 students in the Gifted Program, Asian students make up more than 75% of the cohort. Only 1 Black student and 6 Hispanic students are included in the Gifted Program.

Research and data show that tracking systems not only separate students by academic level but unintentionally divide students by race. By doing so, a widening gap of differences is inevitable within a school. This tracking program has systematically created a perceptive division of both intelligence and race.

Tracking systems are not a new phenomenon. The 1989 article “Teaching Inequality: The Problem of Public School Tracking,” further describes the widening effect tracking systems have had years ago. The article reports:

Higher dropout rates of low tracked students may derive from feelings of alienation they appear to experience. These results are consistent with labeling theory that posits that people classified by institutions internalize the expectations and social practices associated with the groups into which they have been placed. Thus, when teachers say they seek independent thinking from higher-tracked students and more conformist behavior from lower-tracked students they are essentially teaching students to behave as they expect them to behave. The result of this system is that initial and potentially enriching differences between students become steadily increasing inequalities that make hierarchies steeper and open larger gaps between students who experience school in fundamentally different ways. (Harvard Law Review p. 1333)
Not only does a tracking system fundamentally promote separation among cohorts it also implies how a student sees themself. I have had the unique experience of teaching both 9th grade and 12th grade over the past four years. This means that during my fourth year, a handful of the 12th grade students were my students four years ago as 9th graders. In 9th grade, students do not have the option to be placed in a cohort yet. Classes are mixed at all levels meaning that students are given the same curriculum and the same expectations as everyone else.

I was surprised at the beginning of the year when I sent out a survey to students about their learning needs. Some students who I remembered as bright and capable in their 9th grade year responded that they were “slow learners,” “didn’t get things right away” or “needed more tries.” On the contrary, this is not how I remember these students when they were in class when they first entered high school. I recall these students in 9th grade rising to academic challenges and applying what they learned adequately. Something certainly changed with how these students saw themselves between their 10th and 11th grade years. I believe that the turning point could have been when these students began selecting their level of classes. Unaware, by the 10th grade, students begin to be classified into academic cohorts. In effect, because of the thinking and culture that has been accepted by the tracking cohorts, students also began to accept “what kind of student” they were to be for the rest of their high school career. This then effects how students see each other. Through different class discussions over the years, generally Gifted Students think on-target students are unintelligent or simple, while on-target students see the Gifted Students as socially awkward and robotic.

This data and experience show the tangible distance created by separating students into bands. By doing so, students have classes with people that look like themselves, who share similar cultures, and who experience similar social opportunities. Riel affirms this
by writing, “By racially stratifying students' placement in school, it also limits interracial interaction and friendships” (Tyson, 2011) (p. 172). Consequently, our students do not coincide with others who are different than them despite spending 180 days within the same walls as each other.

**Community**

Being a part of a systematically segregated school influences the school community. It is imminent that a school community is one of the first places that leads a student to develop a sense of identity. The sense of belonging and identity is an important notion for anyone, and school is one of the first places one begins to feel accepted. Through the friends that a student surrounds themselves with, contribution in the classroom, or validation from a teacher, a school offers much influence for a student to feel welcome. Much literature is written on the impact schools have in providing community. In their study with college students, Brown and Pederson define community as, “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan and Chavis 1968, p. 9 as cited by Brown and Pederson). In support of this conceptualization (sic), Shaffer and Anundsen (1993) also add that spirit, trust, independence, interactivity, and shared values are among the most essential elements of community (Brown and Pederson, 2020, p. 342).

The feeling that Brown and Pederson report on can easily be gained or lost between school walls. Students can find their comfort zone with other students and feel the safety, value, and acceptance desired as they go about challenges like tests, social pressures, group projects, or clubs and sports. Yet, on the other hand, students can also get a taste of the rejection,
disappointment, and isolation that a high school experience can bring. A student can slip by class without talking to anyone, get a taste of not being picked for a certain role or group, or not feel missed after being absent for a number of days. Within a school campus, the opportunity to feel accepted, or lack thereof is enormous. The responsibility of accepting each other falls on both students and teachers.

Relating this quote to one of my classroom experiences further kindles the need I see for this curriculum. I once was leading a class discussion and had to remind the class to quiet down so that I could better hear one student responding to my question. Another student reacted by getting up to leave the classroom for the bathroom and telling me they did not care to hear what their classmates had to say. This student eventually told me that they were only joking, but the words still had an impact on me. A red flag raised in my thoughts that this sentiment needed to be addressed. This classroom incident profoundly demonstrated to me that students sitting in my classroom did not matter to each other. Not only is there a lack of cohesion on a school-wide level, but also on the micro classroom level.

