#RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Discussion Guide
for Parents

AN INVITATION

Why join a discussion on your own social media usage? Chances are that as a parent who has invested in Catholic education for your child, you have already been part of many different conversations concerning social media. In recent years, Catholic school communities have wrestled mightily with the role that social media is now playing in students' lives and how to best manage both the opportunities and challenges that the ever-increasing number of online platforms present:

How young is too young to be on social media?

How do we prevent cyber bullying?

Can we hold kids accountable for things they post about classmates or teachers online?

What policies should we have around the sharing of students' images publicly?

How do we keep kids safe from online predators?

These conversations are important and ongoing. But the discussion you are now being invited to will not focus on any of these questions. Rather it will give you as a parent the chance to reflect on your own use of social media as a member of a larger Catholic school community. In the Catholic tradition, parents are often described as the "first educators" of their child, with schools playing a supportive role. In the world of social media, you could also think of yourself as your child's "first friend." Your children are learning all of the time about what digital citizenship looks like by the way that they see you engage social media:

How much time you spend online. How you react to posts.

Whether your phone sits on the dinner table.

How you digest news.

What you decide to share.

What boundaries you keep.

Because social media is still so new, Catholic school communities are only beginning to look at the role that parents play in establishing a healthy online ecology for students. As a member of the first generation of parents to ever have to consider such a question, your experience is needed to inform the conversation. Moreover, the practices you establish for yourself related to social media will help create norms for future generations of Catholic school parents.

The purpose of this discussion guide is to offer a way to reflect on your own social media usage in dialogue with other parents who also want to be conscientious about their social media usage. Using the book *#Rules_of_Engagement: 8 Christian Habits for Being Good and Doing Good Online* as a launching point for the conversation, you'll be invited to gather insights from your group that can help inform norms and policy in your own Catholic school community … and maybe even beyond!

A READING PLAN

Because there is so much to talk about, the discussion will be spread over three sessions. In advance of each session, please prepare by reading and completing the exercises found within the following pages:

• Session One: Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. ix–34)

• Session Two: Chapter 4 through Chapter 6 (pp. 35–64)

• Session Three: Chapter 7 through Epilogue (pp. 65–94)

A Few Rules of Engagement for Discussing *#Rules_of_Engagement*

The questions provided for discussion fall into two types: questions for reflection on one's own social media experience and questions intended to elicit the wisdom of the group to help inform wider conversation. When meeting, you should be able to expect that the information shared in the first part of the discussion about your own personal experience will be held within the group and not shared more widely. For the second part of the conversation, a notetaker may be appointed so that the ideas that surface from the group can be shared with the administration of the school and perhaps with other parent groups meeting on this topic. As noted earlier, it is important that insights from parents help shape the conversation around emerging social media norms and policies within Catholic education.

When talking about something as contentious as social media, group conversations can become lively, even heated. People naturally have a lot of passion about topics they care a lot about! As a way of ensuring the conversation remains constructive, before coming to the first session please review the general discussion guidelines provided by Columbia's Center for Teaching and Learning: **https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf** . At the start of the first session, your group facilitator will introduce a couple of additional strategies for keeping the conversation moving while giving everyone a chance to talk.

Preparatory Reading: Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. ix–34)

Discussion Questions:

Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience

1. On pg. 6, Garrido lists some of the effects researchers have associated with social media usage. Have you experienced any of these in your own family? Perhaps in your own life? Which ones concern you most?

2. Share the Personal Social Media Purpose Statement you arrived at on p. 10. What did you discover when you compared your purpose statement with your actual posts/tweets? Did they seem aligned?

3. In Chapters 2 and 3, Garrido makes a distinction between assessing news stories for accuracy vs. assessing news stories for bias. How do you understand this distinction and why is it important? What tips have you found especially helpful for determining the accuracy of a story?

4. In your assessment of your own feed were you able to find examples of stories that were inaccurate/from sources without journalistic credibility? Does this surprise you? (p. 24)

5. In your reflection of your own reading patterns, do you notice that you tend to read from sources that lean in a particular direction? (p. 33) What do you do to try to widen your perspective while still valuing accuracy of reporting?

