



Parents Connecting With Social Media

There is a power outage, and your child's school is dismissing students early, requiring you to arrive quickly for pickup. Your kid will not be left waiting for you because you got this information immediately after a quick log-in to the social media site you use to connect with other parents. Some other parents may be delayed in receiving this important information because they rely on phone alerts.

Social media has changed the way people communicate. Whether through tweets or status updates, information shared through social media avenues is often instantaneous and can reach a large number of people, which is why many parents have turned to social media to learn about events at school.

According to a study by Nielsen McKinsey Company, parents are more likely than adults without children to play games, engage in creative pursuits, and look for entertainment on Facebook, blogs and other social sites. The data collected from 2,000 adults (both parents and nonparents) who fre-



Parents are increasingly relying on social media sites to communicate with others and learn about school happenings.

quently use social media found 88 percent of users rely on social networking sites for communicating with family and friends. The next most popular activity is connecting with new friends, followed by accessing product reviews and online entertainment. Reports show that adults devote a quarter of their time spent online to social media sites. Parents, in particular, are finding new ways to put these sites to use.

Social media is helping parents in a variety of ways, even enabling them to keep an eye on their children when they go online. According to a survey from Laptop magazine, 55 percent of parents are using social media to watch their kids' online activities. Of that 55 percent, one-fifth indicated they only use social media to monitor their child's online activity.

However, social media

has other handy purposes. Many parents use it as they would a bulletin board — posting all types of information. Some parents use social media to stay abreast of school happenings, asking questions about when fundraiser money is due or if anyone

got the spelling words for the week. Others find it is a good way to meet parents or speak with the parents of their child's classmates. Some moms and dads use it to set up parents' nights out, advertise things for sale or ask for recommendations on contractors.

Parents also use social media to invite people to special events, including birthday parties. Others can see who was invited and decide if they're going to come, too.

More parents are turning to social media sites for advice and information, to stay in touch or simply to share a good laugh.

Back-To-School Party Ideas

Back-to-school season is on the horizon, and many students and parents are either loving or loathing the idea of starting a new school year. For some, a party to commemorate the new school year and the end of summer is customary. Hosting a fun event for the soon-to-be students is one way to make the most of vacation time.

* Go with a theme. Maybe the theme is rulers and text books, ABCs, or science, and it can run through the decorations used, the games played, the food served, and many other aspects of the event. Consider a science experiment inspired volcano cake that is oozing strawberry jam.

* Include some educational games. Some students experience educational backsliding during summer vacation. That is why many schools have summer reading lists that educators feel promote lesson reinforcement for the coming school year. With this in mind, plan activities around concepts children learned in school. Think about math problem relay races, art projects,

reading a story and reenacting it in a play form, or science experiments using solar energy.

* Host a campout reading marathon. Encourage guests to bring sleeping bags and favorite books to a campout under the stars. Most of the time can be spent reading while breaks can be devoted to exercising, making campout snacks or telling campfire stories.

* Rent out a fun bus or truck. Since many students will be spending a good deal of time on a school bus once the new school year commences, tie into those jaunts to school by renting the services of a game bus or truck. Some vendors will park their vehicles in front of the house for an hour or more, allowing children to climb in-

side and enjoy themselves on play equipment or compete in video game competitions inside specialized gaming trucks.

* Plan a group event at the beach. Spending time seaside can be educational and enjoyable at the same time. Enlist the help of a few chaperones and set up an area on the beach where kids can play and explore the wonders

of nature around them. Pack picnic-type snacks or ask attendees to bring items themselves.

* Plan a trip to the school. First-time students may be anxious about what to expect during their first days of school. Having friends who are slightly older accompany younger kids to school to give a tour and show them the ropes make the experience less frightening. Afterward, meet at a pizzeria to enjoy some slices and soda.

* Host a classic pool party. Of course, some kids want to commemorate the end of summer vacation by enjoying the pool one last time. Have a classic pool party and barbecue in the yard for everyone to enjoy.



An end-of-summer party could be just what kids will enjoy prior to the start of school.

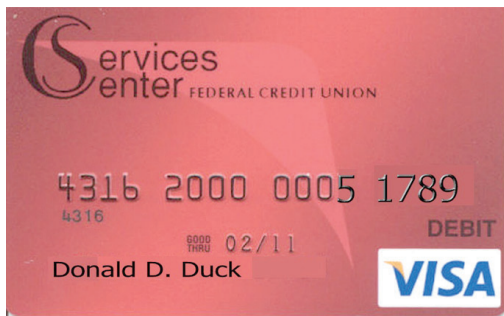
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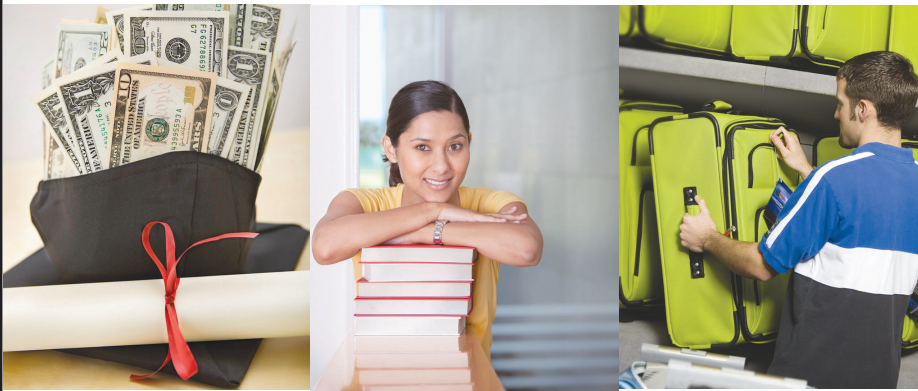
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