*The 2020 Pandemic Impact on School Community*

Furthering the lack of community at my school are the aftereffects of spending a year of school online because of the 2020 pandemic. For over a year, class was held online. The majority of students joined the class with the camera off, logged off as soon as the 50 minutes of the class session was up, and responded mostly through the chat feature rather than speaking through their microphone. If ever there was a sentiment about the lack of school community it was the 2020 school year. This is on top of the effects the tracking system has on our school community.
Welcoming students back to the building in Spring 2021 was one of the hardest teaching experiences. On the first day back, students entered the classroom, sat down, but did not talk to each other. They gazed forward hiding behind masks, not associating with the classmates around them. Along with that, school was in a hybrid format and so half of the students were logging in from home and observing the class through a camera attached to the wall. The last months of the 2021 school year palpably showed the loss of community that had happened over the year. More than ever, going into the 2021-2022 school year, schools needed to draw a sense of community for students. In the article “Gotta Give Heart” Drew Himmelstein (2021) highlights the importance of providing community to students as they came back to school after the pandemic. As a director of Social Emotional Learning in California Mai Xi Lee writes, “The gist of the return this year is about how we do wrap our arms around students to make sure they feel a sense of community, that we are affirming their sense of identity however they show up, that we are nurturing their sense of belonging, and that we are cultivating their sense of agency” (p. 38). In sum, both educators stressed the urgency of providing acceptance and community to students as they were welcomed back into the classroom from the pandemic.

A lot can be said about the impacts of the 2020 pandemic on education. The lack of academic skills, focus, and social interaction manifested in the past year. Because of the uncomfortable social exchange in classrooms, the loss of school community became prevalent. Schools needed to step up to compensate for the feeling of isolation brought upon people, especially teenagers, due to the pandemic.

*The Social Media Impact on School Community*

Because of the isolation, many teenagers turned to their phones and social media as a substitute for community. Already a heavyweight in teenagers' lives, the pandemic accentuated
social media use. Despite the many positive benefits of social media, if not used correctly, the effects can be drastically negative, especially for a teenager. Some of these consequences can be low self-esteem, the inability to decipher fake news, and ideological polarization.

These social media consequences also relate to the desire for community. In a report funded by the United States State Department, the authors, Nemr and Gangware (2019) touch on the opportunities for feeling community that social media can provide.

A large body of research shows that people desire social belonging, such as inclusion within a community, and the resulting identity that accompanies such belonging. Indeed, the research indicates that this need for belonging is a fundamental human motivation that dictates most interpersonal behavior. These motivations play out in real time online, often with drastic effects. For better or worse, the internet and social media have facilitated the ability to seek out and find a community that contributes to a person's sense of belonging. (p. 6).

This shows one of the allures of using social media. If teenagers are forced to do school online, not leave the house, and not see their friends, then it makes sense that they may turn to social media to feed their need for community. The problem with this is that if not careful, the tunnels of social media can unintentionally have an effect on how someone starts to view the world and themselves.

Reliable and Credible News

Fake news has been thoroughly in academics. The distinction between what is credible and unreliable has caused storms of news sharing stories that create false narratives for society. On a large scale, social media has played a hand in intrastate conflicts like elections and cyber-
attacks. And on a much smaller scale it has caused fights within the hallways at schools. Teenagers are at the prime age to be impacted by such effects.

Recent work suggests that deception for news is a difficult task. For example, McGrew and colleagues (2018) found that students ranging from middle school to college had trouble evaluating claims and sources of social and political information online (Luo, Hancock, Markowitz, 2022 p. 172).

With such effects impacting how society weaves together and how teenagers perceive themselves, it is important for students to be able to think on their own and investigate for themselves. Social media can manipulate “likes” for popularity and give false confidence in posting comments that would not usually be said face to face. It can also cause hours of scrolling through posts and pictures of strangers and set unrealistic standards for teenagers to obtain. As teenagers and people are reading posts, there is no filter of what is fantasy or true. The skill of being able to tell what is credible and reliable is becoming a life skill that all should be taking with them into society.

The Process

With the weight of lack of school community and awareness of hyper dependence on social media, at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, I had two main goals in mind for my students: to develop the skill to evaluate what is reliable and credible online and to address the gap in community that I felt in the school culture. I imagined the final product being an interview session with students from different cohorts. Idealistically, I envisioned students spending time at the end of the year together, talking to one another, finishing their interviewing
project, reflecting on them, and becoming friends. I knew it would take a lot of work to get to
that point, but my hopes starting this curriculum were high.

Goal #1: Reliable and Credible News

At the beginning of the school year, I started with strategies from Stanford History’s
Education Group. The forum has a number of tools for social studies teachers to use in their
classrooms. One recent development is their Civic Online Reasoning Curriculum. This perfectly
addressed the goal of evaluating what is reliable and credible online.

According to the Group’s website, the main goal of their Civic Online Reasoning
Curriculum is to provide teachers with free lessons and assessments that help students “evaluate
online information that affects them, their communities, and their world.”

One strategy that I leaned heavily on was their “Lateral Reading” method. In this
procedure, students are taught to open a new tab in their browser when they see something
suspicious. Then students take the time and effort to investigate other sources to make an
evaluation of the original post. We adopted this method in class.

