



Center for Public Education



Research Report

“Follow Me and Like My Beautiful Selfies”: Social Media Use and Adolescent Mental Health

AN **nsba** PUBLICATION

Why? What? How?

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The leading advocate for public education.

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a federation of state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands. Through its member state associations that represent locally elected school board officials serving millions of public school students, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.

We believe that public education is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people and that each child, regardless of their disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or citizenship, deserves equitable access to an education that maximizes their individual potential.

In pursuit of these beliefs, NSBA and our members will continue to lead the national conversation about public education, advocate for public policies that ensure each student everywhere has access to an excellent public education where they live, create a better understanding of the importance of school boards and the benefits of local governance, and enhance the effectiveness of school boards.



The Board's Role

- Serve as the leaders of public education in their communities and their states.
- Create conditions within their district that enable students to meet rigorous knowledge & performance standards.
- Improve student achievement
- Increase community engagement to support student achievement.



Effective Governance Teams

Policy Focused Board

Establish high expectations and clear goals

- Collaboratively establish district vision and mission
- Collaboratively identify district priorities

Primary focus on student learning and performance

- Demonstrate a student-centered approach

Effectively fulfill board responsibilities

- Demonstrate ethical and legal behaviors
- Policy focused
- Delegate authority to the superintendent
- Ensure accountability for district performance

Maintain collaborative relationship with superintendent

Encourage two-way reliable and representative communication with all stakeholders

Engage in training and professional development to improve governance practice

NSBA Center for Safe Schools

- Provide a national forum and platform by which school district leaders/employees, students, parents, and communities can **educate, engage and be empowered** to ensure that schools are a safe place to learn and grow.
- Promote and develop collaborative relationships with and between state school boards associations, communities, educators, law enforcement, emergency responders, and other entities concerned with school safety.
- Keep local school districts informed of relevant and current information in a timely fashion.
- Provide critical resources, information and best practices in four key focus areas.



The Center for Safe Schools



Infrastructure

The physical aspects of school buildings and facilities designed to safeguard against attacks and potential threats.



Crisis and Emergency Management

The detection, prevention and management of critical events and emergencies. By working together, schools and community partners can focus on crisis and emergency preparedness including efforts to build a positive, prevention based, school culture.



Whole Child Health

A child's physical, mental and social and emotional well-being essential for them to achieve positive outcomes in their academic, professional and personal lives. Everyday life experiences can impact the abilities of all students and these experiences can have lasting effects and present barriers to the well-being of the whole child.



Cyber Security

The body of technologies, processes and practices designed to protect personal information and to support students, families and communities in the cyber domain. The rapid pace of technological change is leading to schools facing new challenges in identifying threats, protecting personal information, and promoting the positive and responsible use of technology by staff and students.



Center for Public Education



The Center for Public Education (CPE) provides accurate and timely information about public education and its importance to the wellbeing of our nation. CPE offers research, data, and analysis on current education issues and explores ways to improve student achievement and engage support for public schools.

A national resource for those interested in public education, CPE's audience includes school board members and other policymakers, as well as educators, community leaders, and parents.

Launched in 2006, CPE emerged from discussion between NSBA and its member state school board associations about how to inform the public about the successes and challenges of public education. NSBA believes that accurate, objective information is essential to building support for public schools and creating effective programs to prepare all students for success.



Why this study?

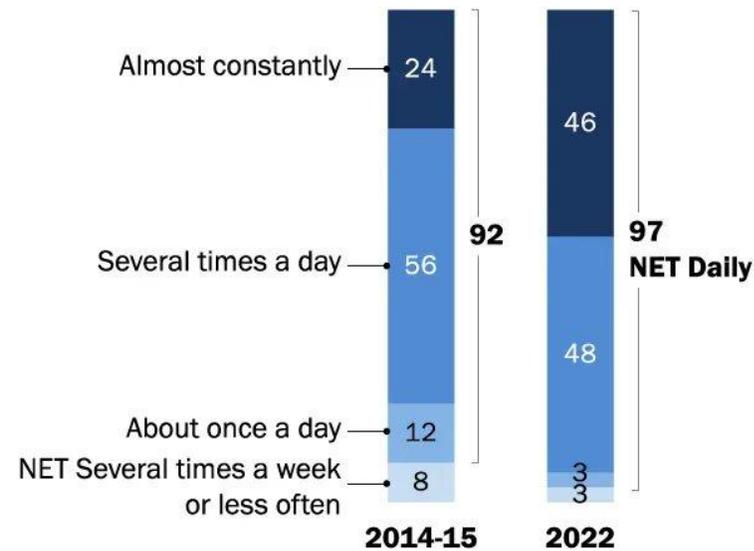
- Pandemic and students' mental health crisis
- Ubiquitous influence of social media

Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES, 2021)	Female	Male	American Indian or Alaska Native*	Asian*	Black or African American*	Hispanic or Latino	White*
Strongly agree or agree that doing their schoolwork was more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started	69.1	64.1	72.4	61.7	67.7	69.4	65.5
Reported that a parent or other adult in their home swore at them, insulted them, or put them down during the COVID-19 pandemic	62.8	46.8	54.9	59.2	49.6	52.5	56.4
Felt sad or hopeless (almost every day for two or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities, ever during the 12 months before the survey)	56.5	31.4	49.5	40.2	39.7	46.4	43.8
Reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good during the COVID-19 pandemic (poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression)	48.9	24.4	23.3	33.7	28.0	36.8	40.1
Reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good (including stress, anxiety, and depression, during the 30 days before the survey)	41.6	19.6	20.5	29.1	25.6	31.1	32.8
Never or rarely were able to spend time with family, friends, or other groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (such as clubs or religious groups and not counting attending school online, by using a computer, phone, or other device)	28.2	28.3	29.4	26.6	31.1	32.8	24.9
Seriously considered attempting suicide (during the 12 months before the survey)	26.0	13.6	23.3	15.9	16.2	19.7	21.0
Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (during the 12 months before the survey)	20.5	10.0	14.4	14.1	12.1	15.8	15.7

Ubiquitous Influence of Social Media

Nearly half of teens now say they use the internet 'almost constantly'

% of U.S. teens who say they use the internet ...



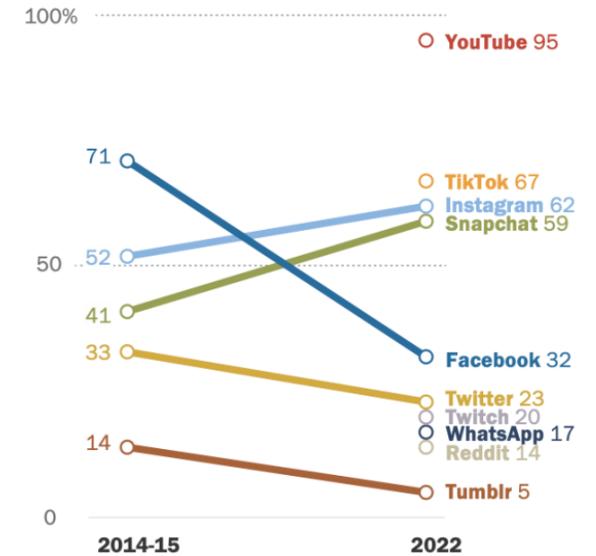
Note: Teens refer to those ages 13 to 17. Figures may not add up to the NET values due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022. "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Since 2014-15, TikTok has arisen; Facebook usage has dropped; Instagram, Snapchat have grown

% of U.S. teens who say they ever use any of the following apps or sites



Note: Teens refer to those ages 13 to 17. Those who did not give an answer are not shown. The 2014-15 survey did not ask about YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitch and Reddit. TikTok debuted globally in 2018.

Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022. "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022"

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What does research say?

