

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND LEARNING IN THE ART CLASSROOM

by

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## ABSTRACT

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The thesis explores the potential and existing benefits of implementing social based technology in the art classroom. The thesis focuses on how technology affects high school students' ability to access and create content autonomously while maximizing their engagement in collaborative work. Research findings suggest that students who engage in social media based art projects often teach each other and work more independently in a climate of mutual collaboration.

Through observations and interviews the study explores how social networking is currently used and why some forms of social networking prevail over others. The study analyzed data from interviews, observations, and class websites and blogs of two high school teachers, one in a public school, and the other at a private school.

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## CHAPTER I

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

As a prospective teacher, I am interested in the advantages of using new technology in the classroom; in particular, how social media based technologies can be used to promote social networking and enhance student learning. A video clip from Natasha Westcoat's (2010) website Fresh Gloss stresses to parents and teachers that integrating technology into young artists' lives is essential. In relation to this integration and how it can be weaved into young artist's development, Westcoat states "kids can use technology to create and cultivate their own skills" (Westcoat, 2010). She goes on to discuss how to "get started in social media, using blogging to share your artwork and build a community around your art" (Westcoat, 2010). Westcoat teaches blogging basics, social media network discussions, a tutorial on how the tools work, and potential strategies. Westcoat also discusses a radio show that she made with her brother in childhood, along with funny videos shot on an old video recorder. She ponders how her life may have been different if she and her brother had had access to YouTube.com at the age of ten (Westcoat, 2010).

Wescoat's experiences remind me of when I was ten years old. I recorded music using a sound recorder and then spliced the tapes together to create my own music. I also loved photographs, but regrettably, my parents were very overprotective of their cameras, so I never had the chance to explore taking photographs as a child. Now I too wonder how my life might have changed if I had enjoyed access to technology in a classroom setting. How do a child's artistic ideas change with access to technology? How are students affected by their awareness of an

international audience for their work, provided by websites like YouTube?

As part of my requirement for my Master of Science degree, I was required to observe an intermediate school. The students I observed had swivel screen laptops that they brought with them to every class. They would use them to show one another images found using Google, and to share reading responses. I noticed that there was a strong shift from teacher-centric learning to interactive learning with technology. Learning, once viewed as “filling the bucket,” has shifted to “social activity,” where students learn not only from using technology, but also from collaborating with other students and teachers (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009). We are now well into the Information Age, where not only adults, but also young students, have access to technology. Ninety six percent of teens are registered Facebook users, have their own laptops, and are increasingly using social media for their own purposes (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009).

This acknowledgement has led me to my main research question namely: how can social networking be used to enhance learning in the art classroom? I intend to explore this question with a series of related sub questions. How does the incorporation of social media based technology in the art classroom affect student learning? How is social networking currently used, and why some forms of social networking prevail over others? How does social media based technology affect or promote high school student collaboration and collaborative work? According to Mr. Rondinelli, an art educator at School Three in Brooklyn New York, the school policy on social networking is that teachers have limited access to these sites for educational purposes. According to Mr. Rondinelli, he only has access to his personal email and YouTube.com on his school owned laptop, but his student's do not have the same access. Students are banned from using them because it is against the district's policy, according to the school's principal (J. Rondinelli, personal communication, September, 22, 2011). Why do school administrators often eschew from

investing money on laptops? Milton Chen, an advocate for technology, argues that laptops cost a fraction of what textbooks do, and that laptops cost the same amount as the cleaning supplies used to clean schools (Chen, 2010). In general, technologies are not used in schools more often because of research and policy factors, district and or school factors, and factors inherent to technology itself (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009).

When I was a student in high school, teachers were just beginning to use technology for school assignments. For English, we used Microsoft Movie Maker to create interesting presentations. In Math, my teacher handed us remotes and presented multiple-choice quizzes on the projector screen for us to answer. When I took art classes, I was responsible for photographing my own work and creating a PowerPoint to present to the class at the end of the year. My high school provided desktop computers as well as access to many types of software including Windows Movie Maker and Roxio.

In my research, I want to find out how using technology in the art classroom affects student learning, particularly collaborative learning. Social networking sites like Facebook allow students to connect and share information with others “who share similar ideas, backgrounds, and interests” (Bonk, 2009, p.27). These learning tools are essential for collaboration. Social networking resources such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook as well as a wide range of blogging sites are increasingly popular and integrated into our culture (Bonk, 2009). I am interested in studying how these play a role in the art classroom, despite the fact that most schools do not have access to them because of state regulations and policies. The Department of Education in New York City has a Limitations on Internet Usage, which prohibits dangerous and distracting sites in public schools (Walcott, 2001). Educators have worked around these barriers by finding alternatives in sites like Vimeo, and Flickr. Educators Claudia Wallis and Sonja Steptoe argue that

innovation and creativity, communication, interpretation, synthesis, collaboration, problem solving, and interdisciplinary insights are the types of skills that need to be emphasized. [Students] need to build such skills through real-world experiences and projects and thoughtful use of new and emerging technologies (Bonk, 2009, p. 42).

According to Milton Chen's research, students who participated in online classes performed better than those who took the same course in a traditional classroom without the use of technology (Chen, 2010). One student who Chen interviewed said that he used social networking based technology because it allowed him to express himself, and that he could create things that resonated for him (Chen, 2010). In 2006, the US House passed US House Resolution 5319, the Deleting Online Predators Act, stating that social networking sites and chat rooms must be banned and schools that chose not to ban these sites were to be penalized by confiscating internet access totally. According to Ted Poe, a Texas Republican, "social networking sites such as MySpace and chat rooms have allowed sexual predators to sneak into homes and solicit kids" (Goldman, 2006). Chen, however, says that although there are many useful videos on YouTube and iTunes, these sites are blocked by districts due to content that can create legal liability (Chen, 2010). When I was exposed to social networking in the classroom as an undergraduate, I began to consider how it could be utilized in today's high school art classroom. I am excited to observe more high schools classroom settings that are heavily technology driven. I want to see how curriculum that incorporates social media is designed and delivered in the art classroom, and how students and teachers communicate and share knowledge. I want to know why high school students have certain rights at home, but they do not have the same rights in school.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

Educator Sharan Merriam states that observation in a qualitative research paper allows the spectator to see a situation firsthand and that interviewing and documenting allows for holistic interpretation on what is being investigated (1998). Drawing from qualitative research, this study examines how social media based technology is currently used in several high school art classes, what obstacles teachers face in integrating social media into their teaching practices, and what students achieve through the integration of social networking in the high school art classroom. It was designed to address the following research questions: how can social networking sites be used to enhance learning in the art classroom? How does the incorporation of social media based technology in the art classroom affect student learning? How is social networking currently used, and why some forms of social networking prevail over others? How does social media based technology affect or promote high school student collaboration and collaborative work? When or how are social networking based projects important in the high school classroom? In order to answer these questions, I conducted a comparative case study of one private high school and one public high school in New York City.

I set out to collect data to analyze how social networking is currently being implemented in the two research sites selected. Though conducting series of oral interviews, questionnaires and observations, the case study examined the effects of social media on student learning as well as several projects that incorporate social networking implemented by teachers in the art classroom.

My goal was to examine the classroom setting to find out how the students responded and interacted with social networking in their class work. I also observed the teachers involved in both school settings and the social networking sites that they worked with respectively, along with the strategies they used to incorporate social media in their teaching.

Mary McDowell Upper School is a private school located in Brooklyn Heights, NY in its first year of operation. For this case study, both the Art teacher and the English teacher were observed and interviewed on their experiences with technology in their classrooms, their uses of social networking, and on the selection of social networking sites they used in their classes. The high school is renowned for its small class sizes ranging from seven to fifteen students per class.

Mary McDowell Upper School is a Quaker school for students with learning disabilities. The school's mission is to provide support and learning to every student that attends. It is located on a quiet tree lined street in an early twentieth century building with a courtyard for the students to enjoy. The school is located near the Borough Hall subway station, which is a main center for transportation and there are many small restaurants for students to go for lunch. The school offers grades ninth through twelfth with a class size of around ten students on average per class. The high school is known for having a strong diverse student population that includes students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

This private school was selected for the study because of its integration of social networking in its classes. Mary McDowell Upper School has one art teacher, and one Media Publication's teacher. Each student takes two art classes a week, while the Media Publication's class is an elective offered to students who are interested in art and writing and meets twice a week as well. The art teacher and Ms. Rosen, the Media Publication's teacher, design collaborative lessons that integrate both social media and art in one another's class. The Mary McDowell

Upper School was vital to observe because of the use of social networking in the classroom. The school prides in its strong beliefs in technology and social networking and through interviews and observations, the research investigated which social networking sites are used and which work best for art classes. The school uses a variety of social media based technology including: Eno Boards, laptops, iPads, and projectors.

The Mary McDowell Upper School has two head IT personals, Mr. McCormick and Ms. Rosen who make basic computer repairs and have set up the uses of Google+ and Google Apps. The school is in the process of switching from the social networking site Google Apps to a newer site called Google+, which allows high school students to display their homework under an even more secure network. The school also has an actively used school blog monitored by Ms. Rosen, where students can ask questions and relay information and students from Ms. Rosen's "Multi-Media Publications" class post answers and other useful information. Communication is created among students and faculty members, which leads to collaboration on the information provided on the site. These social media based technology and social networking sites will be documented and studied to observe how they are used to implement online projects and their effects on students learning.

The second site observed was the iSchool, which is a public high school in Manhattan, New York. The iSchool is devoted to preparing students with the essential skills needed for success and leadership. The school was created out of a need for more technology in high schools in New York City. The school was designed to give each student a chance to use technology for their classwork and homework. With the help of the art teacher, and through the implementation of social media-based technology, students at this school are encouraged to create, solve problems and enhance their critical thinking skills.

The iSchool is a public school approaching its fourth year in operation, with well over 400 students in total from grades ninth through twelfth. The five-story building houses another high school, Chelsea High School, also owned by the Department Of Education. Across from the high school is a public park with plenty of seating for students and teachers to relax during lunch and access to the subway. The iSchool has a class average of eighteen students, from different backgrounds and boroughs. The iSchool has just one art teacher, Ms. Jenkins who came up with the art classes that are being offered at the iSchool with fellow teachers from her school. Most of her art classes meet twice a week, and the Sixteen film class meets three times a week. Students at the iSchool have to take at least two art classes while they are in high school, but most students choose art as their extra elective. The iSchool was important to observe because of the way social media based technology is used in the art classroom. The iSchool provides students with MacBook Pro laptops, individual class websites, and access to social networking sites such as Vimeo and Flickr. The school also offers a summer class called DisasterCamp, that meets for a whole week and which gives students the chance to use social networking to solve a disastrous situation. DisasterCamp allows students the opportunity to communicate in a small group to figure out multiple solutions to their assigned disaster then collaborate together to execute the solution in the hope for a safe resolution. The students' use of technology, blogs, and the class website was be documented as part of the case study.

