

GRADE 11 WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

Is social media truly helpful or harmful to young people? After researching the two articles on social media and networking, write an essay in which you argue the beneficial or harmful results. Support your position with evidence from your passages, and be sure to include a counterclaim.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: HELPFUL OR HARMFUL?

By Travis Winkler March 17, 2009

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The Daily Pennsylvanian

- 1 The ever-growing encroachment of online social networking and electronic media on people's everyday lives begs the question of what effect these virtual interactions are having on the mind and body.
- 2 According to a paper recently published in *Biologist*, the increasing displacement of face-to-face contact by time spent online can be associated with negative physiological changes.
- 3 "The rapid proliferation of electronic media is now the most significant contributing factor to society's growing physical estrangement," Aric Sigman, the author of the paper, wrote.
- 4 With this increasing isolation, people are putting their health at risk when they devote greater amounts of their time to online activities instead of interacting with others in person, according to Sigman.
- 5 Sigman referenced the decade-old The Internet Paradox study by Robert Kraut that associated greater use of the Internet with declines in communication between family members in the house, declines in the size of their social circle, and increases in their levels of depression and loneliness.
- 6 However, Sigman's use of the study in his paper has come under some scrutiny since it does not take into account social-networking sites that are around today, like Facebook and Twitter.
- 7 While Penn students are quick to associate their time Twittering, Facebooking and browsing online with a decrease in their lack of productivity, few believe their health is being affected.
- 8 "On numerous occasions, I've had to change friends' passwords so that they don't go on Facebook during finals," said College sophomore Marianne Mercede. College freshman Margot Neuburger had similar sentiments.
- 9 "A lot of my friends and I spend a lot of time on Facebook, and it is often a big distraction from our work," she said.
- 10 However, she added that she hasn't noticed any negative effects of Facebook apart from "distracting you so you sleep less but [even] that would be a real stretch," she said. "Too much homework has a negative effect on health."
- 11 Sigman has made it clear that he does not believe catching up with existing friends or staying in touch with people far away via social networking is bad. Instead, he merely believes that electronic media is creating a problem when it inhibits in-person interactions.
- 12 However, some believe that the online world can only enhance those interactions.
- 13 "The majority of people use Facebook and other sites as an extension of their social networking," College sophomore Rachael Durkin said.

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES CAN HELP AND HARM KIDS

By Nanci Hellmich, USA Today

March 28, 2011

- 14 Facebook and other social media websites can enrich children's lives, but they could also be hazardous to their mental and physical health, says a report today from the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- 15 In the group's first report on children and social media, it encourages pediatricians to talk to parents and children about kids' use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, video gaming sites, virtual worlds such as Club Penguin and Sims, blogs and video sharing sites such as You Tube.
- 16 The report says these sites and other technology can be useful to kids for staying in touch, socializing, entertainment and even doing homework. They can enhance kids' creativity and help them develop technical skills.
- 17 They also can lead to cyberbullying, depression and exposure to inappropriate content, the report says.
- 18 And too much time spent online can squeeze out important activities such as homework, physical activity, and sleep, the group adds.
- 19 "We are acknowledging that this is a health issue—it isn't just a technology issue," says pediatrician Gween O'Keeffe, co-author of the report, in the April issue of *Pediatrics*, out today. She's also the author of *CyberSafe*, a book published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- 20 "Parents have to get a handle on what their kids are doing online and offline, especially tweens and teens," because they have a limited ability for self-regulation and time management, she says.
- 21 According to one recent poll, 22% of teens log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day; and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day, the report says. About 75% of teens now own cellphones.
- 22 Among the problems pediatricians and parents need to watch for:
- A new phenomenon called "Facebook depression." Some children who are at risk for social isolation, anxiety or depression seek connection online. If they don't find it, they may become depressed. O'Keeffe says: "Their lack of connection in the online world amplifies what's happening in their offline world."
 - Cyberbullying. This is defined as spreading false, embarrassing or hostile information about another person. This can cause depression, anxiety, severe isolation and even suicide in children, she says.
 - Exposure to inappropriate content that may influence their self-esteem or body image or cause them to engage in risky behaviors, such as smoking and substance abuse, she says.
 - Sexting. The sending, receiving or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, photographs or images via cellphone, computer or other digital devices can have legal and other repercussions, so they always need to be taken seriously, O'Keeffe says.
 - As soon as children go online, parents need to begin teaching them about the digital world, O'Keeffe says. But "parents also need to encourage their children to unplug from the online world and experience the real, unplugged one."