1. Who do we think could be behind the information?
2. Lateral Reading - Open a new tab and search the news headline
3. Practice click restraint
4. Evaluate what other sources say
5. Draw a conclusion on reliability and credibility

This procedure and class activity were heavily borrowed from Stanford History
Education Group. The only addition for my students was to provide more examples to practice
with. In essence, the point of these two lessons was for students to master fact-checking for
themselves. In Part 1 of this practice, students work with the rest of the class and teacher to
evaluate provided articles from Occupy Democrats, the Brookings Institute, and a blog. In Part 2 students are provided different posts, articles, or videos and individually use the Lateral Reading method to conclude if the news is reliable and credible. If an extension of this assignment is needed, students can find their own online news and give it to a friend to evaluate for credibility. I thought this activity with continued practice would adequately address the first goal of determining what is reliable and credible online. These activities and practice can be seen on Handout A.

Goal #2 Social Media Discussion

Feeling like we were on our way to accomplishing the first goal, I set about brainstorming how to address the lack of community. Thankfully, a piece that I did not realize was missing fell into place halfway through the school year. The bridge to the previous two goals landed by a “docudrama” produced by Netflix called The Social Dilemma (2020). A docudrama is a mesh of a documentary that shares facts, interviews, and information, but also tells a story with actors crafting a narrative paralleling the presented information. The goal of the film was to highlight the negative impacts that social media has on an individual’s mental health and on the structure of society. This docudrama led me to want to address another issue with the 12th graders: the negative side of using social media.

It is evident how social media is producing false narratives, affecting lives, and influencing the political opposition. This seemed like the necessary bridge to connect the first two goals of evaluating online news and combating isolation. I now had three current issues as goals: reliable and credible news, community, and social media effects. Since social media
effects acted as a link, it became the next issue to address in the classroom and the second goal to this curriculum.

It was clear to me that we should watch The Social Dilemma together in class. However, rather than the students thinking it as a “movie day,” we watched it in segments. The next handouts are activities to be used before watching the docudrama and acted as primers to get students thinking before the film. Some of these activities came in personality quizzes and the game bingo. These can be seen on Handout B.

We began to watch The Social Dilemma in sections. The docudrama explains how social media feeds are based on an algorithm. The algorithm predicts what a person likes to see on their newsfeed and continues to display likeminded posts and issues. In effect, this puts a person in an echo chamber of news, posts, and comments that they already agree with. The consequences to this can be troublesome. First, by knowing what the social media user likes to see, it prompts the user to keep coming back for more. This turns into hours of scrolling and continued clicking on different posts. I see this manifest itself as teenagers cannot put down their phone or part from it for too long. In essence this has turned to cell phone addiction.

The other striking effect of algorithm is on society as a whole. If social media users are continuing to see posts and news that are like-minded to them, then that user can become isolated in their beliefs and ideology. In the last segment of the docudrama, a graph shows a time lapse of the introduction of social media and how society has become more politically polarized. The more social media users are sucked into their tunnel of posts that agree with them, the higher the tension when they engage with someone that believes differently from them. The docudrama calls this an erosion of our social fabric. Social media makes people feel validated that their belief and values are the correct ideals. Less people want to listen to each other, more people
believe that their values are the only correct way and in effect, our society has become extremely polarized by our views.

As we watched the film together, I reiterated my purpose to the class. Social media can be a positive tool. But more often citizens are not using it as a tool and instead people are being used by the algorithm. My hope was to make the students aware of this. By showing this film and having discussions, my desire was not to persuade students to delete their social media, but to just be aware of the impacts it is having on themselves and society.

As we watched the documentary in segments, questions were provided for the students to follow along with. There are also checkpoint questions for students to discuss together and end-of-the-documentary discussion questions. This can be seen on Handout C.

After watching this film together, the next piece of the curriculum that formed was wanting a final product for the students to create. As my students are 12th graders, I wanted them to have something to take with them after graduation. Eventually, the idea was formed to create a list of self-evaluating questions to help critique the impacts social media has on them. I wanted the students to brainstorm questions they could ask themselves to check how social media was affecting them. Although I had many ideas for self-evaluating questions in my head, I wanted the self-evaluation checklist to be authentic and for the ideas to come from the students. I realized that this was something that I could not throw at the students right away. They would need a primer to get them thinking on their own.

We started with a brainstorm of the positives and negatives of social media on the class white board. I reminded the students that my goal is not for them to feel like they need to delete social media but to be able to evaluate the impact they are letting social media have on them. In this class activity, I was hoping to show that the negatives do not necessarily outweigh the
positives. Most classes ended with a somewhat balanced list of positives and negatives. It was my aim to point out that the negative impacts depend on if we are using social media as a tool or being used by it. An example of this class discussion brainstorm can be seen on Handout D.

After this, I created discussion questions that the students talked through in round tables. Groups were given an open-ended question about social media and had 3 minutes to discuss before switching questions. This acted as an activity to get the students ready to start brainstorming evaluating questions for themselves. Next, posters were hung on the wall with prompts about social media usage for students to respond to. Students brainstormed responses to each poster’s question as they rotated around the room. The second time students circulated around the posters they formed questions that could combat the negative effects they wrote before. In the end, we had posters with some ideas that were starting to form our self-evaluation question list. Examples of these discussion questions and brainstorming posters can be seen on Handout E.