The observations and research at both schools were meant to investigate how the incorporation of social networking in the art classroom is changing the way students learn in school. The following questions were asked during an oral interview to the art teachers at both Mary McDowell Upper School and the iSchool:

1. When did you first start using technology and/or social media in the art classroom?

2. What type of technology and sites did you use?
3. Do you use any technologies and sites now?  
If so, what do you use? If not why?
4. How do the social networking sites engage students' abilities to be teachers and work collaboratively?
5. What sites or other technology do you wish you could use?
6. Are there any sites that are blocked?
7. What are some examples of assignments where social networking is used?
8. What are your students think about using social networking?
9. Is it beneficial to their studies in art and other subjects in school?
10. Does it help with them understand their autonomy?

Interviews were conducted with Ms. Jenkins from the iSchool, Mr. McCormick, and Mr. Rosen from the Mary McDowell Upper School to get a better understanding of their students' experiences using social networking sites. These interview questions provided insight into how and why social networking sites benefited students' communication skills, ability to work collaboratively, as well as autonomy in accessing and creating content knowledge.

The data sources collected for analysis included: observations of class projects, websites, and curricula. According to Merriam, studying school material is a useful way to compare information while tracking trends and cultural changes. The data collected pointed to current and potential uses of social networking sites while providing new insights on how to use them in the classroom. According to Merriam, it is important to study the setting, participants, interactions, and activities (1998). For this study, it was important to observe:

- The experience the student had using the social networking sites
- What type of social media based technology was used

- How students communicated with one another through social networking
- How these sites affected the students' ability to work collaboratively
- How technology helped with both student autonomy and academic achievement

Observations included detailed journal recordings of the events observed at the two schools for the duration of six weeks. The journal provided a place to document and store ideas and thought processes, as well as formulating new questions. It was essential because it was a resource that could be reviewed at any given moment, providing a way to notice and remember specific details that might have been forgotten over time. A camera was also used to photo-document school environments and student work. Pictures helped to reflect on and visualize students' projects that might have gone unnoticed and contributed toward creating new interpretations of their work. The information recorded supplied insight on how social networking sites contributed to students' literacy and communication skills, ability to work collaboratively, and increased autonomy.

Data Sources collected included:

Interviews of three teachers  
Observations  
Documents and handouts  
Class websites  
Blogs  
Social networking sites

Data collection tools utilized included:

Canon Rebel Digital Camera  
Journal  
Video recorder for interviews

I analyzed the data by comparing and contrasting responses elicited by the questionnaires. I noticed several similar teaching and classroom management strategies shared between the two teachers. Lessons were observed to analyze how the subjects involved in the study incorporated

social media in their classrooms. The focus was on identifying effective strategies that could help other art educators who wish to incorporate social media based technologies and social networking in their art classrooms. The research looked to explore how these tools increase students' communication skills, ability to work collaboratively, autonomy, and academic performance across content areas. The study also sought to demonstrate how these tools are not only beneficial for the students, but also allow teachers to enhance their communication, organization, and collaborative skills, which in turn help with their teaching and lesson development, as well as assessment and small group instruction practices. The data was collected over a period of three months from September to November. In September, I collected and read literature related to the research question. In October, I began visiting the Mary McDowell Upper School and the iSchool. Lastly, in November I developed questions for teachers and set out to interview them.

I initially thought it was going to be easy to find a school that uses social media in New York City. However, I had to quickly readjust my perceptions for I actually had to undertake a search in order to identify the two sites that I selected for the study. During my quest I had to expand my resources to the Internet as well as a network of friends and colleagues to find a very small number of schools to visit. I found that while several New York City high schools have implemented social media in their core content area courses with class websites to post readings and homework assignments, fewer of them implement social media based technology in the art classroom specifically. I also found that I had to narrow down the focus of my study for the sake of this paper so I limited the number of research questions to focus on the impact of social media on student collaborative work.

## CHAPTER III

### RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review examines the pedagogical arguments for using social media based technology in the art classroom. The literature examines how this technology interacts with social networking and analyzes its effects on high school students' collaborative work. There are four themes that reoccur in the literature that has been selected: teachers' perspectives on technology, pursuing technology in the classroom, the impact of social media technology on students' learning, and collaborative learning in the high school environment.

#### Teachers' Perspectives on Technology

This section of the literature review explores the wide range of perceptions on technology from the educators' point of view. Teachers have their own perspectives on technology and the uses of social networking, some positive and some negative. Curtis Bonk, a college professor, expressed that "Educators typically have not shown the vision necessary to take advantage of technology innovations for learning. Consequently, education has been the one area of society that has not been transformed by technology" (2009, pp. 382-383). There are still some teachers who are trying to avoid the integration of social networking in the classroom. It is important not to simply place technology in the classroom, but instead demonstrate that doing so results in better learning (Chen, 2009, p.136). Educator Milton Chen states that schools and teachers are often cautious of social media based technology because it can be expensive, the technology

might not always work, or because teachers do not know how to use them. (Chen, 2009). In the article “Increasing the use of instructional technology within the K-12 curriculum through staff development” by Salvatore Ferraro, research shows that “teachers at each school had access to computers connected to the Internet, but did not know how to use them to provide instruction to their students” (p. 25). Ferraro writes about just one of the common reasons for why teachers hesitate to integrate social networking in the classroom. The teachers Ferraro studied did not have effective training to use these programs, and therefore could not teach their students using the software. These teachers felt that the technology training they received did not fit their needs and caused them to feel threatened by computers, adding to their hesitation to use them in the classroom (Ferraro, 1999). In the article “Using the Technology of Today, in the Classroom,” the author discusses how using social networking in the classroom is not an easy task to accomplish because many schools block sites like Facebook and Twitter from school computers. According to the Department of Education of New York City, there are limitations on the Internet:

“Internet access and the use of e-mail through the use of the Department’s system, has a limited educational purpose. The term “educational purpose” includes use of the system by students and their parents for learning activities both in school and at home, employee professional or career development, communication between teachers, students and their parents and the facilitation of information-sharing between teachers and administrators throughout the New York City school system” (Walcott, 2001).

Another obstacle is that students simply do not want to share their personal Facebook pages with their teachers because of privacy and censorship issues, relating to what is and what isn’t appropriate to post online. Many teachers are going around these hurdles by using social networking sites that resemble Facebook, such as Think.com, Diigo, WordPress, and Blogger. These alternative social networking sites have the key characteristics of Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace, allowing students to have their own profile, the ability to create an identity, and connect

on a global scale (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009).

While some teachers are hesitant to incorporate social media in their teaching, others have noticed that their students are tech savvy when they come into the classroom and pull out their smartphones and mp3 players. With many schools now providing computer access, it is no wonder that these teachers began to recognize the educational potential of this technology, and are increasingly integrating social media in their lessons.

Technology is constantly evolving, and the percentage of students using iPods and laptops rises higher and higher each year. It is a wonder that schools are banning these technologies while an increasing number of students embrace them wholeheartedly. Despite this paradox, many teachers are trying to incorporate them into their curriculum. Curtis Bonk, professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University, provides the examples of electronic flashcards that can test students' knowledge, and video and sounds clips that can be seen instantaneously on iPods and cell phones, enhancing class interactivity (Bonk, 2009).

There are many teachers who have enthusiastically embraced and successfully incorporated technology in their classrooms. These teachers tried to exploit the educational potential of these technologies by incorporating social networking in their curriculum. According to authors Eric Klopfer, Scot Osterweil, Jennifer Groff, and Jason Haas, teachers are realizing that "ninety-six percent of youth in [high school] have used social networking tools at some time... sixty percent of the students' surveys said they use the sites to talk about education topics and more than fifty percent use it to talk about specific schoolwork" (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009, p.10). Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace are allowing students to meet, learn and keep in contact with each other through their postings and online communications (Bonk, 2009). Ashley Qualls, a teenager with a strong interest in graphic design, created a social

networking site called Whateverlife.com. The site is a source for MySpace graphics and tutorials on creating designs. Qualls sees her website as a place to harvest self-expression and a place to create and collect free graphics. The site also has an online magazine with articles and reviews written by teenagers (Peppler, 2011). Students interested in the arts are turning to social media as an outlet to extend their art making beyond the classroom to an expanded audience. By creating social networking sites with the arts in mind, these students are enhancing their ability to become content creators, as well as to competently present and be accountable for their work while gaining awareness of an expanded audience.

In order for learning to begin taking a new shape, teachers have to be willing to explore new options to increase learning and cognitive thinking. In her article, “The New Conversation Using Weblogs for Reflective Practice in the Studio Art Classroom,” Art Teacher Alexandra Overby states that:

Educators give many reasons for not using the latest technological applications available. However, unless we start incorporating these new approaches, we are creating a large disconnect between this generation of tech-savvy students and the art educator’s ability to stimulate meaningful learning opportunities” (p. 19).

It is important for high school students to be able to use their technological skills to enhance their learning, and it is even more important for teachers to embrace the idea of social networking in the classroom. It seems that many educators do not see the positive changes in social media: students, who are creating digital media projects, are showing new opportunities to advance in literacy and disposition than other students who are not incorporating art in their everyday lives (Peppler, 2011). It is hard to ignore the extensive research that has been done on the effects of social media incorporation in the classroom. With most of the research conducted believing that this incorporation has positive effects, it is interesting to see how many teachers

choose not to incorporate social media in the art classroom.

### Pursuing Technology in the Classroom

Students freely use technology and social networking outside of the classroom. It has become a challenge to increase the integration of both technology and social networking inside the classroom to heighten students learning because it has proven to enhance student learning by increasing vocabulary and critical thinking skills because it holds potential to enhance student learning. Art educator Elizabeth Delacruz believes that teachers can better themselves by helping to shape young students' understanding and use of new digital technologies (Delacruz, 2009).

Like Delacruz, Don Wass, a leader in technology in art education, stresses that social media based technology can be a positive influence. He suggests that bringing technology into traditional art programs will allow students to use a visual medium that is more interesting to them. Social networking based technology in the classroom encourages one of the main components of creativity and learning: risk taking. Children, more than adults, are risk takers with technology, and risk taking is an important strategy for successful art students (Johnson, 2004). High school students are so familiar with how social networking works that they are taking huge risks in showing their artwork on a global scale. Students are now displaying their works of art for all to see. According to Milton Chen, schools that are integrating social media based technology are preparing students with thinking, communication, and collaborating skills (Chen, 2009, p.6).

According to elementary art teacher Becca Swanson, teachers are using social networking in the art classroom because it "raises student interest, promotes class participation, teaches new skills, introduces careers in the digital arts, and helps students make connections between the classroom and the outside world" (Swanson, 2010). Students can realize that using social

networking based technology is not just a tool for creating artwork, but can be the subject matter for their artwork as well (Swanson, 2010). Delacruz adds, “When young people know more than their teachers about computers, new digital media, and techno-culture, teachers become free to engage the kinds of other things youth need to learn” (p. 14). Despite some initial resistance to using technology in the classroom, many art educators are now embracing the possibilities provided by new technologies (Ferraro, 1999). Student learning is enduring a transformation, “made possible through new media and technology, in how curriculum is designed and delivered and how groups of learners and instructors communicate and share knowledge” (Chen, 2009, p.138).

