



## **GREAT NEW RESOURCES FOR PRINCIPALS**

**By: Ron Williamson**

The end of the school year is a hectic time for high school principals. Summer often provides a brief opportunity to “kick-back” and take time to rest, relax and spend some time thinking about the coming school year. As the school year ends I’d like to introduce several new or updated resources that every high school principal will want to examine. They include new items from The Principals’ Partnership website, and from other “principal friendly” sites.

**Social Media** – One of the fastest growing issues for school leaders is dealing with the impact of social media---both its benefits and the costs.

Today’s teens are very comfortable with technology. They use the Internet, cell phones, and text messaging to stay connected to friends. Particularly during high school teens become interested in attention and popularity. Social networking sites provide a way to socialize and meet new people. For some students this becomes a distraction. Being part of a virtual community (MySpace has over 70 million visitors) is the digital equivalent of hanging out at the mall. A study by the National Crime Prevention Council found that 59% of 13-15 year olds have a cell phone and 74% of 16 - 17 year olds have one. More than 60% of teens say they use text messaging and about 25% of those teens send text messages while in school. A recent survey found that 73% of online teens use social-networking sites (<http://www.pewinternet.org/>).

Three new Research Briefs dealing with some of the major questions about social media have recently been to the Partnership website. They include:

**Social Media: An Introduction** – This brief talks about the types of social media and discusses both the challenges of dealing with inappropriate use of it as well as the innovative ways schools use social media to improve communication and instruction.

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org>

**Innovative Uses of Social Media in High Schools** – Schools have begun to use social media to improve both curriculum and instruction. This brief describes many of these innovations with specific examples from high schools throughout the United States.

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org>

**Cyberbullying** – One of the negative uses of social media is to cyberbully. A recent study found that more than 43% of students reported being cyberbullied in the last year. This brief shares ways to deal with the legal, policy and educational issues connected to the growing problem of cyberbullying. <http://www.educationpartnerships.org>

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention developed a set of recommendations for how to respond to the growing use of social media. The complete report is available at ([www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/YVP/electronic\\_aggression.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/YVP/electronic_aggression.htm)). A summary of the recommendations include:

- First, develop a clear policy with a focus on educationally valuable use of the Internet. Effective policies are supported by curriculum and professional development. Teachers should be expected to have students use the Internet only for high quality, well-planned instructional activities.
- Second, implement a comprehensive program to educate students and their families about online safety and responsible use.
- Third, develop a plan to monitor Internet use at school.
- Fourth, have appropriate consequences for inappropriate use of the Internet or social networking sites. Include administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, and school resource officers in developing an monitoring the plan.
- Fifth, engage families in monitoring Internet use. Since most use occurs outside of school hours it is critical that parents understand the importance of monitoring their children’s online activities and how they should respond when inappropriate use takes place.

**New Research Briefs** – The collection of Research Briefs available at The Principals’ Partnership website continues to grow. If you’re reading this article you know about website and the many useful resources available for principals. There are now over 250 briefs, downloaded more than two million times [www.educationpartnerships.org](http://www.educationpartnerships.org).

Every brief was written in response to a question from one of the Partnership principals. We encourage you to look at them and discover how they might be useful. Five of the most recent briefs include:

e-Texts – This brief examines the growing interest in purchase of electronic textbooks rather than traditional textbooks. It provides an analysis of the advantages and concerns about

adoption.

**Online Courses** – The growing use of hybrid and fully online courses in high schools is explored in this brief. It also provides guidance for implementing online courses and monitoring their success.

**Productive Group Work for Students** – An important instructional issue is how to assure that group work for students is productive and contributes to a positive classroom environment. This brief looks at the data showing that students involved in productive collaborative work outperform their peers and provides explicit suggestions for making student groups more productive.

**Costs of Educating At-Risk High School Students** - We've also added a brief that discusses the costs of educating at-risk students in both traditional comprehensive high schools as well as alternative settings. The brief also discusses the social costs of failing to educate these students.

**Response to Intervention (RTI)** – This brief discusses RTI and strategies for successfully implementing the model.

**Evidence for Small Schools and Improved Student Achievement** – For the past decade there has been a growing movement to create small learning communities and small schools, built on the belief that small schools positively impact student achievement and school climate. The Gates Foundation and the Meyer Memorial Trust funded the Oregon Small Schools Initiative (OSSI) and an initial evaluation of the project was released in March 2010. It reported a positive impact on student success and said, “despite high rates of poverty and other barriers to success, Initiative (small school) students generally perform as well as or better than non-Initiative students.” The report also said “students enrolled at a small school for multiple grades will, on average, have better outcomes than those with fewer years.” The complete report on the success of the Oregon Small Schools Initiative is available at [http://www.e3smallschools.org/documents/Statewideoverviewreport\\_FINAL4\\_8\\_10.pdf](http://www.e3smallschools.org/documents/Statewideoverviewreport_FINAL4_8_10.pdf)

**Useful Blogs for Principals** – There are incredible resources available on some of the blogs designed for principals. Here are some of my favorites.

**Effective Principals, Effective Schools**

<http://effectiveprincipals.blogspot.com>

This blog shares effective strategies used by principals to positively impact their school. The author of *The Principalship from A to Z* maintains this blog.

**Get Organized!**

<http://frankbuck.blogspot.com/>

Devoted to making life easier through organization and time management this blog is written by Frank Buck author of Get Organized! Time Management for School Leaders.

### **Leader Talk**

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/LeaderTalk/>

This Education Week blog is written by school leaders for school leaders and provides interesting commentary and useful suggestions for leading your school.

### **The School Principal Blog**

<http://www.schoolprincipalblog.com/>

This site also provides information and tips for school principals.

**Learning Something for Nothing** – If you're interested in learning a new skill or adding to your knowledge about almost any subject there are several sites that provide access to videos, podcasts, articles and even entire textbooks. The material available at each site grows each day so we're not quite sure what you might find. We recommend them to you. Happy exploring!

iTunes U ([www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/](http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/))– Located in the iTunes store, iTunes U provides very friendly browsing of audio and video files. iTunes U is described as the most comprehensive entry point for online higher education. It includes more than 300,000 audio and video files from more than 600 colleges. Much of the content at iTunes U can be used to supplement curriculum in high schools and some K-12 districts also have an iTunes U presence.

Connexions ([www.cnx.org](http://www.cnx.org)) – This site began at Rice University more than a decade ago and currently includes more than 16,000 modules that include textbooks, papers, curricular units and other instructional materials. Anyone can contribute by writing a module. Connexions is committed to providing easily updatable material in an open environment.

Academic Earth ([www.academicearth.org](http://www.academicearth.org))– This site offers 130 courses from ten top universities and more than 3,500 video lectures. It provides a set of “Editor’s Picks” and builds some sections around themes like “First Day of My Freshman Year.”

### **Final Thoughts**

Our access to information is almost unlimited. Availability grows exponentially and provides each of us with a rich array of ideas, strategies and tools we can use to positively impact our lives and our schools. I find that incredible and wanted to share some of the most recent resources with you. As a former principal I know that principals are always looking for quality

resources that can stimulate their thinking, guide decision-making and improve their schools. I hope that you find these new and interesting resources useful. I welcome your feedback.

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