Comparing District Policies – by Kris Sward – November 11, 2013

For my policy comparison I chose three websites that I use or have used in my school and classroom. Though my students don't necessarily use them directly, I do and thus I thought a review might be in order.

Prezi (http://prezi.com/) is a dynamic presentation tool that allows users to create a series of frames that are jumped to in order on the screen. As opposed to a traditional Powerpoint type presentation tool that scrolls page to page, Prezi moves around the themed main page by zooming in and out on topics or frames. I was intending on having my students use Prezi to create their own presentations until I found out through the CSB that the required age of users is 18. This restriction would, without a doubt, cause me to not allow my students to use this tool and I would reason that this would be the reason many students in Chilliwack are not allowed to use it. Interestingly, though, it is listed as a tool that students might use on the Surrey School District Technology Tool Consent Form.

Though not for student use, I could still create Prezi presentations for viewing by students, parents or staff to highlight projects or assignments that we have completed in class. As an alternative to using Prezi in the classroom, students can still create those Powerpoint presentations, or perhaps use another similar online presentation tool (though other tools would possibly have similar age restrictions). And in the absence of that, students could simply create a video presentation using an iPod or other mobile device to achieve the same end.

Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/) and Pinterest (https://www.pinterest.com/) are both social media sites that allow users to view and 'like' or 'pin' to other people's content. The CSB rationale for denying student access is that teachers cannot protect students from the collection and use of their personal information. There is also a chance that, through advertising or the posts of other users, students could view inappropriate material. Yet, as with Prezi, I, as an adult, am still able to use both of these tools in my classroom. I use Pinterest simply to gather ideas for projects. In the case of Facebook, I have a class page where I post updates and announcements, though this page is mainly for parent use. I do have student 'friends' but we don't use this as a class meeting place or required activity and important notices are also posted on our class website or sent home in the form of a paper newsletter.

Though both tools could easily be used to 'flip' your classroom (login, watch the video posted on the link and comment on it), I think the real value in both tools is the sharing of information. In Pinterest you could choose three art projects (with directions) and have students choose one to create. Or students could bring in ideas for art projects they would like to do. In Facebook you could post a picture and have students access it to write a response blog. The possibilities are endless, but so are the risks. Facebook, more so than Pinterest, has come under fire for the ease with which students can bully or harass fellow students on line as well as for the amount of information that is shared there, which gives more incentive to limit its use in the classroom. Surrey does include Facebook in its pamphlet on commonly used tools though it does point out that users must be 13 (which eliminates my students, though many of them have accounts). In Chilliwack neither of these sites is specifically prohibited, but both the

Acceptable Use Contract and the Mobile Device Permission form both talk about lawful and ethical use of technology, so if the law says 13, then that counts my students out.

Alternate activities to either tool would be either Googledocs, where a number of users could share information for our group, or a class wiki which would create a closed environment for only us to access and share information.

After researching the use of Prezi, Facebook and Pinterest, I'm not sure that I would change my existing practices, mainly because I make use of them, but don't require their use by my students. I would still use Prezi to create a presentation for my staff or students, Pinterest to get ideas from and Facebook to communicate information home. What this review has done, however, is solidified my belief that I wouldn't have my students access, create accounts and use these tools in the classroom.