New media is shaping how young high school students are learning and in exchange, teachers are now changing how they create their curricula and lesson plans. Curtis Bonk stated that individuals using social media are more able to contribute to the knowledge-building process instead of passively consuming prepackaged knowledge and information. Now anyone with Web access has myriad opportunities to build, tinker with, and share information. Such information might be of value and contribute to a growing access and exchange of knowledge, to shaping learning communities and promote web based practices, or alternative ways of organizing and accessing information (Bonk, 2009). That students are interested in testing the limits of social networking sites should not come as a surprise, when they are already connecting and sharing on their own at home, in a public space, or in some cases, in school. It would be in teachers’ best interest to harness this information and incorporate it in their curriculum as a way to engage students, encourage relevant dialogue, and promote collaboration in the classroom and in their artwork.

### Facebook, Twitter and Blogging in the Classroom

High school students in the United States visit social networking sites every day, bringing them together with others who share common interests, experiences, and activities, and allowing students to share their knowledge (Bonk, 2009). Will Richardson, a former classroom teacher, demonstrated in a survey that eighty one percent of students in high school have email accounts, seventy five percent have an AOL Instant Messenger account, and ninety seven percent of students strongly believe that technology is significant in the classroom (Richardson, 2009). Social networking sites are highly integrated into our culture and they allow students a place to contribute their talents, which in turn enables them to be seen not only on a local level, but on a global level as well (Bonk, 2009). It is important for high school students to add to the creation of content on the Internet. These students often bring valuable life experiences and knowledge to what they post on the Internet, challenging the views of those who say that the information students post is not savvy enough.

David Perry, an assistant professor at the University of Texas, argues that the use of Twitter has transformed his classroom. Twitter has allowed Perry's students a way to communicate inside and outside of the classroom. Students are able to receive class announcements and reminders by checking their Twitter accounts. Twitter also allows his students to receive instant feedback from not only him, but other students in the class. Bonk (2009) stated "All of these types of ideas create a sense of classroom community" and foster learner discussion, collaboration, and the creation of new class content and information (p. 301).

According to Mark Franek, an educator at William Penn Charter School, each of his students designed and maintained their own blog using WordPress. WordPress allowed Franek's students to upload images, papers, and projects and present them in an organized fashion so other

users could comment on them. High school students enhanced their ability to engage in peer assessment by viewing and leaving comments on their fellow students' social networking sites. Students, who use social networking, tend to create content and use their sites as a portfolio of their work, which includes images, videos, and other media. According to Peppler (2011), "Youth can also create sites for their work, advertising themselves as an artist and appealing to peers to: "like" their work" (p. 83). This creates a sense of accountability, motivating them to enhance their performance based on their knowing that their work is visible to their teachers and peers (Bonk, 2009). Klopfer & Osterweil (2009) found that many teachers were convinced that using social networking in the classroom gave their students something new and fun they could relate to and respect. In turn, these sites allowed students to feel respect and encouragement from their peers and their teachers. Social networking sites allow students to share personal interests with one another, thereby creating a sense of belonging and identity (Bonk, 2009). Students are always in search of what is new and popular; it is no wonder that they turn to social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace as a place to stay connected with their friends.

### Impact of Social Media Technology on Students' Learning

In the following sections I will be exploring the impact of social media on students when utilized in and outside of classrooms as viewed by teachers. In addition, I will examine the differences between teacher centered and student centered teaching, and the relationship between social media to shifting hierarchies in the classroom. This literature will point to the changing role occurring with students who through their active engagement in collaborative social media-based projects are becoming mentors to their peers, teachers, and larger community.

### Establishing Learning in the Art Room

Social networking is being increasingly used in high schools. The use of social networking in the art class allows high school students to express themselves through posting their work, writing comments, and reading responses. According to the literature reviewed, the questions pertaining to the importance of using technology in creative learning seem to shift constantly. How can these learning tools enable high school students to create in ways that were not possible in earlier generations? How can educational shifts from teacher-centered classrooms to learner-centered classrooms enhance student learning? In “Education Nation”, Milton Chen points out that in the digital era of the 21st century, the use of the internet, computers, smartphones, and many other innovative learning tools helps create a social network that was not available in older generations (Chen, 2009). Because social networking sites weren’t available in the earlier part of the 21st century, today’s students have a greater responsibility to help out their parents, teachers, and other adult figures when it comes to understanding new technology and social media.

High school students are active creators and inventors who use many digital tools to express themselves, understand the world around them, and expand their understanding of academic content. Students are creating artwork on the Internet, including their own music, animations, videos, stories, presentations, and websites.

These tools offer high school students the chance to create in ways that were not possible before the mainstream of the Internet. These students are actively engaged in the learning process and are not stagnate in a classroom (Bonk, 2009). Many schools are now providing laptops and access to class websites, and blogs which results in multimedia content creation as well as an increased interactivity in the classroom.

### Teacher Centered vs. Student Centered

Learning has often been directed from teachers and texts books with both having biases towards their own personal views. In a traditional high school classroom, the teacher creates the lesson and lectures to the student. The student's job is to listen, take notes, do their homework and memorize facts. In the digital age, students are expected to work hard and use technology to "actively seek out reliable and high-quality sources of information, analyze these sources, and utilize them in producing a product of their knowledge" (Chen, 2010, p.237). Learning now implies more of an interactive and shared involvement. Sites like Facebook and Twitter allow students to create a profile in which they can share personal information, ideas, and images (Bonk, 2009). Students in the Digital Age are active creators and thinkers because of the vast amount of digital tools that help them express themselves, interpret the world, and create a stronger understanding of what they are learning. In "The World is open", Curtis Bonk (2009) states:

"Today's students create music, videos, presentations and websites, which helps them to learn in new ways: Shifting methods of delivering knowledge enhances students' ability to learn by allowing them to develop skills such as creativity, communication, and problem solving through allowing the possibility to creatively combine knowledge; which is more important than remembering facts, names, and dates" (p.42).

In an article found in the Education Arcade, a website for technology in the classroom, the authors believe that because social networking sites allow students to have their own profile, they encourage connecting to others on the Internet with similar interests (Klopfer & Osterweil, 2009). According to art educators Rina Kundu and Christina Bain, social networking can connect art to social practices (Kundu & Bain, 2006). Students can upload their art portfolios and critique works of art by using these sites. Student creations can be seen on websites like Flickr, Facebook,

and Blogger where they share their ideas and insights not only in school, but around the world.

Classroom learning is no longer relegated to the local, but can be expanded and become global (Bonk, 2009). Students can now use resources like Twitter and Facebook to connect and share information with others who have similar ideas and cultivate their interests while transcending geographies. This introduces the idea of students peer teaching, allowing them to exercise their oral or verbal skills, problem solve, and create arguments and opinions (Chen, 2010, p.104). Using social networking, unlike traditional learning, can allow for multiple answers to a problem.

### Tracking Critical Thinking Online

By recognizing that students have the ability to construct their own knowledge and to develop their own critical thinking skills as they make sense of what they have learned according to educator Will Richardson, students are learning to read more critically, their reading is more analytical, and their writing is clearer. Students are creating relationships amongst their peers, teachers, and professionals within the social networking environment (Richardson, 2009). Using social networking sites as part of a class assignment helps students to be thoughtful with their responses because they know that their fellow classmates will also be reading their responses (Chen, 2010). Social networking sites can teach high school students “new literacies they will need to function in an ever expanding information society” by teaching valuable skills, for example: research, organization, and the combination of ideas (Richardson, 2009, p. 28). Social networking sites can also help teach critical thinking, reading and writing skills, as well as management skills, by making high school students accountable for what they post. If students had weblogs set up from the time they started school to the time they graduated, what they would have at the end is a comprehensive history of their work and learning that was searchable and shareable, one that

would provide a great resource for reflection or future study (Richardson, 2009).

By using blogs, high school students could also create an e-portfolio. When students use a blog or other social networking site like Facebook, they are creating an online filing cabinet. Information, images, and comments are stored chronologically by date on these sites. This digital filing cabinet is a useful assessment tool for students to map the progress of their work, it also provides a place for reflection, and creates a space for an online e-portfolio. Students can create e-portfolios by collecting all of their best artwork, commenting on these artworks, and posting them for everyone to see (Richardson, 2009). Comments from outside of the classroom can be powerful motivators for students to continue to write and create artworks. E-portfolios also allow high school students a chance to expand their audience and create a space for their artwork to be critiqued, shared, and commented upon by others.

### Students as Teachers and Self-Discovery

Students are empowered to become administrators of content as they actively make decisions on how they choose to present it and use it on social networking platforms. High school students are exceptionally competent with digital tools, and can become teachers to not only their peers, but their teachers and other adults as well. This is creating reversing the roles between students and teachers. By allowing students the chance to teach, students are gaining confidence and are reinforcing what they are learning. Students can be teachers by creating social networking pages, sharing their favorite resources, leading workshops, classes, and developing multimedia products designed for sharing information with others (Chen, 2009). Milton Keynes, a British educator, explains that there is a need for teachers and students to work together to understand how they can learn from one another the uses of technology in the high school classroom

(Kukulaska-Hulme, 2009). As different forms of learning are developed, there is a shift from teacher-based knowledge to problems that need to be solved and products that need to be created (Bonk, 2009). This redefined student-teacher role allows high school students to gain confidence and reinforce their own learning. Milton Bonk believes that an important key to using technology and social networking sites is the new role students can play. Students can use their familiarity with technology to help their teachers. There are still many teachers who are unfamiliar with social networking, let alone technology, and the student now has a chance to teach the teacher (Bonk, 2009). Unlike Bonk, Kukulaska-Hulme, technological learning belongs to the student more than the teachers, it is important to understand that students will struggle with what they have learned without the teacher's direction and guidance (Kukulaska-Hulme, 2009).

According to a Pew study, fifty seven percent of teenagers are considered “content creators” (Richardson, 2009, p.2). These students are sustaining their own websites, social networking pages, workshops, and classes, all while creating multimedia products intended to share their knowledge with others (Bonk, 2009). Students are able to create a sense of autonomy and identity by being given the opportunity to create and maintain their own web content. Blogs and other social networking sites simplify the process of creating, editing, and publishing for everyone, including students who are interested in sharing their thoughts and feelings (Richardson, 2009). Richardson adds, “creating a weblog can enhance the development of expertise in a particular subject” (p.27). According to Michael Prater, an art educator, teachers using technology in their classroom should allow students to be teachers, giving them assignments that encourage the use of the internet to learn about a certain topic (Prater, 2001). Students can be given a homework assignment that would ask them to create a blog about a certain subject. Students can easily make a blog that shows all the facts, images, and writings on a subject and later teach the

class what they have learned by presenting their blog. Students can also compare information from multiple sources and reflect on what information is trustworthy. High school students can be asked to build upon a previous topic, welcome feedback from outside of the classroom, and explain and teach their fellow classmates the information that they have learned. Not only does this form of blogging increase students' understanding of teaching a subject, it also helps students develop better skills to teach others.

