

Teaching Social Media at Lawrence High School

Students today have unprecedented access to social media but may not have structured opportunities in which to think critically about how and why they use it, and why doing so is important. It was with this thought in mind that the Business Department at Lawrence High School, Mercer County, designed and implemented a course entitled *Introduction to Social Media*.

Lawrence Township Public Schools is a technologically progressive district that has embraced the use of social media for professional learning, culture building, and public relations. When a flurry of simultaneous retirements brought some unanticipated changes in terms of the district's ability to staff existing courses, we turned problem into opportunity by shifting a staffing position to another department and hiring an additional Business teacher. *Introduction to Social Media* came about as a result of needing additional curricular offerings to replace the ones that could no longer be taught, given the role of social media in our society and how the district embraces the use of it to communicate with the local and global community, it was an addition that made sense.

The course is run as an elective out of our Business Department and open to all students in grades 10-12. The scope and sequence (with approximate timelines, on a 60-minute block/drop schedule) is:

- Digital Identity/Footprint - 2 weeks
- Historical Perspectives - 6 weeks
- Legal Considerations - 2 weeks
- Ethical Considerations - 4 weeks
- Peer Presentations - 3 weeks
- Media Analysis - 3 weeks
- Language/The Online Voice - 7 weeks
- Business Applications & Engagement - 9 weeks

After learning about the safety, legal and ethical aspects of social media, students work with their peers to develop a presentation to educate their peers about digital responsibility. During the current school year, social media students conducted presentations on digital responsibility to other high school students. During the upcoming school year, the presentations will also be conducted at the middle school.

While Lawrence Township runs this course out of the Business Department with an emphasis on marketing in the latter half of the year, with some revision of focus, this course lends itself just as well to being run as an English, Social Studies, or Technology elective, at the middle or high school level. So much of what the course can and does deal with has students grappling with big-picture questions of digital identity, ethics, societal movements, and the disparities between the evolution of technology and the evolution of the law that it would be right at home in any of those departments. Additionally, social media plays a role in so many current events that teachers will never want for fresh discussion topics or opportunities to expand the curriculum.

The next steps for the course is to connect the social media classes with departments and/or clubs within the district that are looking to develop a social media presence. The students will be required to meet with the group to determine what they are looking to accomplish and identify the appropriate social media platform to support them in accomplishing their goals. In future years, we will look to connect the students with community businesses and organizations to help them develop an online presence to promote their businesses.

Interested in learning more about this curriculum or modeling a similar class in your district? Visit <http://bit.ly/LTPS-SM> to see our complete curriculum documents or contact:

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