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### **What are Students With Disabilities Telling us About Their Social Media use?**

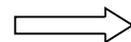
**By: Jennison Asuncion, Jillian Budd, Catherine Fichten, Maria Barile, Mai N. Nguyen, Anthony Tibbs, Chris Gaulin, Rhonda Amsel**

Recently, in a collaborative study between the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) and the Adaptech Research Network, we conducted an online, bilingual study on social media use by students with various disabilities in Canada. What did they tell us?

The 723 respondents, who came from all ten provinces and the Yukon territory, self-reported their disabilities/impairments (participants could report as many different disabilities / impairments as they wanted to). We asked this question because these could influence participants' experiences with social media. Top five disabilities/impairments reported were: psychological / psychiatric disability, learning disability, chronic medical / health problem, attention-deficit disorder (ADD / ADHD), and visual impairment (low vision).

We also asked what types of specialized software students used. The top five technologies reported were: software that improves writing quality, software that reads what is on the screen, dictation software, scanning and optical character recognition, and software that enlarges what is on the screen.

Students told us that they spent 12 hours per week using social media for non-school related activities, and half that on school-related activities. When we asked which social media activities students took part in over a one-month period, the top five things they said they did were: watching a video on YouTube; using an instant messaging service like MSN / Windows Live Messenger, Skype, Google Talk, etc.; searching for someone they knew on Facebook, MySpace, etc.; added someone they knew using Facebook, MySpace, etc.; and updating their status on Facebook, Myspace, etc.



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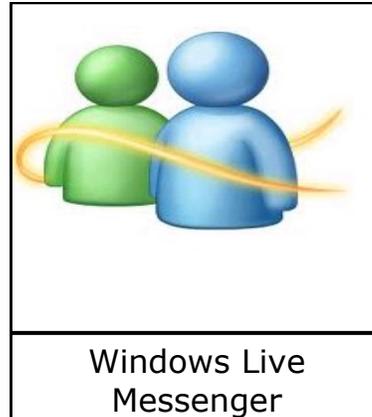
The five most accessible social media mentioned by student participants were: MSN / Windows Live Messenger, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo! Messenger, and Skype. The five least accessible social media were: InternSHARE.com, SecondLife, Disaboom, Classmates.com, and Digg. Keep in mind that when broken down by disability/impairment, these rankings would be different owing to specific accessibility needs of each group of students.

Finally, when it came to benefits of using social media, the top six mentioned were: communication / networking, keeping in touch, connection with groups, access to local and world-wide information (not school related), staying in the loop, and entertainment.

Want to learn more? Contact us at [info@adaptech.org](mailto:info@adaptech.org). Thanks to NEADS and Research in Motion who both provided tokens of appreciation for several of our participants.



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