Educator Curtis Bonk believes that high school students now have the option of being authors of new knowledge. Knowledge no longer has to come directly from the teacher. Instead, students can contribute their findings and become experts on a topic (Bonk, 2009). With extensive exposure to technology, students can build and create their own understanding of art and technology. Social media also allows students to find other artists to learn from, artwork to study, and inspiring works of art. Social networking sites provide resources that can help students to learn their own studio techniques, and later teach these techniques to not only their classmates, but to their teacher (Prater, 2001). It is important to understand and acknowledge that regardless of whether there is a teacher involved or not, teenagers are going to visit social networking sites and learn about them independently. Social networking is cutting-edge; teens are going to want to be a part of it. Therefore, students ultimately know more about this subject than their teachers. These students are able to assist their teachers when technical problems arise. In cases like these, students are just as crucial to the learning process as their teachers.

Constructivist learning allows for students to arrive at their own conclusions and at ideas that are not directed from their teacher. Constructivist learning occurs when a student can construct knowledge, meaning that the knowledge students learn is not a collection of facts, but the journey of actions and operations that is important to the students' learning (Kundu & Bain,

2009). By using this type of learning, not only do students become teachers of a subject, based on their own ideas, but it allows them to communicate and defend their arguments. It is important for students to analyze their own findings, because they can interpret information in a way that the teacher may not have thought possible. In return, the student will be able to explain how they came to their conclusions by showing their peers a blog that documents their thinking processes and achievements.

### Collaborative Learning in a High School Environment

Historically, students were expected to retain information that was given to them by their teacher and work independently. Their own work was viewed by a limited audience, usually their teacher or family members. Now students can actually collaborate with other students for their projects, writings and artwork and display them to a larger audience. The use of social networking sites facilitates learning skills such as communication, conversation, and collaboration. Collaboration is not just a social phenomenon, but also an important learning source for students and teachers (Bonk, 2009). Communication tools help students to share and work collaboratively to create something new. High school students can actively collaborate in new ways because of social networking. Social networking sites allow for feedback on a global scale, and create an online community. These sites enable students to be in constant communication with their friends, classmates and their teachers through various forms including Instant Messenger, email, and general posts. High school students can thus find and make new friends around the world, expand dialogue and engage in online collaborative work with others.

Social networking tools allow students to stay connected and learn from one another through their blog postings, and other forums. With the help of social networking sites, students

are now able to collaborate and meet with fellow learners and interact with experts, peers, and other teachers they may have never been able to encounter before the use of social networking (Bonk, 2009). Social networking sites have connected high school students to others around the world, transcending geographic boundaries and creating the ability for them to collaborate and influence each other's capabilities in new ways. Social networking sites are a collaborative space because they allow the audience to become part of the learning process (Richardson, 2009).

Klopfer et al propose that social skills are developed through collaborating and networking, and that these skills are based off of traditional literacy acquisition techniques and critical skills learned in the classroom environment (Kloper & Osterweil, 2009). For example, students can be given the project to create a social networking page. By asking their fellow classmates what a good art topic could be, these students can take and share notes with one another to formulate an appropriate art topic to create a social networking page on any topic (Kloper & Osterweil, 2009). Collaborating with others is so subtly integrated into how people communicate with others, that it sometimes goes unnoticed. By using social networking sites, high school students are offered specific collaborative tools, such as working with other students or mentors. In addition, when someone leaves a comment on a student's social networking page, it can be a very positive learning tool (Richardson, 2009). Will Richardson, an educator; reflected on the first time he received a response from someone who read his comment:

There was something really powerful about easily being able to share resources and ideas with a Web audience that was willing to share back what they thought about those ideas (p.17).

Richardson realized that social networking sites provided not only a place for him to share his comments, but a place for his ideas as well, thus creating a potential collaborative educational setting.

High school students already have the necessary tools for collaborative learning, including the abilities to bring their own ideas, talents, resources, networks, and products together for sharing and innovation (Bonk, 2009). The idea that high school students can use social networks to look for the works of others to support their own learning is how collaboration works (Richardson, 2009). Students can benefit to “connect, exchange, share, remix, and reinvent” (Bonk, 2009, p.15). Students want to share their expertise and see what other can contribute to their own opinions, thoughts and ideas.

Without collaboration in education, high school students will not have the vital skills necessary when they graduate to a job where people have to work together in teams, such as in a business or a company where ideas and collaboration happen every day (Bonk, 2009). While some argue that online collaboration is just a fad, educator Curtis Bonk believes that such powerful websites have the essential tools that can impact education, and will not go out of style (2009).

There are many sites geared towards collaborative learning. Sites such as Skype and Google Talk allow users free online peer-to-peer voice collaboration. High school students can use these sites to connect with other classmates to share research, writing, thoughts, and information without being in the same room. The site Groove, made by Microsoft, allows users to use online sticky notes, project management tools, concept mapping, chat, and others for free, online or offline. Because of these tools, Groove is one of the most used sites by teachers to create collaborative projects (Bonk, 2009). The actor Joseph Gordon Levitt created a site in 2004 specifically for collaboration. According to Gordon Levitt: “HitRecord is an open-collaborative production company, and this website is where we make things together” (Levitt, 2004). Hitrecord.org allows an artist to post a song, piece of artwork, photographs, etc. and have another artist collaborate with this artwork online. The site is free for users with the user’s knowledge that

their work may be used to create a profit, which will be shared with the original artists. With emerging sites geared towards collaboration, it is no wonder that teachers prefer to use these social networking sites in their classroom. Social networking sites provide a fun and interesting way to learn about art and about one another's cognitive processes.

Teacher and student relationships can largely improve with the incorporation of social media based technology in the classroom. Today's students' lifestyles and their connection to the world revolve around social networking. It is important for teachers and students to help one another to find effective ways of using this new technology. Social networking will benefit both the teachers and the students by improving students' abilities to lead a class discussion, creating new opportunities for collaboration with peers and teachers, creating new platforms for art-making and exhibiting and taking students out of the classroom and into a sphere of public engagement (Delacruz, 2009). With so many high school students with access to the Internet and social networking sites, there is a growing teacher and student collaboration that is creating a new type of learning in the art classroom. In the next section I will be exploring the context of social media and technology in the high school art classroom. I will include a comprehensive history of social media in the classroom, I will elaborate on terms and definitions that pertain to my research topic, and contextualize the research sites selected for this thesis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

#### History

Internet technology is a relatively new reality that has only been around for about twenty years. In 1989 Tim Berners-Lee was working with the concept of creating a collaborative medium that could connect people from all over the world; he called it the World Wide Web. After developing the idea, Berners-Lee shared it with computer researchers and government officials who used it to share text and data. Seeing that it had the potential to work, Berners-Lee created a browser called Mosaic Web in 1993 (Kist, 2010). Immediately, the Internet went from text and number-based research to information and color images. Millions of people around the world were accessing the web to discover new information and entertainment. By the end of the twentieth century, web designers and authors began redeveloping the way people navigated through the Internet. One of the oldest social networking sites is Amazon.com that began as a place for visitors to read and write reviews on books. There were still not many content creators at the time; in fact those who did create content had to have knowledge of HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) codes. HTML is often mistaken as jargon because of its complexity, but it is also the language in which we see things on the internet. There were no website builders like weebly.com and wix.com, all sites at the time had to be built using HTML which is not an easy task and limited content creators (Kist, 2010).

In 2003, Pew Internet & American Life Project conducted a study to see how and who

was using the Internet. The project found that fifty three American adults were using the Internet to read and publish their thoughts, post images, and share files. The test was conducted again in 2005; there was a thirteen percent increase in content creators (Kist, 2010). By 2008, the group Technorati that tracks blogs, discovered that there were over 110 million Weblogs, also known as blogs. Blogs were the answer to those who knew nothing about the language of HTML because blogs are forms that already are embedded with the codes and the author only has to type in the selected field and the blog will create the page. The same year Youtube.com had over 100,000 videos being uploaded each day (Bonk, 2009). With the ever growing use of the Internet, there are now an infinite amount of images, videos, and text, these new technologies can help transform how educators can teach and learn. Through implementing social media in the classroom students have now the opportunity to enhance their reading, writing, and collaborative skills. By facilitating these attributes, educators are allowing students to communicate and collaborate with peers using social networking sites. In the next section, I will define important terms that are essential to understanding this paper.

### Terminology

The terms “social media” and “social networking” are two terms that consistently recur in this paper. These are terms that people are arguably familiar with, but they do not always know what they mean. When I use the term social media in this paper, I am intending to use it to describe the technology being used to view the Internet in relation to its ability to facilitate communication through interactive dialogue between people, communities, and businesses. Whether it is a smartphone, a tablet, or a projector, these forms of technology have the ability to connect to the Internet that is essential for using social networking. The term social networking

refers to the communication that takes place on the Internet using some type of interactive website (Bonk, 2010). For example, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube allow people to connect with others who are on the website.

The term “blog” is also repeated through this paper and is intended to describe online journals. Blogs, or web logs which is their official name, are free websites that give the world the chance to interact with the journal entry, or “post” in the realm of the Internet. With blogs, the reader can leave comments and leave feedback, additional information, or comments that can engage further conversation and interaction. This form of interaction is instant, can be public or private, and can help gather input from friends, family, and even strangers.

Wikis are sites that have many authors who have access to the site to add, delete, or modify the data on the website. The idea of a wiki is to have authors contribute to a database, or a website with lots of information. The most famous wiki site is Wikipedia.com, which allows millions of people to add their research and knowledge on any particular subject. While the idea of this many people contributing to this type of website is meant to maximize and expand knowledge on any given subject, there are bound to be mistakes in factual information posted to the site. Wikipedia has qualified employees comb through newly inputted information to check for accuracy, which reinforces the collaborative component promoted by these types of sites.

Social networking sites are constantly changing and redeveloping the way they work. Just a few years ago, if you said you had Facebook, most people would have thought you were referring to Saturday Night Live’s comedy sketch Jarret’s Room, where college student Jarret’s online webcast announced the sixth annual Freshman Facebook, which was an online yearbook that made fun of other students. Now Facebook.com is the most popular site in most countries with over 845 million users since February 2012 (Protalinski, 2012). This exponentially rapid

development inspires the question, of what social networking site will be next. Will Facebook triumph for good, or will another social networking site like Google+ prevail?

