

Should schools teach social media skills?

By Aarti Shahani, KQED-TV

Taking selfies at funerals. Tagging pictures of teens drinking alcohol at parties. Kids (and adults for that matter) post a lot of silly stuff online – and although most of it is chatter, some of what might seem harmless leads to tragic consequences. But is it the job of schools to teach kids the dos and don'ts of social media?

At Lincoln High School in San Francisco's Sunset district, counselor Ian Enriquez teaches students three very big words: "Disinhibition, reputation, anonymity."

Enriquez is using a curriculum created by the non-profit Common Sense Media, a media watchdog group for parents that also offers resources for teachers.

Like many schools throughout the country, Bay Area schools hold workshops on cyberbullying, but don't have uniform practices for teaching social media etiquette beyond that. While teachers use platforms like Facebook as a tool to engage students in learning, ongoing instruction on digital citizenship itself is the exception, not the rule.

Enriquez, who counsels students on health, racism, homophobia, and other topics that aren't purely academic, believes the district should institute a mandatory social media curriculum.

Dennis Kelly, president of the United Educators of San Francisco, the local teachers union, says teachers are already drowning in work – especially now with Common Core. While social media is important, Kelly says, so are other things. "All students should learn to swim, but should it be school's responsibility to teach them swimming?"

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