Parent Documents

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a platform where students are able to send 'tweets' which are messages that are 140 characters or less and can include videos, pictures, or URL links. Twitter also incorporates hash-tags (#) to help you find things that are of interest to you. For example, if you like the Vancouver Canucks, you can search #Canucks and find what people are tweeting about them. We will be using #**[insert tag here]** so when your child tweets something and includes the hash-tag, other people can search the hash-tag and find what their peers are tweeting.
Something else that your children are able to do is 'follow' their friends and myself on twitter. You can do this by searching for the twitter name (mine is **@[insert twitter handle here]**) and then click follow. This will allow your child to see what is most recently tweeted by their peers and myself every time they log in. There is also an app available for smart phones.
With Twitter, people can create a twitter id that does not tell anyone who they are. My suggestion to the student is to sign up with their parent's email address and choose something such as their pet's name and favourite number (@Buddy21) or their favourite colour and favourite food (@pink_chocolate). I will also be allowing my students to use a shared class id (@**[insert Twitter handle here]**) but it would be best if they had their own id.

Why am I using twitter?

Since twitter uses very little information about yourself to get signed up (all you need to enter is your email and name) it is a secure social media platform to use. It does not ask for any geographical identification. Tweets are kept to 140 characters or less (including hash-tags) so posts may be done quickly. Twitter is a way that students can communicate and connect with others to discuss educational things such as assignments and requirements for their course as well as personal interests, such as the Canucks. It is a very easy way to quickly check in to see what the new tweets are and sign out. Most people would be able to read through all the new posts in a few minutes and take about a minute or less to create a new tweet. Since twitter is available online and on mobile devices, it is a great tool that can go anywhere and connect our class with other classes and students from around the world.

Risks that could arise

The major risk associated with Twitter is being contacted or tweeted by someone that your child does not know - in an inappropriate way. If this happens, your child should tell you and I immediately so we can deal with the situation. There is also the risk of the student posting something and the 'digital footprint' it leaves. We will discuss the effects of a 'digital footprint' in our Blackboard Collaborate sessions. We need to make sure the students are aware that once something is posted, it is online for good and they should be aware of what they are tweeting. The personal information requirements (anything that can be used to identify you and where to find out) for creating a twitter account just include your name and email, no locations or addresses. The name and email address you sign up with can be used to search for you to connect in twitter. If you are concerned about someone figuring out your child's name, you are able to sign up with your name instead. I want to remind you as well that I have suggested that you have your child sign up with their parent's email address so that if any notices come from twitter, you will be able to see them and have access to them. If there is a concern about Changes may occur; this document is current as of terms of service on August 29, 2014. Check with your own school to make sure it meets your school's privacy policy. Review completed by Breanne Quist.

your student using an individual twitter account, please let me know and I will give them access to the class account or I can tweet on their behalf if they email me what they would like tweeted. Twitter is not 100% risk free but I have been doing everything I can to put rules, guidelines and options in place to keep your child as safe as I possibly can.

What's 'personal information'?

"People have different standards of what they consider 'personal' information. Sharing over social media has done a fair bit to reset our expectation. Regardless of personal definition, if the information, data, or content could be used to identify you, it's 'personal information' – though professional or business contact information may be treated separately." [1](Henglstler, 2013). A student's personal information could include: name, date of birth, address, telephone number, email address, educational information, and anything that identifies an individual, including photographs. If any information, data or content could be used to identify you it is then qualified as "personal information".

Why is BC so sensitive to privacy laws regarding data?

"Shortly after the 9/11 attacks on the US in 2001, the American government enacted the nited Staets Patriot Act that allowed the United States government to search private and public data housed on servers on nited States soil. At the time, The British Columbia Medical Services Plan was hosting our provincial medical records in the nited States. Unions in British Columbia expressed concern over the ability of the American government to search through British Columbian's personal medical records and histories. Ultimately, the rules is: if you transfer or authorize the transfer of your personal information outside of Canada, that data is subject to the laws and practices of the country where it sits – be it nited States, China, or India. (Remember that minors, under the legal care of an adult, cannot authorize such a transfer.) Not all locations have similar notions about your right to privacy. Since cloud computing is a relatively new technology, the laws and best practices governing it are still changing and there is a need to stay current." [1](Hengstler, 2013)

How to stay safe

Twitter is mostly designed to have tweets go out to everyone and not so much for private messages so in that regard, everything is in the open and it lessens the chance of your child being made to feel uncomfortable. Make sure that you have access to your child's Twitter id so when you want, you can go online and see what they are tweeting out. I will also have access to all of their twitter ids and will be checking in daily for tweets that they have posted. If I find something that is unsettling, I will contact you immediately. There is also the option for your child to click on a button titled 'report abuse' if they come across anything unsettling.

Also, before a student will be able to use twitter and contact others, I am requiring them to sign (as well as their parents) the consent form so that they are aware of the expectations when using the tool. I will also be demonstrating proper use of Twitter in a Collaborate session before the students sign on for the first time. If you do not feel comfortable signing the consent and having your child on twitter, even with all of the adaptations suggested, your child can email me their 'tweet' and I will post it on their behalf in an anonymous way.

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Why is a consent form necessary?

Various provinces in Canada – and other jurisdictions across the world – have enacted laws to protect personal privacy. In BC, the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) covers all independent schools. It is one of the most defined privacy protection frameworks in Canada. PIPA states that 'private bodies' such as independent schools have defined legal requirements for handling your personal information when it is within their 'custody' and 'control'. Generally, private bodies must make sure that your personal information cannot be stored or accessed outside of Canada without your expressed permission – 'consent' (Note: there are certain expectations in the law like data covered by treaties, etc.). PIPA states that your consent must be in writing, state to whom your personal information may be disclosed, and how your information will be used. Also, if you post personal information about others, their permission must also be secured.

What if I don't want to consent?

You have the right as a parent/guardian to withhold consent to your child using Twitter Alternate activities will be provided to students in the event that parents/caregivers choose to withhold consent and that selection of an alternate activity will not affect a student's grade.

While no internet-based experience can ever be 100% risk-free, know that I will take every reasonable measure to manage expected risks.

More information

Twitter is hosted on servers based out of the United States, because of this, the information is subject to the U.S. privacy laws and the Patriot Act, if you would like more information about this, please go to: http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Reference-Shelf/FOIA.shtml
For more information about twitter, you can visit their website at: https://twitter.com/about and while on that webpage, there are links to their security page.
Something that might be interesting and helpful for you to look into is HootSuite. This is something that allows you to set up "streams" and follow certain hash-tags. You can find more information at: https://dev.twitter.com/programs/twitter-certified-products/hootsuite .
Your child's rights and responsibilities using social media:
http://www.sd43.bc.ca/Resources/DigitalCitizenship/Pages/RightsResponsibilites.aspx
You can access the BC laws regarding privacy at:
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/LOC/freeside/--%20F%20--/Freedom%20of%20Information%20and%20Protection%20of%20Privacy%20Act%20RSBC%201996%20c.%20165/00_Act/96165_03.xml#section30

[1] Julia Hengstler is the Educational Technologist with the Faculty of Education at Vancouver Island University & an Instructor in Educational Technology. Please visit this site for more background information about her:
http://www.viu.ca/education/faculty/profiles/hengstler_j.asp

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