Google+ allows for increased privacy for users. The site enables you to not only add friends, but also to share your ideas, thoughts and creations. With Google+, the user can create circles, which are groups of friends, families, colleagues, etc. Circles work by separating other users according to selected information that will remain within a particular circle. Google+ also connects the users Gmail, calendar, document, photos, and bookmarks, which allows for easy and fast navigation.

Flickr is a social networking site used for hosting or storing personal images. There is a large fan base for this website: people around the world use it to share photographs they have taken and hope to receive feedback and suggestions from other users. This site is often used to create memories because it allows users to put images in ‘albums’ that can be shared with friends and family members.

Similarly to YouTube which allows users to upload videos, Vimeo is a website used for uploading high quality videos. Like Flickr, and YouTube, Vimeo allows users from around the world to comment on any video clips shared on the site. The site allows users to store video clips in progress that can be downloaded to any computer for further editing. The user can choose to make their profile private so other users cannot access their videos. This site is not generally used for sharing videos, as much as for the user to view their own video clips.

Facebook is a social networking site that is used for connecting people, sharing status, photographs, and video with people you know. It is a highly interactive site that constantly updates the user as to what their “friends” are posting. Facebook also allows users to connect with company pages, fan pages, and event pages, which keep the user informed of new changes and

developments.

Most high school students have used one of the above social networking sites at least once in their lives (Richardson, 2009). These sites are appealing to students of this age group because they allow students to have a sense of autonomy, as well as connect to their peers and socialize. In the next section, I will further expand on the schools that use social media based technologies and how they use them.

There are several issues with using social networking in the classroom that cannot be avoided. “Many school districts still block iTunes because of objectionable music; it is only a matter of time before this cyber-barricade is overthrown to unleash the wealth of online resources to learners everywhere and provide the highest quality content for online courses” (Chen, 2010, p. 116). Districts in most cases choose to block blogging sites like blogspot.com and myspace.com because of the often-graphic content that can be posted on these sites. When schools block these sites, they block not only these few uncertain sites, but also the vast majority of harmless ones that are appropriate for high school viewers (Richardson, 2009). When I was in high school, social networking was just starting with websites like MySpace and AOL Instant Messenger. For some time, students were allowed access to these sites. Then the school blocked them because they were seen as ‘unproductive’ and ‘not school related.’ “Many districts have recoiled from the ‘dark side’ of the internet by shutting down access to the sites with some objectionable content but some very worthwhile material, as well” (Chen, 2010, p. 135).

Through my studies, I discovered that there is a gap in the research that focuses on the history of social media in the art classroom specifically. My research is looking to fill this gap and to explore the impact of social media in the art room along with the need to focus on its implementation as a new medium that is changing the way students create and present their

artwork.

In next chapter, I will explore how these schools have implemented social media based technology in the art classroom. I will explain how social media is being used in a private school and a public school respectively. Private schools generally do not have many rules against social networking, unlike public schools that generally ban these types of sites. Through first-hand experience, I have seen that social media impact the way students communicate, interact, and teach in a positive manner. The results are relative to the specific classroom settings that I have observed and are not in any way claiming to be a description of all schools in New York City.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS

In this chapter, data will be reviewed to see if there is a strong connection between using new technology in the classroom and an enhancement in student learning and performance in the art classroom. The research investigates how social media based technologies are used to promote student collaborative skills teaching techniques and self-discovery. Over the course of twelve weeks two high school classes in New York City were observed, and several recurring key themes emerged from the data. This thesis looks to argue that by incorporating social networking into the art classroom, students can enhance their learning and understanding not only in the art room, but in other classes as well. Relevant themes that emerged from my research include: social networking in the classroom, student ability to make connections, learner autonomy, students' teaching strategies, and teacher training. This case study was created to explore how teachers are currently integrating social networking into the art classroom and to identify effective strategies to maximize student engagement through the use of social media.

This chapter is separated into sections; they will break down the afore-mentioned categories and analyze the way educators and students use social networking in the classroom while simultaneously suggesting effective strategies and modifications that may enhance teaching and learning in the art studio. The analysis will be based on data gathered from observations of the two teachers in their respective classroom environments, interviews, as well as social networking based projects that were observed and documented. For the first case study, a multi-

media publication teacher at a high school in Brooklyn, NY was observed. For the second case study an art teacher in Manhattan, NY was observed. Ms. Rosen who has been teaching multi-media publications for six years at the Mary McDowell Friends Schools was the first to be observed. Ms. Jenkins who has been teaching art at the iSchool for two years was observed next. A ninth grade Multi-Media Publication class at Mary McDowell Upper School was observed. In addition, a tenth grade Video Production class and a ninth grade Cartography class at the iSchool were observed.

### Social Media in the Art Classroom

This chapter is designed to analyze and to review data relative to the advantages of using new technology in the art classroom; in particular, how social media based technologies are used to promote social networking and enhance student learning and collaborative work. A number of collaborative projects that implemented social media were observed in the fieldwork performed. Specifically for this analysis, projects implemented by the multi-media publication class teacher were documented to analyze the strategies utilized to integrate social networking into their classrooms.

This section will analyze how social media can be used to enhance art projects and promote the acquisition of reading comprehension, research, social and collaborative skills in the art classroom. While observing a variety of lessons two typologies of collaborative projects became visible. While most of the projects being implemented in the classrooms observed were collaborative, they became distinguishable as tangible projects and un-tangible projects. For the sake of this paper, tangible will represent works of art that are physical in nature such as drawings and sculptures, while non-tangible will represent virtual and/or digital works of art that cannot

be handled or touched and are relegated to the digital screen as in the case of websites and video clips.

### Collaborative Projects

The observations shed light on how both teachers and students can benefit from the use of social media in the art room. Ms. Jenkins' use of social media based technology in her art classroom enhances her lessons because she relays on the Internet to heighten students' communication, literacy and research skills as well as their sense of independence. Her art room has desks set up in a circle in the middle of her room. There is a blackboard on the back wall with websites that are used in the classroom, and on the other side of the classroom is a LCD projector. The room is very colorful with its light blue walls, inspirational posters of famous artists, and colorful design books and board games.



Figure 1. Ms. Jenkins' classroom (2012).

The first tangible project that will be introduced is the Matte Globes project created in the Cartography class. The matte globe project was made using a technique similar to paper mache' that utilizes matte medium instead of flour.

### *Tangible Matte Globes- Cartography Class*

During the first visit to Ms. Jenkins' art room, there were several different types of art classes being taught. There is a film anthropology class titled "Sixteen", which is essentially a video documentary class, a game design class, where students examine games as art, and a cartography class, which looks at maps as art. In the Cartography class, the students had already made a paper matte replica of the Earth by using mathematical equations to determine the size and green and blue acrylic paint to represent land and water. The goal of the project was to have the students design their own utopian version of the Earth by moving continents and oceans around on the globe, creating an entirely new replica. They had their paper matte globes stationed at their desks where they were asked to explain the challenges faced in their process so far by both discussing it verbally in front of the class and filling out a written questionnaire. One student explained that the paper Matte technique was difficult to execute because the project became very wet. After the students discussed their work in progress, She told her students that the next step was completing their globes.

Ms. Jenkins instructed them to retrieve their assigned MacBook Pro laptop from the shelves and go to the site Google Maps. She asked them if they knew which country Moscow was in and where that country was located on the globe. The students used the site to figure out that Moscow is located in Russia. Ms. Jenkins then turned on the LCD projector and showed the students' art that uses maps in their artwork. She pulled up a Kamil Fattakhovich Zainetdinov painting entitled The Map of USSR After Funeral and asked them what they saw. A few students said that the artist used mostly reds in the painting, while another student asked what the acronym USSR stood for. Ms. Jenkins told the students that Moscow is located in the USSR. A male student then said to Ms. Jenkins that according to Google Maps, Moscow is located in Russia and

not in a country called the USSR. Another student explained that according to a quick Internet search that she just did on her laptop, that Russia used to be called the USSR during the Cold War and that the artist must be referring to that time period. Ms. Jenkins allows the students to use the Internet for researching purposes to help them solve issues that can arise in her classroom. By allowing the students to undertake their own research and figure out their problems with the use of the Internet, she is facilitating independence. Through having them look for and provide answers to themselves as well as the rest of the class, she is subverting hierarchy while blurring boundaries between academic roles by allowing the student to become the teacher.



Figure 2. Student observing Moscow, Russia via Google Maps (2012).

In this case the student who did the Internet search on the USSR was able to inform the other students that Russia was once called the USSR. This is an example of how students become teachers and of the teacher's act of facilitating a constructive learning environment in which students can become active learners and turn themselves into educators. Through this activity students built research skills and expanded their knowledge of History and Geography as well. The use of technology facilitated learning through accelerating their ability to access information

autonomously. The first non-tangible project observed was the Artist Sketch Blog created by the high school students at the Mary McDowell Upper School. The blog was created to bridge the gap between the art class and the English class, which would allow for both more art and more writing and in return, will enhance both their art and their literacy skills.

### *Non-Tangible project 1- The Artist Sketch Blog*

Ms. Rosen's classroom is divided into two sections; the left section being the main classroom with a long conference table surrounded by office chairs and an Eno Board in front of it, while the right section has a large bookshelf, printers, and inspirational posters of famous fashion designers on the wall. When the class started the students came in with their laptops and were instructed to sit in the office chairs as close to the Eno Board as possible. Ms. Rosen instructed the students on how to use Google Apps, the school's official way of communicating. The teaching tools utilized in the art classroom included the Eno Board, the projector, and the laptops.

In the Multi-Media Publications class, students incorporate artwork from the art classroom into a blog, where they can then respond to the posted content and comments about the artwork engaging in a dialogue with each other, the teacher, and people from around the world.

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'the LightPost', the student publication of the Mary McDowell Friends Upper School. The header features the title 'the LightPost' in a large, stylized font, with the subtitle 'the eclectic online student publication of the Mary McDowell Friends Upper School' in smaller text below it. A dark navigation bar contains links for 'Home', 'About the Authors', and 'Columns'. Below the navigation is a section titled 'The Art Journal' with the subtext 'The art that's hidden inside the notebooks of Mary McDowell's high-schoolers'. A featured post is titled 'Inside Sahara's Spanish notebook', accompanied by a small thumbnail image of a notebook page with drawings. A caption below the post reads: 'Here are some amazing drawings. Thank you for letting us all look inside your notebook, Sahara! Want us to feature YOUR drawings? Bring us your notebook!' A 'Read more »' link is visible at the bottom of the post.

Figure 3. The LightPost, a student collaborative blog (2012).

