

How Schools Can Help Students Moderate Their Social Media Use

Recent studies have linked high levels of social media use during adolescence with lower cognitive performance and poorer mental health outcomes. Hundreds of school districts have sued major social media companies, claiming their products are eroding students' mental health and ability to learn. Most states are now also limiting students' access to their cellphones during the school day, which is helping curb social media use during school hours.

For schools looking for ways to help students build healthy digital habits, experts shared the following advice:



- **Teach digital literacy:**

While there are different definitions of digital literacy, it generally refers to the process of teaching kids to understand and use digital technologies effectively and responsibly. This often includes lessons about healthy phone and social media use and how to be a good digital citizen. Schools should figure out a time in the day to provide digital literacy lessons. In some schools, librarians are in charge of these lessons, while in others, they happen during advisory, English, or social studies classes.



- **Discuss social media habits:**

Talk to students about why they use social media and how they feel when they're using it. Talk to them about moderation and self-regulation; ask them what else they enjoy doing that could take the place of their social media time, such as playing outdoors or hanging out with friends in person. These discussions could be part of the digital literacy lessons that students are participating in.



- **Partner with families:**

Schools should think about collaborating with families in trying to moderate students' social media and cellphone use. This can include discussions about why it's important for their kids to have healthy digital habits and how those behaviors affect their ability to learn.



- **Cultivate a safe, welcoming environment:**

For some kids, social media can be a lifeline; it can make them feel less alone. Schools should try to create learning environments where all kids feel a sense of belonging. Schools should also address concerns about cyberbullying and ensure students have a trusted adult to turn to if they see harmful content on social media.



- **Involve students in policymaking:**

Schools should seek student input on tech-related policies, such as cellphone use, because it enhances student buy-in and cooperation with those policies.