ySafe
by Qoria

Planning for the Social Media Delay

Everything schools need
to know in the lead up
to the Social Media Delay.

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Before the social media delay begins

What the delay will mean for students

Level up free time

First things first, make sure students are prepped for this big change.

The social life of our young people is not supposed to solely exist on an app, but rather with people. They can be encouraged to plan hang outs and relocate chats to a more friendly environment.

We can be stressed about this and the potential challenges this may bring to under 16s, or we can look at the delay as an opportunity to connect, create, master new skills and so much more!

These young people are about to be gifted back HOURS of time. Challenge your students to learn something new. How about a language, or have they tried crocheting? How are their free-throw skills? See if they can explore offline hobbies, plan tech-free activities with friends, learn a new game, or spend time face-to-face with others.

Whatever way you shape it, our young people have just been handed back their evenings and weekends, so whether that's gaming, baking, learning or just relaxing without digital distractions, it's a rare and powerful gift.

What the delay will mean for schools

Continue the proactive approach

For schools, thankfully, not too much will change. We will still continue to support children if incidents arise, and we will still empower students to report issues. We acknowledge there may be an increase in the volume of students requiring a little extra support during this time.

From a curriculum and educational perspective, there may need to be a revision of digital literacy programs. If we are delaying this first hand learning, we will need to fill the gap and ensure that essential skills are taught for when students inevitably return to social media. Skills such as digital literacy, online safety, and positive online citizenship are essential for positive online experiences. We also need to continue to reinforce the importance of respectful relationships online, as these will undoubtedly be moving to alternate platforms, and this new landscape will take some getting used to.

Continue to educate and collaborate with parents about new updates to the laws in layman's terms, using multiple translations if needed, in your community. Provide resources, run workshops, and engage parents in communication about the journey ahead and how to best navigate it.

An alternative approach would be to boost encouragement for extracurriculars; sports, clubs, and other activities. We need to fill the gap for social interaction and provide avenues where interpersonal development can occur.

As far as policies are concerned, we suggest clear and (where needed) new, user agreement policies that are understood, signed, sealed, and delivered by your students. It is also worth noting, that it is not currently stated that schools are required to report to higher authorities if students are in fact discovered on social media.

Young people aren't breaking the law by using social media. **The responsibility lies with platforms, which must not allow underage accounts.**

What the delay will mean for parents

Talk!

Find out their 'Whys'. Why do they love that app/platform in the first place?

Is it just a group chat they love? Okay, let's set them and their besties up somewhere else.

Is it creative ideas and expressions they love? Consider relocating them to another platform, or encourage offline activities with craft supplies.

Is it gaming and strategy they love watching on YouTube? Let's download the game itself, or bring friends out and set up a game IRL. Have they tried Catan?

When we find out their 'whys', we can provide a friendly alternative.

Another way we can prep our children, is by encouraging a *slow* wean-off. We (as adults) know how hard it can be to go cold turkey on your favourite vices, so we need to allow the same grace for the young people in our lives. Let's start a tech-free Sunday, or perhaps use odd and even days of the week, where we practice putting our phones down, so that when December 11th rolls around, they are going to manage that bit better.

How they are looking to skirt the system

Now, given our privileged position of talking face-to-face with students, we have heard of a few creative ways that they are planning to avoid the ban altogether. Whether it be from a bold confession of their master plan or data from our anonymous survey, we think it's imperative to share a few of these with you.

Please take note: the easiest and most common 'solution' we hear is to simply lie about their age. Many problems here, but simply put, this will expose them to content and other users who are not age appropriate. This also means they will not fall under any of the child safety mechanisms already in place on the apps.

Another way they may get around the ban is to buy a $20 'old man face mask' this Halloween and the account can be successfully created that way. Unfortunately, many facial age verification methods failed the system here and identified the user as visually older.

Alternatively, they may continue to use the platform, such as YouTube or TikTok, without 'logging in' or by using a guest account. This simply means they do not have to have an account, but can still passively watch content (think of looking in at a party through a window). They don't remember you, you can't say or do anything, but you can see what is going on and observe).

Whilst we cannot know exactly what our resourceful younger generation is planning, we can make an educated guess, we can assume they are still going to want the same online connection and entertainment. This just means we need to keep an eye out on their devices for new apps that may be downloaded, such as Reddit, X, Discord, Telegram, Threads, Sora*. Apps built on connection and entertainment, may attempt to fill the void.

What the delay will mean for parents

A team based approach

We can see the light at the end of the tunnel and want to make this transition as smooth as possible for schools and their communities. We know there will be resistance, maybe arguments and tears. These are understandable emotions and valid concerns. We don't want our children to lose the vital pillars of childhood they think they are losing; entertainment, connection and a social life.

As we are on the coalface of this, hearing from disgruntled students day in and day out, our main concern is their wellbeing. Conversations need to be had, questions asked such as, are they prepared to lose their 1000-day Snapchat streaks, which have taken them years to build up? How are they going to feel when their accounts that contain years of memories, photos, footage, and memes are lost or deactivated?

If parents have a child who is a prominent content creator and shares their art or creations online, have they downloaded their creations or backed up the hard drive? Losing this content will be very difficult for creative students.

Have children exchanged phone numbers and perhaps made a text chain instead? Have we prepped the younger students to go back to Kids Messenger for the time being? Or look at alternative platforms that are child-friendly?

Communication, connection, belonging, creative expression - we need to make sure our young people are not losing this element of their world. We do not want to take away the features of childhood that make it feel technicolour.

Take a step towards helping your school create safer online experiences.

Get in touch with us
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