Ms. Rosen instructed her students to open their laptops to the Google Apps school homepage, while she pulled the website up on the projector. Each student was instructed to send his or her first homework assignment to the class email. The email homepage was presented on the Eno Board for all of the students to see. Ms. Rosen asked the class if there were any volunteers to share their homework assignment. A female student raised her hand and Ms. Rosen opened the email. The teacher asked the student to explain the drawing that was displayed on the Eno Board. The young female student described the drawing; explained why she chose the pencil medium, what the drawing was depicting, and the conceptual ramifications around the artwork. The student went on to say that the drawing was titled Eagle of Love and that it was part of a sketchbook assignment she was given. The assignment consisted in drawing something that interested the student: Native American totem figures were interesting to her because of the compositions of abstract shapes that were combined to create animals. Ms. Rosen asked the class if they had any question or comments for the young student. A male student raised his hand and asked the female student to explain what she will write her description about. The female student answered that she hoped to do some research on Native American population, particularly from Northern Canada to see where and how the totems came into existence.

Another female student volunteered to show her homework, Ms. Rosen opened the email and the Eno Board displayed another pencil drawing. Ms. Rosen asked the female student to explain her drawing. The student said that she was fascinated with fashion design and that she hopes to become a designer when she is older. She used sketchbook paper and sticky notes as accents of color for her designs. One student asked where she developed the ideas for her dresses. She clarified that she watched a lot of fashion shows on television and that she was inspired by the work of many fashion designers. The weekly discussions about their artwork on the blog are

usually student lead with very little teacher involvement; Ms. Rosen believes that her role is that of a facilitator for learning, and that this type of teaching technique works best for this class.

**the LightPost**  
the eclectic online student publication of the Mary McDowell Friends Upper School

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## Inside Our Notebooks

What's the word? Art's the word, and it's your art we want to show!

The LightPost has begun a new art column to showcase the creativity and talent of Mary McDowell's students. If you have a drawing, doodle, picture, or even a short story that you want to show the school, feel free to submit it to the LightPost for all the school to admire. We kick off our Art Journal column with several lovely drawings from our LightPost members.

Figure 4. Student work from the LightPost (2012).

During the course of the following site visit, the students were preparing to insert their art work jpeg images on their class blog, Lightpost. The students utilized Google Docs to upload images on their blog, which is hosted by WordPress. Students agreed on the design layout, resulting in the creation of tabs, known as Inside Our Notebooks, which allow the visitors to view individual pages. As a class the students agreed to allow Student A to write the description of the notebook page because they believed she was the most articulate when it came to phasing content. The written description said that this was a new art column that will showcase artwork of Mary McDowell High School students. The passage engages the viewers' participation by inviting them to send work to them for posting. I went back to this webpage several weeks after and noticed that some visitors had left comments explaining that the artwork was "amazing" and that they were "talented" artists. While the site did not have a lot of visitors in general, it was very important for

the students to implement a way to gain a larger audience, a goal they hope to fulfill by the end of the school year. The students in this class are very excited to facilitate and gain a new audience, as well as to create new content and answer questions about content that interests their peers and other viewers from the Internet. The observations shed light on how Ms. Rosen takes advantage of using new technology in the art classroom. It will be interesting to know if the students will be able to reach their goal of expanding their audience even without actively advertise their website.

#### *Non-Tangible project 2- Film Making: Sixteen*

The next class observed was Film Anthropology, best known by the students, as “Sixteen.” Sixteen refers to the main project in this class: creating a video that demonstrates the life of a 16 year-old student. Ms. Jenkins introduced the first project that the students will be working on entitled A Day in the Life. The project was a film that the students worked on for half of the semester that contained photographs, footage, and sound taken by the students that provided glimpses of their everyday life. To further explain this project, Ms. Jenkins asked her students to retrieve their laptops and open their web browser to the class website. Ms. Jenkins turned the LCD projector on and it displayed the site Vimeo. She explained that everyone was to post all footage of their documentaries on the class Vimeo website, and showed an example of a past student’s project. The students watched the short documentary and were asked to critique the project. The majority of students agreed that the film had a smooth voiceover and that the footage shots were crisp. Other students suggested that the music in the background could have been lowered so that the voice over could be heard more clearly, and that perhaps there could have been more footage about the subject’s family and friends. Ms. Jenkins pulled up the class website and created a post that listed the class’ critiques of the film. This is an example of peer assessment where the students

are responding to each other's work without the intervention of the teacher. Ms. Jenkins proceeded to ask the students to begin brainstorming in groups. She asked them to watch the student film again and to share in a discussion with their groups any suggestions or ideas that came to mind after watching the film. The next step was to ask students to come up with a design, a plan or a layout of their documentary in their groups. Several students were inspired by the Rebecca Black music video entitled Friday, which begins with a teenage girl waking up, getting ready for school, getting into a car with some friends, spending the day in school, then finally singing at a party.

During the following visit, they had the footage mostly compiled.



Figure 5. A Day in a Life Video Montage created by a student (2012).

Students used Vimeo to post their footage, and their fellow classmates were able to comment on the footage and give them helpful suggestions on what to fix and what to keep. One student commented to another: ‘I think your video is cool, your video isn’t shaking and your transitions are at the right speed. Maybe you could increase the speed of you walking down the hall because it’s sort of boring to watch.’ The students were then asked to pull up the class Flickr site where they posted photographs taken during the filming. This assignment allowed them to

photo document the progress of their projects and provided an occasion for them to reflect on the process itself. The teacher explained that photographs are just as important as the video in a documentary, and that they can be inserted into the film. I was impressed with the students' willingness and ease in critiquing their peers' work because in my personal experience students do not generally want to talk about someone else's work. Teens are self-critical, introspective, idealistic, and have a growing concern about their relationship in society (Lowenfeld, 1987). Ms. Jenkins believes that these social networking sites allow students the courage to share what they are thinking and that without these sites; they would be too self-conscious to share their opinions. Ms. Jenkins said she has seen a great improvement in student participation. These social networking sites allow the students to critique in a constructive and secure environment. In these online communities, all the students participating share the same authority in using social networking: there are no hierarchies.

#### Student Learning: Using the Internet as a Medium

It is important to comprehend how social networking is shaping a new generation of student learning because it provides a new way of accessing, generating and understanding knowledge that was not offered a decade ago because of the lack of resources and qualifications. With the help of the teacher as well as technology, students can come to their own conclusions by using resources from social networking sites.

At the iSchool, Ms. Jenkins believes that her students should be able to have certain freedoms. When the "Sixteen" class was observed, she allowed them the freedom to go on the Internet and do research to find inspiration for their video project. Many students went to the MTV website, which at the time was not blocked. When asked about her opinion about them

using sites such as mtv.com she explained, “Watching Sixteen and Pregnant and Sweet Sixteen are awesome resources because it allows the students to connect to it, they’re sixteen and the show is about sixteen year olds.” When asked why she allows the students to navigate the Internet on their own, Ms. Jenkins answered that the students are blocked from really bad sites and that once parameters are set in place to promote safety, access to navigating the Internet is a learning experience. Ms. Jenkins’ theory is visible in her approach with all her classes.

### Promoting Student Growth

During the Cartography class, some students were using social networking sites like Google Maps to research things closely related to the assignment, but also for their own interest-driven knowledge. One student said that they were using Google Maps to look up their house. While the project does require the student to use this site, the student chose to expand their knowledge beyond the assignment and connect their learning to other spheres of their experience, by looking up other things on Google Maps. Ms. Jenkins had this to say:

“I believe students should have a break, if a student is playing a game on the computer and they are not in the game design class, that is not acceptable, but if they are in the game design class, then it’s fine because while they are not directly working on the assignment, they are learning techniques and strategies that are related to the assignment” (Ms. Jenkins interview, 2011).

Ms. Jenkins’ quote is closely related to the Cartography students who are using Google Maps to look up their homes. A similar trend is occurring at the Mary McDowell Upper School. Ms. Rosen also has a more relaxed approach to students using social networking sites in class. She explained:

"They can use Facebook; they don't generally though because they don't want a teacher to see what they are saying on the Internet. I have to constantly remind them that whatever they post on Facebook or other sites is forever on the Internet even if their profile is private" (Ms. Rosen interview, 2011).

She believes that allowing the students to use sites like Facebook is good for students and that as long as the students understand that their actions may have consequences, it will promote accountability. She also expressed that she would rather be there for them if a problem should arise.

#### Student Autonomy

During the first observation at the Mary McDowell Upper school, Mr. McCormick, the Head of Technology for the school was asked to talk about how the parents of the students feel about the policy of allowing Internet access at school, he said: "Most of them are okay with it because we remind them that their children are safe with us and that we are trained to deal with accidental inappropriate sites and we know how to handle them." When asked about parents who were not okay with this Internet policy he said:

"At a PTA meeting once we had this mother who said she refused to allow her son to go on the Internet. She didn't want her son to accidentally stumble upon an inappropriate site. I reminded her that our classrooms were a safe environment, but she wasn't buying it so I asked her how her son gets to school. She said that he rides the subway with a friend. I told her that if you trust your son enough to ride the subway without an adult, she should at least trust him to use the Internet with adult supervision in a safe environment" (Mr. McCormick interview, 2011).

Mr. McCormick believes that students should have a certain amount of freedom when they are in high school. The faculty members at Mary McDowell Upper School feel that this is a learning experience and that allowing students to explore the Internet will enrich students' ability to engage in self-directed learning while enhancing their sense of responsibility and sense of autonomy.

### Teacher Strategies

Every teacher has their own way of creating and engaging classroom environment with various teaching tools and techniques. The tools adopted are designed to adjust to circumstances that are often beyond the educator's control; what classroom they are given, what websites they can use, and the students they teach. All of these conditions are considered to help create meaningful teacher strategies that change and are adjusted from year to year.

The following class and teacher were observed: a Multi-Media Publication class with Ms. Rosen. All of the teachers at the Mary McDowell Upper School use an Eno Board in their respective classrooms, which allowed teachers and students to access content and material in digital form in and or out of school. Students used special pens to write and draw on the Eno Board and then were able to post them on the class blog. Ms. Rosen was in their first year of teaching high school at the Mary McDowell Upper School and has previously worked at its sister school, Mary McDowell Friends, which is a middle school in Brooklyn, NY. Observations of Ms. Rosen were useful because of the way she approached social networking by incorporating it directly in class lessons. In both schools, allowing students to be teachers and work collaboratively on projects worked well. Both schools also shared some challenges that included using social networking sites for procrastination. Both teachers had different approaches to teaching and solving problems. It is not possible to say who handled these tasks better, but rather both Ms. Rosen and Ms. Jenkins found effect ways to handle their classes.

Observations of Anthropology, Game Design, and Filmmaking classes at the iSchool revealed that Ms. Jenkins used many social networking sites with her students. For her film class, she asked her students to upload all photographs and footage of their film to the class account on Flickr. For her Anthropology and Game Design class, she mostly used the class website where

student assignments are posted and students ask questions and made comments.



Figure 6. MacBook Pro computers at the iSchool (2012).