The last step to create our self-evaluation questions was to rethink the list we had so far. I took the posters from the previous lesson with the student’s ideas and combined the questions into one list. I categorized the questions into sections and gave the list back out to students with empty bullet points. I intended for the students to add more ideas on the empty bullet points or additional categorizes. This process seemed to work well because students had a bit more structure as the list of questions started to take shape. This was the final step to get students to evaluate the effect social media has on them. In the end, I sent the self-evaluating questions home with the students individually. I hope that it can be a tool to combat the negative effects social media can bring to my students lives. This final product is on Handout F.
Goal #3: Building Community

With the self-evaluation checklist now in hand and lots of practice to continue evaluating reliable and credible online news, the last step of this curriculum was to prepare students to talk to other students in the building that they believe are drastically different from them. I hoped that after talking through social media effects, students would realize how the polarized differences were mirrored right in front of their eyes in their own school community. Unfortunately, this is where I feel the project fell short.

Case Study

I had planned to team up with a colleague that taught my similar subject but with the Gifted cohort of students. The plan was to spend at least three class periods together to eventually have the students discuss issues and hopefully find commonality with each other. We went so far as to meet, brainstorm activities, and collaborate on potential topics together. We planned our first meeting for our classes to get to know each other as an introductory with more activities and games. The second meeting we hoped would be more intentional to find similarities between each other. The third meeting we planned to share some curriculum in our separate classes and then to have the different students discuss together. I felt confident with this plan, was excited that we might be able to make some progress in community, but also apprehensive knowing the animosity that already existed between the two classes. I knew in advance that the meetings were going to be awkward. For this reason, I did not tell my class that we were going to meet the other students purposely.

The first meet up went fine. Students could play basketball, corn hole, charades, or relay races games. We tried to place structure where activities would have a mix of both classes but
inevitably, some students did not adhere to the instructions and sided with who they were already comfortable with. In a few classes, the on-target students took over basketball, while the gifted students mostly played charades. Even when I numbered off students to make sure that they mixed, there were students that sat out not wanting to participate. I asked students later how it went. Some comments were “they didn’t know anyone” others asked, “why did we have to do that?” or “why couldn’t we just stay in our own classroom?” Although my observations of how the students interacted were not surprising, I was determined that we were on our way to something more meaningful.

Unfortunately, the next step of the plan derailed. We were nearing the end of the school year and were supposed to have a bit more down time in class. My colleague determined that they could not find another time where our classes could meet again so we should just call off our class meet up plan.

I was disappointed and felt like the goal this whole curriculum was orbiting around was suddenly swept away. I had been mulling over how to build school community for so long and it felt like the culmination of the entire project was going to be missing. The curriculum would feel very un concl uded to myself if I discontinued my goal of getting the different cohort of students together.

On a last attempt to try to bring different students together I reached out to a different colleague. Although he had a class of younger gifted students, I decided it was better than nothing. I also knew that making one more attempt to bridge community at my workplace would help me feel closure to the work I had been trying to cultivate all school year and with this project.
And so, one of my on-target 12th grade classes met with a 10th – 11th grade gifted class. The plan was simply to play one relay race and then divide the students into groups of four, two students from each cohort, and have them answer some ice breaking questions together.

As we met up in the school courtyard the initial plan to mix up the students fell through. It was clear from the body language of many students that they did not want to be there. My colleague and I looked at each other, gave instructions on how the classes should interact together and stepped back. Not surprisingly, the activity turned on-target students verses gifted students. It was painfully awkward for me and my colleague to watch. Even when we forced teams to mix classes, only a few students participated. In the end, we cut the time short and went back to our respective classrooms for the last fifteen minutes class.

When we got back to our classroom, I asked the students how it went. Their response was loathsome. One student told me how he belittled a gifted student with offensive words. When my on-target class won their game, they made the comment that being in the Gifted Program does not prove anything.

Even though this interaction did not go at all how I envisioned, I at least felt closure after a second try at getting the cohorts together. The discussion with my fellow colleague was very helpful and validating on how hard it is to force community. I observed the side of the on-target students where they felt justified that they were able to beat the gifted students in something. I believe this feeds into the lie that students accept that being in the Gifted Program means you are automatically above students in the other cohorts. My colleague shared his views from the gifted student’s perspective. He made the statement that they did not want to participate or do anything during our time together. If it is not pushing their own agenda and future, they could care less. Sadly, it feels like as a teacher, you have to threaten these students with a grade to get them to do
anything. My colleague and I discussed back and forth about what this could look like in the future, and I feel like we highlighted what next steps could look like moving forward.