- Teenagers with mental health concerns showed a larger increase in posting/commenting and expressed more negative expressions during the pandemic, compared with their peers without mental health concerns ([Zhang et al., 2021](#)). .
- Harmful social media posts can be linked to feelings of envy, inadequacy, and less satisfaction with life. In addition, teenagers' addictive use of social media can lead to ADHD symptoms, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and sleep deprivation ([Columbia University, 2021](#)).
- Instagram, with its algorithmically-driven feeds of content tailored to each user's engagement patterns, can draw vulnerable teens into a dangerous spiral of negative social comparison and hook them onto unrealistic ideals of appearance and body size and shape ([Harvard University](#)).

Addictive Use of Social Media

- In the study “#Being Thirteen: Social Media and the Hidden World of Young Adolescents’ Peer Culture,” the participants who checked Facebook or other networking sites between 50 and 100 times a day were 37% more likely to feel distressed than those who checked just a few times a day. Those who checked more than 100 times a day were 47% more likely to feel distressed ([Underwood and Faris, 2017](#)).
- Among girls who spent 3 hours or more per day on social media, 29% engaged in self-harm; among girls who spent 5 hours or more on social media daily, 31% were depressed ([McAllister et al., 2021](#)).
- Social media use can lead to a decrease in social contacts and an increase in loneliness ([Apaolaza et al., 2013](#); Kraut et al., 1998).
- For adolescents suffering from depression, 3 types of social media use — “oversharing” (sharing updates at a high frequency or too much personal information), “stressed posting” (sharing negative updates with a social network), and encountering “triggering posts” — can aggravate their depression symptoms (Radovic et al., 2017).

How can schools work with all stakeholders?

Mental Health Professionals

Work with mental health professionals to increase knowledge and understanding about addictive use of social media.

Parents

Work with parents to help students develop social and emotional skills, such as time management and self-discipline.

School Staff

Work with teachers, administrators, and other school staff to raise awareness of risks when students overuse social media; take practical measures to educate students and prevent mental health crises.

Legislatures

Work with state and federal governments to promote responsible use and management of social media platforms.

Example:
**Free Online
Mental Health
Screening from
Mental Health
America ([MHA](#))**

- In 2014, MHA launched a collection of [online mental health screenings](#). The free, confidential, anonymous, and scientifically validated screening tools help individuals understand and learn more about their mental health.
- According to MHA, with [more than 15 million screens](#) taken — over 5 million in 2021 alone — the online screening program has collected the largest data set from a help-seeking population.
- The data show that most screeners are under the age of 25; most people screen “positive” — their results show moderate to severe symptoms; most “positive” screeners have never been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

Example:
**Districtwide
Campaign in
the Dallas
Independent
School
District ([DISD](#))**

In December 2021, the DISD in Texas launched a districtwide campaign to promote digital self-awareness, safety, etiquette, and best practices among middle school and high school students.

The four Appy Day sessions that students attended addressed digital citizenship, social media, cyberbullying, and media literacy.

“We want to make sure that our students are safe and that they’re not posting things on the internet that would jeopardize their safety,” Roshonda Clayton-Brown, deputy chief of school leadership, said in an article in the [Dallas ISD’s News Hub](#).



Conclusions:

The important role
of schools –
**Education,
Prevention, and
Early Intervention**

- In 2021, The Social Institute (TSI) surveyed nearly 10,500 public and private students nationwide about how they can be empowered to navigate social media positively
- 60% of the 4th graders said that they could post positive and encouraging comments.
- 40% of the 5th graders said that they told their parents what they watched on YouTube.
- The data suggests that educating students on how to use social media positively from a very young age is essential.

What does helping our students look like in practice?

- Intentionally teaching our students how to appropriately use social media. Simply banning or taking away social media only encourages students to find workarounds and to use social media in secret which increases the likelihood of negative behavior.
- Actions that districts and schools can take to mitigate negative social media behaviors
 - Adopt standards related to social media literacy
 - Require all district and school personnel to be trained in social media literacy
 - Make social media literacy information available to parents both on and offline
 - Create campaigns around social media awareness and etiquette, and highlight both the positives and challenges students might face on social media
 - Train students as peer educators at the middle and high school level to help mediate social media issues among students
 - Model appropriate use of social media and give students opportunities to practice

Thank you for attending!

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Questions?