### Classroom Environment

The way a teacher strategizes to set up the classroom environment is essential in facilitating students' sense of interest and discovery and in promoting their engagement in social networking because it allows for inspiration, a sense of organization, and motivation for the students. In Ms. Jenkins case, she was given a classroom that was painted pale blue. She was told that she had to leave the color, but could paint accents and put posters on the wall. Ms. Jenkins chose to put text on her wall with red paint: the text included the class website and Tim Gunn's name (a fashion designer). She also put up maps, students' artworks, and inspirational posters that encouraged technology in the classroom.

This classroom setting works well to encourage student development and creates a safe place for these students to appreciate their artwork. When a student was asked if the classroom inspired her, she said that it was one of the few classrooms that had student work on the wall and it

is important to her.



Figure 7. iSchool classroom wall (2012).

In Ms. Rosen's classroom at Mary McDowell Upper School, the room looks completely different; she was given a room with off white walls that she cannot paint on at all. She is allowed to hang up posters, which she did. They are informational posters that raise consciousness about putting information on the Internet. The environment of the classroom gives the impression of working in a conference room, which is effective because the school is trying to create a professional space where the students can have a real-life experience.



Figure 8. Mary McDowell Upper School Classroom (2012).

Ms. Rosen wants to raise students' awareness that her classroom environment looks like a professional job site and she hopes that it will inspire students to perform as if they are working in the real world. The students promptly sat around the table, set up their laptops and waited patiently for class to start. Both teachers take a different approach to how they treat the environment their students learn in. It is difficult to say that one works over the other; each environment works for the students that it is catering to because both classes had effective outcomes and responses to social networking.

### Students as Teachers

Another teaching strategy that both teachers used was setting up the students to become teachers. In both schools students were given the ability to learn on their own by using social networking sites with the guidance of their teacher. These skills enhanced student-led conversations, as well as allowed them to solve their own problems in class.

At the iSchool, Ms. Jenkins had her students explain the techniques that they used to create their films in the “Sixteen” class. When one student explained that he used a sound recorder and uploaded the file on a site specifically for uploading sound clips called SoundCloud, another student asked how they were able to transfer the sound files off of the recorder onto a computer. Ms. Jenkins encouraged the student to explain the steps that he took. He proceeded to explain that he used the USB cable from the recorder and plugged it into the computer. The computer prompted him to open the files on the recorder and he dragged and pulled the sound clip onto the desktop. “I went to SoundCloud.com and signed into my account and choose the upload feature. It was pretty simple, but took forever to upload.” This was a very informative tutorial for all of the students in the class, including the ones who also used sound clips. Another case was when

the students were working together to come up with the next Game Design assignment. Ms. Jenkins explained that she wanted the students to come up with a game that would be considered appropriate for kids and adults. The students asked each other probing questions: “Does your mom play the same Facebook games as you, do your grandparents play any games, and what games does your little brother play on his Nintendo DS?” All of these questions were not asked by the teacher, but are questions that Ms. Jenkins could have asked. Instead, she chose to allow her students to generate their own questions, while enhancing both their knowledge and their sense of autonomy.

Ms. Rosen opened the first email that she received and opened it in Google Documents. She asked one of her students to go up to the Eno Board where the paper was projected and asked him to circle the first grammatical mistake that he saw. The student took an Eno Board marker and circled the word ‘there.’ Ms. Rosen then asked the class to identify what type of grammar issue that was. The students took a moment and a couple hands went up. Ms. Rosen selected a girl sitting towards the back and asked her to identify the mistake. The student explained that it was the wrong form of “there.” and that it should have been “their.” The teacher told the student that she was correct in what she identified. This type of student centered involvement went on for the majority of the class, during which students continued correcting each other’s papers by looking for grammar, flow, repeated words, and offering feedback on whether the paper was engaging to read. Ms. Rosen then made the announcement that the students were to correct their papers, upload a photo of a drawing that they made that they were proud of, and post them both on the class blog entitled The Light Post. One student commented that he was always afraid to post things to the blog because he was afraid that he would overlook a spelling or grammar mistake and that the whole school will see it.

During the second visit to Ms. Rosen's class, the students came to class and opened their laptops right away. A female student asked Ms. Rosen to read her paper first. The female student turned her laptop towards Ms. Rosen and began to read what she had written. Ms. Rosen then asked the female student to post the paper on the Google Apps website. The Paper appeared on the Eno Board from the projector and all of the students began to read the paper. After a few minutes, a hand rose in the air and Ms. Rosen called on a male student. "Do you think the word bra is appropriate for the blog?" The female responded that the word bra was important to describe how the baby birds in her drawing have been living in manmade nests and that she had chosen to represent this, by drawing a picture of the birds' nests placed inside the cups of a bra.

From there Ms. Rosen asked the class what the Mary McDowell friends School mission statement was. A student replied that the statement expressed that all things posted on behalf of the school on the Internet must use appropriate language. Ms. Rosen then asked her students if using the word bra would be okay, or if it had to be changed to something else. The students debated whether or not the word could be used for a few minutes with some students saying that it was okay because of the context, the word bra did not have anything to do with a female wearing it, while some students thought that it did not matter what context it was in. The female student who used the word bra in her paper brought up that lots of art forms where censored, and that her paper was an art form and that she believed that it should not be censored as part of her freedom of speech rights. The teacher asked her female student if she would be able to take responsibility for posting this paper. "Of course, I used factual information and the word was used in a safe situation," the female student said in her defense. Ms. Rosen used an interesting learning strategy that allowed the students to come to their own conclusions about what they are learning in her class. By allowing this type of discussion and self-discovery, Ms. Rosen is allowing her students to

become their own teachers, as well as teachers for their peers.

### Teacher Training

Teacher training plays an essential role in successfully implementing social media based technology in the classroom. Technology and websites are constantly evolving and disappearing at an increasingly faster pace, and it is crucial for administrators and educators to follow and be acquainted with technological advancements as well as current trends not only for their sake, but also for the sake of their students. Many teachers have been using technology for many years, but it is essential to keep up with these new and exciting technologies. Both Ms. Rosen and Ms. Jenkins have gone to professional development workshops in the past and have learned a little bit more about incorporating social media in their classrooms. They both felt that a lot of these professional development workshops were for an older generation of teachers, but there are also a few workshops that had offered them relevant information and techniques about incorporating social networking into their classrooms.

At the iSchool there are a couple workshops offered a year on site that is mandatory for all teachers, while at the Mary McDowell Upper School, teachers are strongly encouraged to participate in offsite workshops that incorporate social media in the classroom. At the iSchool, all of the teachers incorporate social networking into their curriculum as part of the school pledge. The same cannot be said about Mary McDowell Upper School where most of the teachers do not effectively use the Eno Boards, let alone social networking sites supplied to all teachers. Both Ms. Rosen and Ms. Jenkins have been long term users of social networking and were easily able to incorporate their knowledge in their lessons, and feel that professional development is very useful.

### Professional Development

Ms. Rosen was asked if she participated in professional development classes or seminars to enhance her skills in social media and she replied saying yes. Ms. Rosen went on to say that since she is the assistant to the Technology Department at Mary McDowell Upper School, she goes to many seminars all year along with the head of IT, Mr. McCormick. “We like to go and see what other teachers and professionals are doing with social media.” Ms. Rosen continued to explain that she and Mr. McCormick got the idea of using Google+ from a seminar they attended over a year ago at a convention for teachers who use technology in their classrooms.

When Ms. Jenkins was asked the same question about professional development, she explained that she and her friends are tech-savvy. “I don’t go looking for conferences, I go to the ones I hear about, but I don’t go out of my way to find them.” Ms. Jenkins explains that she uses blogs and social networking sites every day, and that using these sites helps further her knowledge about using social media. “When YouTube was blocked, I sent an email to all of my colleagues, and one of them responded that Vimeo was a good comparable website.” Ms. Jenkins thinks it is important to enhance her own learning skills, but she does not think that seminars are necessary for those who are already tech-savvy.

### Communication with Social Media Based Tools

In 2006, Ms. Jenkins communicated with her students via email to inform them of their projects and due dates. “I saw that they were really into MySpace and had the control to post and check things on it.” She saw that her students were using MySpace in school and thought that her students were more than ready to check their emails. Ms. Jenkins would collect her students email addresses in the beginning of the year and ask them to check it the night before class. She

explained that she wanted them to understand what they would be doing during class in advance so that she would not have to take class time to explain the project. This is a clever strategy that helped to maximize work time; by using the email system, Ms. Jenkins was able to minimize time needed for giving directions and allow the students more time to work on their projects with minimal to no loss of instructional time. “At the time it was a great idea, but as the years go by, I realized it does not really work anymore.” Ms. Jenkins explained that over time her students stopped checking their emails and explained that they strictly only use Facebook and their cell phones. “I tried to tell them that email is still relevant, but the kids just tell me that email is for adults and that they never check their emails.” Facebook offers a messaging tool that acts like an email, but it is only for other users on Facebook and rarely has any outside solicited messages sent to it.

In 2005, Ms. Rosen also primarily used email with her students as a form of communication. She allowed her students to visit the library to use the computers to make PowerPoint presentations of their final projects. “Not a lot of classes were using the labs much, so it was easy to schedule a time to come in during class.” She explained that she asked her students to create a portfolio of the work that they completed in class. “I had them use Microsoft PowerPoint to show off their portfolios.” Ms. Rosen described the project as a simple task where students had to insert images of the artwork created in class onto the slide and write a description of each artwork. “I also tried the whole email system, but the kids just weren’t into it at the time. Now it’s all they use.” Ms. Rosen’s students enjoy using email through Google, which is interesting because Ms. Jenkins’ students generally do not like to use email. More research would be necessary to unveil whether this is the result of the influence of the school environment, the type of students the two schools have, or other external factors.

### Diverging Views on Social Media Websites in Schools

With many new websites and technologies constantly being developed, some art educators believe that social networking has little impact on making a student learn better while other art educators believe it is one of the most powerful teaching tools. Both Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Rosen brought up interesting points about their views. Ms. Jenkins, explained that when she worked in a failing school in the Bronx a few years ago, it was a relief when the school invested in a system called 1:1; one computer for each student. “It was amazing to see the change. Test scores went up, more students were coming to class, and more money was being funded to our school.” She continued to explain that two years later, the school in the Bronx declined and that the computers are still being used, but the test scores went down and the money has stopped coming in. “I would love to believe that technology can save a school, but I’ve seen firsthand that it doesn’t.” Ms. Jenkins said that she loves using social media in her personal life, but she is not absolutely convinced that it belongs in schools.

Ms. Rosen was asked the same question; she believes that social media does help students. “I work with students who have disabilities and social media helps them through the learning process.” Ms. Rosen believes that laptops help her students’ fine motor skills, and that social media helps her students make meaningful connections that are essential for learning in her class. She further explains that she is a firm believer in using social networking sites. Her own research has proven that social media does help students learn, get better test scores, and raise their level of engagement. Ms. Rosen believes that if social media is implemented in the right ways, it can be a very effective teaching and learning tool.