**Implications for next year**

My colleague and I discussed the importance of starting this work with the students earlier. Not just earlier in the school year but also earlier in their high school career. It is clear that trying to build community between the cohorts in 12th grade is far too late. By this time, students already have a unbudging preconceived notion of each other. A goal would be to start building community with the incoming 9th graders. One idea that could take shape is by encouraging cross-curriculum lessons and collaboration. Although this is a similar format to what I tried this school year, I imagine that if a group of teachers were serious about this work, the time together could be much more purposeful. For example, 10th grade English teachers read the book “Born a Crime” by Trevor Noah in their on-target English class. So many themes and connections could be made with the curriculum from the 9th grade social studies class AP Human Geography. The different classes could get together for group conversations and discuss the themes of race, ethnicity, and language. Perhaps an advanced physics class could team up with a gym class and carry out experiments together for their force and motion experiments or meet with the band or orchestra class when learning about wave vibrations. I imagine if teachers were serious about working together by cross-curriculum, it would not only create opportunities for making connections but open doors for students to meet other students in different cohorts.

As a step forward, I have reached out to the school’s Leadership Team for utilizing cross-curriculum approaches for the 2022-2023 school year. One of the responsibilities of the Leadership Team is to plan teacher’s professional development throughout the school year. In
the past, this has looked like support circles where teachers provide a problem of practice to talk through with their peers. Another year, teachers formed their own groups and goals for what they wanted to improve on together. The benefit of these professional development practices is that groups and procedures have changed year to year. For next year, I have advocated that in order for students in different cohorts to meet and work together, two teachers from different subjects and cohorts should meet at least four times a semester with their classes. Professional development time can be used for the two teachers to plan and collaborate accordingly so that they can facilitate how their subject and levels of student will work together. If this happens, I think there can at least be more space and conversations for both teachers and students to reflect on how community at Diversity High School is meeting or falling short of student’s needs.

Although, cross-curriculum lessons are not a new idea, I understand that it will be hard to mandate teachers to take the time to plan for and execute. As I mentioned, I was quite disappointed when my original plan of having the gifted and on-target classes meet at least three times fell through. I understand the many time constraints that a teacher feels. There is curriculum to get through, end of the year tests to prepare for, and class projects to wrap up. But I believe that this work of community is so much more important than learning content. This is teaching students how to be human beings, how to socialize with each other and how to encounter other people who are different than them. This is a life skill that they will take with them and will undoubtedly need in whatever job they will be employed in.

My last reminder for next year is to spend more class time brainstorming the metacognition of why this is important. By metacognition, I mean that students want to know why they are doing something. There is always more buy in and engagement with anyone when they see the benefits of working on something. I think my students could easily conclude that
BUILDING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

social media is affecting their lives. They would also easily agree that our school has an issue with school community among cohorts. But no one seems to want to do anything about it. I have overheard students say they are fine with who they hang out with and for that reason do not want to work with or meet any new people. I am not sure how, but somehow, I hope there is a realization that it is the people around them that make their world and experiences a better place.

**Priming students to meet each other**

Although in retrospect, my class did not spend a lot of time discussing why meeting with other students is important, I think the process could have been meaningful and reflective. Again, influenced by the case study from Zembylas, I think students could have engaged in a similar story telling process. I imagine my goal simply being for students to realize their similarities rather than differences. Students could be given a handful of prompts and choose which to respond to.

1. What is the most fun experience you’ve had attending Diversity High School? Why?
2. What are some important values to you that you think will most help you in the future? Why do you think this?
3. What should a school provide to its students? Why do you think this?
4. What could make Diversity High School better? Why do you think this?
5. What is the purpose of high school? Why do you think this?

Students would be required to write a short story responding to their ideas on the prompt and why it is important to them. Students should be told to keep the stories anonymous to the best of their ability. Once students have submitted their work, stories would be exchanged anonymously either within our own classroom or with a class in another cohort. If the other cohort took the
time to respond to prompts also, each student would receive an unnamed story told from someone else within Diversity High School.

Next, students would read the new, unidentified story and write down questions they would want to ask the author. Much like the case study from Cyprus, students would also write or discuss how they would feel in the story they read. Hopefully, students would be sparked with curiosity and interest of the original author’s school experience. After fleshing out good questions to ask, the two cohorts could meet and talk about their stories and questions with each other for the first time. I would hope that students would be a bit more empathetic and understanding compared to how our meet ups went without this prework. Since this year’s community building experiment felt like a mishap, I would be curious how my informal question to the class of “How did it go?” would be differently responded to.

