

This State Expelled Social Media From School. Here's Why.



Homework assistance. Scheduling sports practices. Accessing assignments.

These are common reasons why K-12 students use social media for school. Though typically initiated for benevolent reasons, such communications raise serious legal and privacy concerns:

- Student pictures on social media [can end up](#) in the hands of pedophiles.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other government agencies [use](#) social media for the purposes of surveillance.
- Social media platforms can [impact](#) teens' brains, [increasing the risk](#) of depression, anxiety, and other problems.
- Product [marketing](#) to teens takes place on these same platforms, as those students merely attempt to comply in order to participate in school-related activities.
- These social media platforms are rife with [data-collection and other privacy abuses](#).

Due to such concerns, NEPC [deleted](#) its own Facebook account seven years ago. Now, Vermont has taken a similar step to protect its K-12 students.

This summer, the state became the first in the nation to prohibit schools from using social media [to communicate with students](#). The ban was part of legislation that also prevents students from using cell phones and other non-school-issued electronic devices during the

school day, bringing to [31](#) the total number of states with such restrictions.

In pertinent part, the bill prohibits schools from “requiring students to use social media for out-of-school academic work, school sports, extracurricular clubs, or any other out-of-school school sponsored activities.”

It also prohibits schools from:

. . . utilizing social media for communication with students directly unless the program or platform is approved for such communication by the school district or independent school; provided, however, that any approved communication program or platform shall allow school officials to archive all communications and prevent all communications from being edited or deleted once a communication has been sent.

According to a [2023 advisory](#) from the U.S. Surgeon General, social media doesn’t just carry risks of harm as noted above. It has the potential to benefit teens by providing them with opportunities to express themselves, develop their identities, and meet others their age who are undergoing similar experiences. But when schools formally or informally require students to use such platforms, they are left without ways to avoid the risks while also receiving the inaccurate impression that such usage is entirely benign because it is endorsed by their schools.

In the wake of the bill’s passage, [Elevate, a youth nonprofit](#) in Vermont, also decided to leave social media, following the state’s lead. Elevate’s statement included this call to action, “encouraging other nonprofits and youth-centered organizations to rethink their own relationships with Big Tech and to explore what trauma-informed, ethical tech use might look like.” The nonprofit’s executive director said,

If we care about youth, we have to be willing to question the platforms we use to reach them. Our hope is that by stepping away, others will follow. Social media drains youth into a pipeline of comparison and distraction. We want to redirect that energy into things that nourish—books, music, sports, nature, friendships, and the everyday textures of real life.

NEPC Resources on Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence in Education

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