### Solutions and Recommendations

There are many flaws and obstacles that come with using technology as both Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Rosen have seen. For some of these problems, the two teachers have discovered effective solutions worth trying. In some cases the solution worked, in others they did not. In the following section I will analyze how the solutions could be enhanced for better results in student learning and productivity.

### Blocked Sites

Ms. Jenkins has a lot of obstacles to go through while planning her lessons: all of her lessons require students to use social networking sites that host images and videos. The problem is Ms. Jenkins teaches at a public school where most social networking sites are blocked. “I knew I was in trouble when they blocked MTV.com” Ms. Jenkins told me. She explained that the site worked the previous week and when she had her Sixteen class Monday morning, she became hopeless and weary when she discovered that the school had blocked the site. She went on to explain that she had no backup plan for this misfortune and encouraged her students to work on their videos in the meantime. A suggestion for Ms. Jenkins is to buy the DVD set of the program that she was going to show her students or even to download the episodes from home using Keepvid.com and storing them on a flash drive. Even if the school did not block the site, there is always the chance that the site could be down for maintenance, or that the video was deleted from the site all together. As educators, we run into the unexpected all the time when using technology: bad Internet connections, disappearing sites, or faulty equipment can really interrupt if not terminate a lesson. Teachers should always have a backup plan when using such technologies so that the successful implementation of their lessons is not compromised by accidental technical

glitches.

When asked about her preferences and if there were any sites she wishes she could use, Ms. Jenkins said that she would use YouTube in her classroom if it were not blocked because it has a larger library of video clips than Vimeo. “I think the school administrators blocked YouTube for many reasons. One being that it could be distracting and the other, because it would slow the Internet down with everyone streaming from the site at once.” When I asked her what the difference would be between YouTube and Vimeo she explained that she was not aware of any other teacher using Vimeo in their classroom, and that it is not a website everyone has heard of. Vimeo is a preferred website by professional artists according to the official website that uses other artists’ films on their main page. Jenkins went on to explain that in the beginning of the year, students had access to the website MTV. “We would watch clips on MTV for the “Sixteen” projects. The site was blocked and now I have to download the video clips from home and bring them to school.” Ms. Jenkins explained that this change has resulted in more preparation time, but that the clips are essential to the lesson. Other sites she uses are WordPress and Flickr through which she is able to track students’ work and progress. Despite not having complete access to all social networking sites at the school, Ms. Jenkins does a great job finding viable alternatives finding sites that resemble the ones she would like to use.

<b>Unblocked Websites</b>	<b>Blocked Websites</b>
Vimeo.com	Youtube.com
Flickr.com	Pinterest.com
Googleapps.com	Dropbox.com
Diigo.com	Facebook.com

Figure 9. Unblocked Sites vs. Blocked Sites

Ms. Rosen is fortunate to have access to any website. Mary McDowell Upper School is a private school whose philosophy addresses the treatment of the Internet. Ms. Rosen faces a fair share of problems when using social networking sites in the classroom. “We have a trust system, but I can always tell when a student is not doing classwork on the computer.” Ms. Rosen explained that she allows her students to check Facebook quickly during class, but goes on to say that some students will tell her that they are doing homework, but in reality are just procrastinating on Facebook. When she is teaching a lesson, Ms. Rosen has the class close the lid of their laptops that works perfectly, but cannot work while they are doing work in class. A solution for this issue is to remind the students that they have entered a professional classroom setting and that this behavior is not acceptable in a professional environment. Another suggestion is to have students work collaboratively together, sharing a laptop and having a goal set for the end of class. A student is more likely to do the task at hand if another student is engaging them and holding them accountable in the lesson. There are no easy solutions to dealing with the “honor system” in class. Teachers want students to perform to the best of their abilities and respect rules, but it can be hard to enforce these rules and even harder to come up with solutions that are effective for every student.

At Mary McDowell Upper School, Ms. Rosen is excited that she has no limitations to the websites that can be used in her classroom. “I am really lucky. I can pull any site up at any time and the students can too. I have the ultimate teaching tool at my fingertips.” She explain that the freedom of being able to use all websites does come with a price: she has to be diligent to make sure the students are not going on unacceptable sites that have nothing to do with the class, school, or the project that they are working on. “The kids know the rules, but they sometimes try to go on gaming sites during class and I have to tell them to close their laptops while I’m talking.” She

explains that this technique works best, and that if she gives them a task on another site, they tend to forget about gaming sites. Her experience gave great insight that having all sites available has its perks, but that it can come at a cost. Ms. Jenkins has to take class time out of her lesson to tell the students to give their attention to her and not their computers, which is not a problem Ms. Jenkins at the iSchool has. This problem probably does not happen at the iSchool, because most of well-known gaming sites are blocked.

When reviewing the sites that were being used in both schools, I noticed that Mary McDowell Upper School had use of social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube while the iSchool had access to lesser-known social networking sites like Flickr and Vimeo. Private schools like Mary McDowell Upper School tend to have greater freedom to navigate the Internet, which means no blocked sites and determining which sites can and cannot be used in the classroom it is left to the discretion of the teacher. Public schools such as the iSchool are not able to use all websites like private schools can because of the Department of Education's policies on the usage of the Internet.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The original intent for this thesis was to discover how social networking could enhance the learning experience in the art room and the effects social media has on students' abilities to collaborate, teach, and learn. Through observations and interviews the study explored how social networking is being currently used, and why some forms of social networking prevail over others. The study analyzed data from interviews, observations, class websites and blogs from two teachers teaching in a private and a public school in New York City. This topic is important to the field of art and design education because art educators need to understand that social networking sites though not always readily available in all schools, can enhance students' ability to engage in collaborative work, and that there are strategies that can be used to solve censorship and policy issues that often hinder its implementation. The findings suggested that the use of social networking sites in the art classroom can be a useful form of assessment and that it can benefit both student and teacher reflection practices as well as support and facilitate communication and collaboration in the art room.

The study identified several effective strategies implemented by the participants that successfully incorporated social media based technology into the art classroom. The effects of social media and its impact in the art room, was analyzed through the lens of several key themes including: social media in the art classroom, students' learning, teacher strategies, and teacher training. Social media in the art classroom proved to enhance social skills, and the ability to

make connections in everyday life because of the ability to connect people around the world who share their thoughts and feelings on a given subject. Teachers' in the study also expressed that they noticed an improvement in general academic performance and test scores, though further research would be necessary to further support their perceptions. Students' learning does not only refer to the enhancement of the skills mentioned above, but they include knowledge that students acquire through teaching each other. Students are always learning new skills and information from social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter and they in turn teach what they have learned to other students. They are always sharing new forms of knowledge with their teacher and classmates, and discovering new and exciting information while developing a sense of empowerment and independence. The teacher is setting up the students to arrive at their own conclusions and theories allowing them to safely engage in self-directed learning. Through assigning them the role of teaching other students and share content they have accessed individually to the whole class, teachers give students the possibility to become educators, shifting traditional roles in the classroom. The study also points to the need for teachers to receive ongoing training and professional development necessary to implement an effective incorporation of social media in the classroom. Teacher training allows the educator to become a life long learner and seek professional development, which will in turn help them contend with the ever-changing technological advancements and be able to respond to the exigencies of their students.

At Mary McDowell Upper School, students have social media based technology at their disposal. Each student was assigned a PC platform laptop uploaded with Microsoft Professional. All classrooms are equipped with an Eno Board, which is similar to a Smart Board. Each laptop has the capability to sync with the Eno Board and to project their work, which is helpful with critiques and for making visual connections. Mary McDowell Upper School also provides a school

group page called Google Apps, which allow all students and faculty to communicate and share information. This program has been a great help to these high school students as they developed and enhanced their learning skills that are applicable to other spheres of their experience.

The Media Publications class at this high school strives to make connections to other classes and real life situations. The class also created a blog to express and expand on these ideas and connections. The students collaboratively created an interactive blog called the LightPost that asked its viewers to submit artwork, ask questions, and participate in conversations on the site. The actions they took to work together to create and maintain these steps were inspiring because they were able to help each other research, unanimously format the site, and create friendly debates about posting on the blog. The students also had a lot of help and guidance from their teacher, Ms. Rosen. She helped spark their conversations by asking probing questions that allowed her students to rethink and explore other options that they may not have thought possible. These students were engaged in using a variety of technologies and social networking sites and were very excited for the chance to access them in class. Not every class at Mary McDowell Upper School uses the laptops that are provided to each student and not every class allowed students to use social networking sites, let alone use them for class assignments.

The iSchool is another example of a high school that provides laptops for the students. Unlike Mary McDowell Upper School where there is a laptop for each student, the iSchool decided to provide each classroom with an adequate number of MacBook Pro laptops that stay in the classroom and are not allowed to be taken home. Two to three students share one laptop, not at the same time, but throughout the school year. This approach works well to insure the well-being and longevity of the laptops which saves on computer repairs and cuts down on the number of students who may forget them in other classrooms or at home. This method of sharing laptops

can be beneficial as long as teachers are not expecting their students to do homework outside of school.

The students at the iSchool work closely with these laptops and the available social networking sites. The “Sixteen” Film Anthropology class required several assignments to be posted on the class Flickr and Vimeo sites to be used for inspiration, collaboration, and discussion. For the cartography class, the students used their laptops to conduct research that they later used to describe their projects. Ms. Jenkins conducted great class discussions and encouraged her students to use the social networking class sites to share their artwork, thoughts, and questions, which were utilized in class reflections. Despite not having mainstream social networking sites like YouTube and Facebook, Ms. Jenkins did a wonderful job finding comparable sites to replace the ones she did not have access to.

While conducting my research and reflecting on my findings, I realized that I strongly agree with Curtis Bonk’s (2009) idea that with the help of social networking sites, students are now able to collaborate and meet with fellow learners and interact with experts, peers, and other teachers they may have never been able to encounter before the use of social networking. I discovered this to be true at both schools I observed. I also discovered that I do not agree with the Department of Education of New York City’s “Limitation” policies, which explain that the sites have to be blocked because of safety and practicality reasons (Walcott, 2001). I have found that in both schools, the students are using social networking sites in a safe and constructive way and that the sites that were blocked for these reasons were replaced with similar sites provided by the teacher.

Although the arguments presented in this research seem to support the claim that social media does benefit student learning and ability to work collaboratively, they are relative to the

limitations of this study and to the observations of the two selected sites, and do not claim to reflect the reality of all schools in New York City. There is a need to do further research on the effects of social media on student learning particularly in the context of the art room. Further attention must be given to the challenges involving social media implementation as well as the need to develop an understanding of social media as an art form in and of itself, and not simply a tool to disseminate class information. Given that I have found the implementation of social media to be largely absent from the public high school domain because of New York City Board of Education regulations, my recommendations include more professional development, more teacher collaboration through forums and self-directed learning, creating and disseminating viable alternatives to implement social media through finding comparable and useful websites, and cultivating advocacy for life long learning among teachers.

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