**ELL supplement**

Originally the intent of this curriculum was to also include ELL students. I imagine that the purpose of this curriculum could be beneficial to ELL students as well as it aims to bridge gaps between people who are different than oneself. The past three years, I usually have a handful of ELL students but this year I had very few. Therefore, this curriculum and activities did not address ELL needs. However, if it did, I would go about this the same way except with the activities more scaffolded and differentiated. In reflection, I am not sure how Goal 1: Reliable and Credible News would go without heavy translation tools. I am uncertain which news outlets could be used for examples. I also wonder if the process would entail first guiding the students in Spanish to learn the skill and then adding language objectives in English to add opportunities to practice language. For example, in **Handout A** the teacher walks the class
through the steps for Lateral Reading. This could easily be done in Spanish by translating **Handout A** and allowing ELL students to follow along with the modified questions in Spanish (¿Quién creemos que está detrás de la información, qué dicen otras fuentes, etc.?) Once this procedure is mastered in Spanish then the teacher could add language objectives in English. Language shells in English could be, “I think someone who wants people to think _______ wrote this article…” or “the second article agrees/disagrees with the first article because…” The process would take much longer for ELL students but could be just as purposeful as they would be practicing both critical thinking and language skills. However, **Goal 2: Social Media Discussion** is relatable and relative. ELL students could vote what their favorite social media app is and how often they use social media. Watching the Social Dilemma could create many opportunities for listening and speaking activities. ELL students could also participate in the discussion questions with the rest of the class if given sentence starters like, “We shouldn’t use social media when…” or “I feel _____ when I use social media.” **Goal 3: Community Building** is also difficult to think about for the future, since I feel like it was not even met within native-English speakers. However, it is evident that the practice of interviewing someone opens many chances to use all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Like most of my lesson plans from previous mixed-level classes, it feels like I first need to master the objectives and steps of a lesson plan for the majority of the targeted students. Then I can adapt the lesson to focus on how to modify the lesson to meet the needs of ELLs or other groups that need more support.

**Conclusion**

Through my reflection, I feel satisfied with two out of three goals. Although there was no formal assessment on each goal, I feel that students still took part in open and important
conversations about online news credibility and social media effects. Through one-on-one meetings and class discussion a lot of positive feedback was given on how students were made more aware of their social media habits. A few students told me they would take our Self-Evaluation Checklist with them to college.

As for building community, this is the goal that I can work harder within the classroom and community. I have realized that I cannot make a drastic change on my own. Not one person can change a school culture let alone any culture. What I can reach is what happens inside of my classroom. I think opening discussions and making students aware is the best a teacher can do. It is then the student’s job to take that awareness and apply it and turn it into knowledge.
References


Handouts
Pre work directions: Explore the two websites provided below. Browse through the website, click through links. Both websites are about child pediatrics

https://www.aap.org/ American Academy of Pediatrics  
https://acpeds.org/ American College of Pediatricians

Which do you think is more reliable? Why? What did you look for?

Directions: Watch the videos below: Why shouldn't we stay on the page of the website to verify an article? (This is called Lateral Reading)

Online Verification Skills — Video 1: Introductory Video

Online Verification Skills — Video 2: Investigate the Source
Practice 1: Practice together: Use this article to practice Lateral Reading. You will be evaluating a political organization called Occupy Democrats

1. **Who do we think could be behind the information?** Based on the headlines, other stories, and About page, what is this organization’s purpose?

2. **Lateral Reading** - Open a new tab and search the organization (for this practice use Wikipedia to read about Occupy Democrats)

3. **Practice click restraint** examine the news titles, URLs, Snippets, to find trusted sources (not needed this time since we are using Wikipedia)

4. **Evaluate what other sources say**
   
   A. Summarize what the Wikipedia article claims about Occupy Democrats.

   B. Select one claim and check its citation. Make sure the claim is related to whether the *Occupy Democrats* is a reliable source. Citation #: ____

   C. What source is cited for that claim?

5. **Draw a conclusion on reliability and credibility** - How reliable is the cited source? How does this source help your evaluation of Occupy Democrats? Explain how you decided.

HANDOUT A
Practice 2 Practice with a partner: Use this article to practice Lateral Reading. You will be evaluating a public policy organization called Brookings

1. **Who do we think could be behind the information?** Based on the headlines, other stories, and About page, what is this organization’s purpose?

2. **Lateral Reading** - Open a new tab and search the organization. Scan the list of results generated by the search

3. **Practice click restraint** – examine the news titles, URLs, Snippets, to find trusted sources. What is the best source to click on? Why?

4. **Evaluate what other sources say**
   a. Summarize what the new source claims about Brookings Institute.

5. **Draw a conclusion on reliability and credibility** - How reliable is the cited source? How does this source help your evaluation of the Brookings Institute? Explain how you decided.
Practice 3 Practice individually: Use this article to practice Lateral Reading. You will be evaluating a blog


1. **Who do we think could be behind the information?** Based on the headlines, other stories, and About page, what is this organization’s purpose?

2. **Lateral Reading** - Open a new tab and search the organization. Scan the list of results generated by the search

3. **Practice click restraint** – examine the news titles, URLs, Snippets, to find trusted sources. What is the best source to click on? Why?

4. **Evaluate what other sources say** - Summarize what the new source claims about the blogger.

5. **Draw a conclusion on reliability and credibility** - How reliable is the cited source? How does this source help your evaluation of this blog? Explain how you decided.

