

10-Minute Teacher Podcast Episode 124:

Digital Leadership with Students and Social Media featuring Jennifer Casa-Todd

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VICKI: Today we are thinking about digital leadership. No, not as educators necessarily, but really helping our kids move from digital citizenship to digital leadership, with the author of the book Social LEADia. We have Jennifer Casa-Todd @[JCasaTodd](https://twitter.com/JCasaTodd) with us today.

So Jennifer, how are we supposed to move from digital citizenship to digital leadership? Because, I mean, social media in schools and the kids Instagramming or Snapchatting or whatever, kind of scares people.

JENNIFER: Yes. It really does. But digital leadership is such a positive way of looking at it, and I got the definition from a good friend of mine and mentor, George Couros.

<https://georgecouros.ca/blog/> And he talks about using technology and social media to improve the lives, well-being, and circumstances of others. And that is so counter cultural, right?

And he started to talk about kids who are doing this. And so what I've done, is I've realized that so many kids are engaged in this already. They are learning, and sharing their learning, they are standing up for important causes and they're being a positive influence on others. So really, I think it's about changing our lens. Moving away from a fair narrative towards this more positive stance, and then looking at using social media in the context of our classrooms and digital leadership at a younger age through class accounts.

VICKI: So give me an example. You like class accounts. We've had people on the show like Karen Lirenman (<http://www.coolcatteacher.com/01-ipads-elementary-lirenman-wideen/>) and lots of teachers who have class accounts. So give us some examples of what you think is, "Okay. This is digital leadership with kids."

JENNIFER: Okay. So Kayla Delzer <http://www.topdogteaching.com/> for example. Her third grade class, they have the Tweeter of the day, the Instagrammer of the day, and the Snapchatter of the day. And I'm not suggesting you need to do all three of them. But there's a grade three class where they are looking at opportunities to work and behave online, and then the teacher can have conversations about, "What does it mean to keep something private? When do we share it publicly? How can we be a positive influence on others?"

Another teacher doing this is Rob Cannone @[mr_robcannone](https://twitter.com/mr_robcannone) And one of the really neat things about what I've seen with his class, he's in the same district I'm in, is that as a result of the kinds of activities the classes are engaged in. So just reaching out to others, and including a young girl with a tumor rather, Monica So as a result of engaging in these activities where they are trying to be a more positive influence on others, their own social media accounts have been really positive testaments to what can happen when we model this effectively.

VICKI: Does this scare parents?

JENNIFER: Yes and no. I think that parents right now are scared because of all of the negative media around kids and social media use. I mean it's everywhere, right? It's very much sensationalized, but in the examples that I bring up, not just in the book, but if you think of all the people that are using social media to reach out, to connect to other classes, to transform learning experiences, parents are completely on board, because it changes conversations, right? So you're not saying, "What did you do in school today?" and get the monosyllabic, "Whatever." You're saying, "Wow. Tell me more about this activity that you just did." Or, "I noticed that you did this. What was that like?"

So it really changes conversations. Certainly, it's a communication thing with parents. This other kindergarten class, Stephanie Baveros, (*editor's note: have not been able to locate this teacher will add to the show notes as soon as possible.*) where she started to engage her parents in an Instagram account, and having her four-year-old decide on what needs to be shared and what needs to be private, her parents were so intrigued by it that she actually had workshops for them. So it became this beautiful symbiotic relationship between the parents and the teacher. And the communication was only strengthened by their use of social media.

VICKI: Well, I know in my student genius projects, I encourage them to use social media. And one of my students, she's graduated now so I can say her full name and she'll talk about it publicly, her name is Morgan Singleton, and when she was in tenth grade she had a Twitter account called Apps for Autism. https://twitter.com/apps_for_autism?lang=en And she would research apps for autistic kids. And do you know she got a direct message from a parent who she had done some work for? The parent said, "My child is reading because of you." And it was just so beautiful. And that exchange just couldn't have happened outside of social media, you know?

JENNIFER: Wow. I love it. Absolutely. And there are so many more examples of that positive and transformational experience than we actually know about. Which is why, in the book, I really do bring in the voices of students and their experiences. And there are tons of kids that are absolutely changing the world today. In small and impactfully big ways too.

VICKI: So Jennifer, what do you think the biggest mistake that administrators and teachers make when thinking about social media and the students in their school?

JENNIFER: I think that administrators truly believe that if we ban and block, all will be well. And I don't think that that's the case. Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito and Dana Boyd http://www.e-migration.ro/jims/Vol10_No2_2016/JIMS_Vol10_No2_2016_pp117_119_MATIUTA.pdf talk about increasing risks for kids. I think embracing social media in a school, engaging in conversations alongside teachers and students, not just using social media to celebrate the students, but also to have them engage and respond in social media, so that we're actually modeling what this positive effective use can be. Those are things that I think we need to start to think about today.

VICKI: Is it okay to teach kids how to handle trolls?

JENNIFER Absolutely. It's necessary. Olivia a wonderful nine-year-old at the has a really awesome little video about that, and how important it is for her to work with her mom, in her case her mom, to navigate some of these murky waters. I think that educators can be these caring adults. With the class account, we can-- and I don't think we're really putting our kids at risk. I think though, that it's just an amazing, fertile opportunity for teaching moments together in a supportive and guided environment that when kids are out on their own, they'll be able to take those skills and transfer them.

VICKI: So Jennifer, our last 30 seconds. Give a pitch to teachers about why they should consider social media in their classroom.

JENNIFER: Kids are already using social media in greater and greater numbers on their own. And some parents absolutely help mentor their children. Some don't. To me, it's an equity issue. But not only that, we can completely change the trajectory of where social media's going today. Because we can ensure that it's a more positive place for everybody. And that's the kind of world I want to live in.

VICKI: You know social media just belongs in our classroom. We should use it for our projects, we should use to share with the world. It really just belongs there. It's just another way to communicate. We will have a give away for this book, Social LEADia. Check the show notes, engage with Jennifer, she's got so many fantastic ideas for us.