Social media: helpful or harmful?

1. Read the excerpt from a recent article from the Oakland Press with the class.

2. Have students turn and share their reactions to the article with others around them for a few minutes. Here are some questions that could spark their conversation if they don't immediately have any thoughts about the article.
   a. The article states, "there are no safe places anymore when they are immersed in the digital world." Do you agree or disagree?
   b. What does worrying about college admission and future jobs have to do with how kids use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc…)
   c. What do you think about the statement, "social media is as dangerous to our children as fire and gasoline." ?

3. Divide students into two "teams." Next Tuesday, January 27, the two "teams" will have a debate over the pros and cons of social media. They should take the remainder of the class meeting today to talk with their team and organize their ideas to debate the topic.

   Here are the guidelines to facilitate the debate:

   One team should prepare to defend the use of social media (benefits of using things like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc…) and one team should prepare to point out how harmful the use of social media can be for students (gossip, predators, over-sharing information, long-term concerns of pictures and opinions on internet for anyone to see, etc…).

   The goal is utilized listening, speaking and critical thinking skills.

   • Use the claims from the article (listed below) to guide the debate.
   • Once the teacher states a claim, only one person from the team can speak at a time and the only one person from the other team gets to respond at a time.
   • Students should take turns going back and forth sharing their opinions in support of the stance of whichever side of the debate they have been assigned.

Claims from article to guide the debate:

1. The internet is a dangerous place for children

2. Bullying reaches farther when it is done online using social media (is cyberbullying is more hurtful than traditional bullying)

3. Laws should require that schools report to the state when they have dealt with cases of cyberbullying

4. Students may be held legally responsible when they cyberbully

5. Any other claim you feel important that the students should debate that stems from reading the article

When the debate is over, poll students to see if they feel there is a clear-cut winner. Wrap-up by asking students for important points to take away from the debate.