Additional Practice: Find a news article for someone else to practice Lateral Reading. Copy the link here.
Name ________________________________  Period ____

Reliable and Credible News: Lateral Reading Part 2

Part 2 Directions: Watch the video below and answer the questions

1. How did citizens receive information about the world in the past compared to today?

2. What was the result of a person determining the information citizens receive?

3. How do our internet habits influence our democracy?

4. How does this relate to Civics?

Fact-Checking Tools — Video 1: Verifying Images and Videos

Part 2 Directions: Use your lateral reading skills to determine if the photo, video, or article is reliable and credible. Take screen shots of your search results and new sources to prove your evaluation

Example 1

https://twitter.com/Jeggit/status/902048241646280704
1. Prove it: Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results. Paste Below

2. Prove it: Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article. Paste Below

3. Reliable and credible? Why?

Example 2

1. Prove it: Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results. Paste Below

2. Prove it: Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article. Paste Below

3. Reliable and credible? Why?
Example 3

![Image of a toy truck with a large potato on it.](image)

1. Prove it: Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results. Paste Below

2. Prove it: Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article. Paste Below

3. Reliable and credible? Why?

Example 4

![Image of a tweet and a video.](image)

Atlanta has deployed a child militia at Lenox Mall fitted with riot shields and batons. What the actual fuck is going on?
1. Prove it: Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results. Paste Below

2. Prove it: Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article. Paste Below

3. Reliable and credible? Why?

**Example 5**

1. Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results

2. Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article

3. Reliable and credible? Why?
Example 6  
**Self Parking Apple Car (2024)**

1. Take a screenshot of your search bar and top results

2. Take a screenshot of a credible article supporting or refuting the tweet/post/video/article

3. Reliable and credible? Why?

Extension: Find your own example of either Fake News or an outlandish news story that may seem like fake news. Give the link a classmate and see if they can get to the bottom of the source
### Activity 1 - Bingo

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checks social media 5x a day</td>
<td>Has an Instagram for a pet</td>
<td>Has gotten into a &quot;Twitter War&quot;</td>
<td>Checks Social Media over lunch break</td>
<td>Uses the internet everyday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tries to post at least one thing a day</td>
<td>Has checked Snapchat today</td>
<td>Has used a filter on photos</td>
<td>Follows celebrities on Twitter</td>
<td>Uses hashtags on posts</td>
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<td>Has texted a friend today</td>
<td>Has used a filter on photos</td>
<td>Free!</td>
<td>Has posted something they regret</td>
<td>Uses the internet everyday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has more than one social media account</td>
<td>Is friends with a parent on Facebook</td>
<td>Has stayed up late on Social Media</td>
<td>Has posted a picture today</td>
<td>Uses the internet everyday</td>
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<td>Has more than 100 followers on Twitter</td>
<td>Has a Facebook account</td>
<td>Is YOUR friend on Social Media</td>
<td>Has posted a picture today</td>
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**Handout B**
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Social Media Usage Quiz

1. How much time do you usually spend on social media each day?
   a) Less than an hour
   b) 1-2 hours
   c) 3-4 hours
   d) 5-6 hours
   e) +7 hours

2. You’ve taken a photo. How long does it take you to edit and upload it?
   a) About a minute
   b) A couple of minutes
   c) 5 or 10 minutes
   d) Half an hour
   e) Around an hour

3. When are you most often distracted by social media?
   a) Very rarely
   b) When I’m eating
   c) During conversations
   d) When I’m at work
   e) All the time

4. Do you feel your social media use is negatively impacting on your relationships?
   a) Absolutely not
   b) I don’t think so
   c) I’ve been “told off”
      a couple of times
   d) Only with certain people
   e) Yes, quite a bit

5. Has anyone close to you ever complained about how much time you spend on social media?
   a) Never
   b) Maybe once or twice
   c) My significant other
   d) My manager
   e) Yes, every time I go on my phone

6. Do you scroll through social media near bedtime or when you’re in bed?
   a) Never
   b) I’ll only answer text messages
   c) I have a little scroll
   d) I try to limit it to around 30 minutes
   e) Definitely!
7. How often do you check social media notifications?
   a) Once a day
   b) A couple of times throughout the day
   c) Every couple of hours
   d) Probably once an hour
   e) Every 10-20 minutes

8. When you don’t have access to social media, how do you feel?
   a) It doesn’t bother me
   b) Relaxed
   c) Bored
   d) Like I’m missing out
   e) Anxious

9. How would you feel if you got no likes on a post?
   a) I couldn’t care less
   b) Meh. It probably wasn’t a great post
   c) Must. Try. Harder
   d) I’d ask friends to like it
   e) Embarrassed, I’d delete it

Results
Mostly As – Off the grid
Mostly Bs – Casual browser
Mostly Cs – Timeline trapper
Mostly Ds – Super stalker
Mostly Es – Scrolling addict

Quiz taken from Balance Media Online
The Social Dilemma Viewing Questions

Questions and Activity taken from Lovejoy Literacy

Activity:
Which of the following have you done? Circle the ones at the right that apply to you.

Choose one. What effect do you think that statement had in your life. Explain below.

Answer during viewing The Social Dilemma

1. The movie starts with the quote: “Nothing vast enters the life of mortals without a curse.” What do you think this means? How do you think it will apply to this movie?

