

New study examines use of social media in the classroom

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A recent study by the Lab for Social Computing at Rochester Institute of Technology indicates that the use of social media in classroom settings has little effect on building connections or social capital among students.

The research, conducted as part of a course on social media tools, examined the use of course management systems and discussion groups to enhance [classroom instruction](#), improve communication and connections between students and translate the benefits of social media interaction to the [classroom](#). The results indicate that the educational use of social media may not counteract poor social connections that are seen in face-to-face communication or elicit the same impacts seen in the use of social media sites such as [MySpace](#) and FaceBook.

"Many social media advocates have argued that the use of these tools in classroom settings could greatly enhance interaction and learning and assist shy, more reserved students in becoming more involved, as has been seen in other online environments," says Susan Barnes, associate director of the Lab for [Social Computing](#) and the leader of the research team. "However, our findings show that the incorporation of social media had no measurable impact on social connections, to the point that students did not consider other members of the class to be part of their social network."

The team next plans on expanding the research to include multiple educational formats with different social media applications to measure how social connections differ from the classroom setting. The team

ultimately hopes to provide data that will help educational planners create better [social media](#) formats that have a greater impact on student [social connections](#).

"The issues surrounding poor social network construction within online educational environments points to greater opportunities to examine how technology and mediated software can be better designed to suit the types of communication and interactions desired by our students," says Christopher Egert, assistant professor of informatics, interactive games and media and member of the team.

Provided by Rochester Institute of Technology

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