Questions Seeking the Insight of the Group

1. What has surfaced from our conversation with one another that seems important to reflect upon more widely as a Catholic school community? What hopes would we have for our children/teens around their engagement of social media, and especially the way that they handle competing "truth claims" found online? What role do you think the Catholic school should play in educating around truth, accuracy, and bias online? What do you think should be left to parents in this regard?

2. What expectations, if any, should a school be able to have of its parents regarding parents' sharing news of "goings on" in the school community (formal or informal)?

Preparatory Reading: Chapter 4 through Chapter 6 (pp. 35–64)

Discussion Questions:

Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience

1. It is commonly observed that people treat others online in a much harsher fashion than they treat others in person. Garrido offers a couple of hypotheses as to why this might be, but what do you think? Do you see yourself treating people online differently than you might in person? What do you attribute that to?

2. Do you tend to engage in conversations on social media or do you tend to be more of a "scroller" (reading, but not participating in the conversations)? If you tend not to engage, why? If you do tend to engage, what have you experienced as the pros and cons of trying to have actual conversation on social media?

3. Can you describe a situation in which somebody posted something that really offended you or you were negatively impacted? Did this change the way that you thought of the other person and their motivations?

4. Can you describe a situation in which you posted something that others took offense to? When they let you know, how did you react to their negative response? Did it change the way that you thought of the other person or their motivations? How do your answers here compare to your answers in Question 3? What conclusions would you draw from the comparison?

5. What did you discover in doing the exercise "Where Am I On the Outrage-O-Meter" (p.62–63)? What have you found to be the best strategies for managing your experience of anger/offense on social media?

Questions Seeking the Insight of the Group

1. What has surfaced from our conversation with one another that seems important to reflect upon more widely as a Catholic school community? What hopes would we have for our children/teens around the way that they treat others online? What role do you think the Catholic school should play in setting norms for student behavior on social media? What do you think should be left to parents in this regard?

2. What expectations, if any, should a school be able to have of its parents regarding parents' online treatment of other members of the school community (e.g. teachers, administration, staff, fellow parents)?

Discussion Questions:

Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience

1. Do you have any family practices around the presence of devices in the home? At the dinner table? Before bed? On a scale of 1-10, how well are they working for your family?

2. What did you discover in completing the exercise "Where Is This Relationship Headed?" (pp. 71–73) What did you notice about the number of "strong-tie" and "weak-tie" relationships in your social media circles? Did you choose to cull any? On what grounds?

3. What did you discover in completing the exercise "How Much Time Do I Spend? How Much Time Do I Want to Spend?" (pp. 84–85) Are you content with the amount of time you spend on social media? Did you try to do anything different in time spent on social media leading up to this session? How did it work?

4. Garrido notes that 5-10% of social media users show signs of serious addiction-like behavior related, but that 40% of social media users admit to "feeling addicted" some or most of the time. (p. 80) Do you identify within that group? Is it something that you worry about within your family?

Questions Seeking the Insight of the Group

1. What has surfaced from our conversation with one another that seems important to reflect upon more widely as a Catholic school community? What hopes would we have for our children/teens around the way the amount of time they spend online vs. in face-to-face relationships and other life activities?

2. What would you ask of the Catholic school, if anything, in setting norms for the amount of time children/teens spend online as part of their education?

3. Based on all that you have read and discussed, do you think that your Catholic school should have a policy for parents on social media? If so, what should it include? How should it be monitored and how do you imagine parents would be held accountable?

SESSION THREE

Note: As part of closing prayer for the evening, you will be invited to sign the "#Rules_of_Engagement Pledge" on pp. 98–99 of the book. Use the following QR code to take you to the appropriate site.

Pope Francis' Prayer
2018 World Day of Communications:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgments.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; may our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

where there is shouting, let us practice listening;

where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony;

where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity;

where there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity;

where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety;

where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

where there is falsehood, let us bring truth.

Amen.