2. What are some wonderful things that technology has done?

3. What is the product that social media is creating?

4. What is surveillance capitalism?

5. What do the companies do with our data?
6. What are the three main goals of technology companies?

   **Checkpoint:** Stop movie. Everyone takes out their phone. Check their Screentime and share with group members

7. What two things are at the center of everything we do?

8. What is persuasive technology?

9. What is positive intermittent reinforcement?

10. What is the goal of growth hacking?

11. How have these big Social Media Companies created addiction and manipulation-based technology?

12. How is social media like a drug?

   **Checkpoint:** Stop movie. Everyone takes out their phone. Check their most used apps and share with group members

13. Explain what a “perceived sense of perfection” and “fake popularity” mean.

14. How has social media affected teenage mental health? Give at least three examples.
15. What does he mean when Tristan Harris says social media is like a “digital pacifier”?

16. Explain how the computers’ algorithms have a mind of their own.

17. How does Google (and other social media) change search results?

18. How much faster does fake news spread than real news? Give at least two examples.

   **Checkpoint**: Stop movie. Everyone takes out their phone. Type “climate change” in Google search bar and compare auto response with group members.

19. How has social media affected countries worldwide? Give at least two examples.

20. Who does Tristan Harris think should be responsible for the ethical dilemma?

21. What might happen in the future if we keep the status quo with technology?

22. How can we go about solving the problem?
End of film Discussion Questions

1. How would you define the problem?

2. Film subject Tristan Harris says, “If something is a tool, it genuinely is just sitting there, waiting patiently [to be used]. If something is not a tool, it’s demanding things from you, it’s seducing you, it’s manipulating you. It wants things from you.” Do you think social media is a tool for you? How might you make it one?

3. Who do you think is responsible for solving “the social dilemma”? What should they do? Is there anything you can do?
Social Media Positive and Negatives Brainstorm

**Positive Impacts**
- Catching up with old friends
- Memories
- Recommendations
- GPS tracking
- Proud moments/celebrations
- Feeling validated
- Inside jokes
- Business promotions
- Friend groups

**Negative Impacts**
- Cyber bullying
- Feeling isolated
- Depression
- Unrealistic standards
- Scrolling for hours
- Stalkers
- Unfocused/distractions
- Advertisements
- Opposite/extreme ideas
- Saying/commenting what you wouldn't say in person
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Discussion Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think of a time where you have seen hate comments on a celebrity’s social media post. How does being behind a screen change how a person sees people on the other side?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If you could wave a magic wand and change anything about social media, what would it be and why?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Has a conflict on social media affected you offline, in “real life”? How?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have you ever witnessed a social media public shaming? Did you say anything? Why or why not?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Do you think college admissions officers look online for information on prospective students? What about coaches and potential employers?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why do you use social media? Is that the only way for you to achieve those things?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Do you think you could stay off your phone for 24 hours? What notification would compel you to get back on your phone?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If you could only keep one social media app, which app would it be and why?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have you ever seen an ad for something you had only talked or thought about? How did it make you feel?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What sources do you trust for news? Why do you trust these sources, and do you ever get information from elsewhere?</strong></td>
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[https://savvycyberkids.org/](https://savvycyberkids.org/)
### Rotating Poster Brainstorm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>When is the appropriate time to be on social media?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Where is the appropriate time to do be on social media?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What problems can reading comments cause? What problems can writing comments cause?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What problems can adding/following someone cause?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What problems can posting pictures/stories cause?</strong></td>
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Self-Evaluating Questions for using Social Media

When scrolling

- Am I seeing unrealistic standards?
- Am I comparing myself to unrealistic standards?
- Is this post photoshopped?
- Am I seeing the same news as others?
- Do I need to see this? What did I get out of this?
- How long have I been scrolling mindlessly?
- Am I looking for things that I know are going to upset me?
- Why are these ads being recommended to me?

When making a post

- Why do I want to post this?
- Does this truly reflect me?
- Would I say this to their face?
- How will I look back on this?
- Is this going to affect my esteem or reputation?
- Does this help the image I am trying to build for myself?
- Am I fishing for compliments?
- Is this a catfishing post? A revenge post?
- Are you posting for yourself or someone else’s attention?
- Will this embarrass me in 5 years?
- Would I be embarrassed if my teacher/boss saw this?
- Is my worth reflected off of how many likes or comments I get?

When writing a comment

- Is this comment worth fighting about?
- Am I being respectful?
- How are people going to think of me if I write this?
- Should I talk about this person privately?
- How would saying this make someone else feel?

When reading comments

- Am I seeing both sides of the argument in the comments?
- Does this person commenting know me personally?
- Is the information I am reading credible?
- Do I really care about this person’s opinion?
- Should I talk about this person privately?
- How can I fact check this comment?
- Will I care about this in 5 years?
When using social media

- Was I on social media when someone was trying to talk to me?
- How long was I on social media today? How much time does social media take of my screen time?
- Is there something more important for me to do?
- Is my phone negatively affecting me or someone around me?
- Am I using social media or is social media using me?
- Have I been benefited by social media today?
- Have I taken care of myself?
- Am I using this to replace face to face interactions?
- Did social media fulfil me?