



# Twitter for Educators

KET Multimedia Professional Development Days  
KET Network Center, Lexington, July 10-11, 2012  
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## Ideas for the Classroom

From Powerful Learning Practice Network: ([www.plpnetwork.com](http://www.plpnetwork.com))

- **Announcements**
  - Post information regarding upcoming projects, deadlines, and activities to stay engaged while on break from school.
- **Research**
  - There is a wealth of experts on Twitter who are eager to share their knowledge. MLA now outlines how to properly cite a Tweet.
- **Host a Book Study Twitter Chat**
  - Create a hashtag chat for students to discuss a novel they're reading. Use open-ended questions regarding the author, plot, characters, etc. to encourage students to respond.
- **Start a monthly/quarterly Twitter Chat with parents**
  - Encourage your parent/teacher organizations to co-host twitter chats about issues of interest to them (bullying, relevance/amount of homework, grading procedures, etc.).
- **Debate**
  - Encourage students to defend their position and use appropriate responses for their classmates' arguments.
- **Vocabulary**
  - Encourage students to tweet a sentence using their vocabulary words.
- **Alphabet Study**
  - Have families take pictures of objects from their environment that start with the letter of the day. Have them post on Twitter and include your class hashtag.
- **Teach Effective Searching Techniques**
  - Post a daily question on Twitter that requires students to search online for the answer(s) using effective searching techniques.
- **Use Backchannels**
  - Encourage students to post comments, questions or ask for clarification during classroom instruction and presentations by tweeting with your class hashtag.
- **Promote the Class Blog**
  - Create a class blog that showcases the work of students. If students are older have them create individual blogs. Then encourage others on Twitter to leave comments for students.
- **Encourage Learning**
  - Keep curious students stimulated by pointing them to additional research and learning opportunities

From Tech&Learning: ([www.techlearning.com](http://www.techlearning.com))

- **Ask for recommended books, lesson ideas, or teaching tools.**
  - Sample tweet: Can anyone share their successful SMART board lessons for 2nd grade?  
Sample tweet: What are some good books to read aloud to 4th graders? I switched grade levels this year and need some ideas!
- **Be sure to thank the people who respond.**
  - Sample tweet: @RickToone @evelynsaenz Very cool digital stories! Thanks for pointing me to them.  
<http://www.squidoo.com>
- **Ask for help or advice about a professional question.**

- Sample tweet: Is there a way to find out when your teaching certificate expires?
- **Write a book list one tweet at a time, or link to a book list on the web.**
  - Sample tweet: Grade 3 #summerreading: Clementine by Sara Pennypacker, the most lovable troublemaker since Ramona Quimby
  - Sample tweet: #kidlit Updated list of China books for kids. Thanks for all your rec's.  
<http://tinyurl.com/clt683>
- **Tweet about a useful web resource, a particular blog post, video, website, book, product or service that teachers would find useful.**
  - Sample tweet: Fantastic edublog giving teachers practical tips for integrating technology into the classroom. [www.iLearntechnology.com](http://www.iLearntechnology.com)
- **Provide a daily tip like a word of the day, book of the day, random trivia, useful fact, teacher tip or helpful resource.**
  - Sample tweet: Summer Reading Tweetfest coming June 1. A daily summer book recommendation for kids. #kidlit
- **Share new studies of interest to other teachers.**
  - Sample tweet: Supporting Struggling Writers Using Technology: Evidence-Based Instruction and Decision Making <http://tinyurl.com/qzzq6q> #edtech #education
- **Celebrate timely events.** Recognize author birthdays, African American History Month, and other holidays or events.  
Sample tweet: May 5th - Happy Teacher Appreciation Day!
- **Tweet about your school's website, blog and/or podcast.**
  - Add a new tweet to let your followers know when you make updates.
  - Sample tweet: A link to ESL Summer School Information can be found on the home page  
<http://bit.ly/14DHwX>
- **Link to a book trailer or video booktalk you create.**
  - Sample tweet: New video booktalk for Chu Ju's House is up on Bookwink.com.  
<http://www.bookwink.com>
- **Start a Twitter book club and tweet your reactions to the book as you read.**
  - Sample tweet: Just finished chapter 1 of Graceling and I'm hooked. What do you think is going to happen next? #reading
- **Invite followers to an event (online or offline).**
  - Events can include open-house programs, author visits, extracurricular activities, meetings, your online book club, webchat, etc.
  - Sample tweet: Live Chat: Helping Students Find Their Inner Reader. Today at 4EST.  
<http://www.edweek.org>
- **Link to photos of your classroom.**
  - Sample tweet: K-3 Teacher Resources Photo Gallery - Share and Browse Classroom Photos  
<http://tinyurl.com/px7so4>
- **Share teaching humor.**
  - Sample tweet: Funny teacher videos because we could all use a good laugh. <http://bit.ly/SbG7u>
- **Retweet someone else's post that you found interesting.**
  - Sample retweet: RT @charlottetracks Great podcasts for kids on our new podcast page:  
<http://tinyurl.com/cq9q4wet>
  - Sample retweet: RT @Bookwink Great #summerreading video review of "Museum Mysteries for Kids" similar to Elise Broach's MASTERPIECE <http://bit.ly/dt5MD>
- **Say thanks when someone retweets you or mentions you in their tweets.**
  - Sample tweet: @KateMessner Thanks for the RT. I have a video of Masterpiece as well  
<http://bit.ly/zHTsD>
- **On Fridays, recommend other tweeters that your followers should check out.**

- Sample tweet: #followfriday @kiddrelit Twittering the first lines of children's books. I love it!
- **Answer someone else's general question, and reply to those who ask you a direct question.**
  - Sample tweet: @LizB Occasionally booktalk books I haven't read or didn't like but always explain why. Too scary for me might be perfect for someone else.
- **Schedule to meet fellow teachers at a conference, or organize a professional tweet-up in your area.**
  - Sample tweet: Trying to plan a tweetup to coincide with a big technology and education conference (NECC) and all are welcome!
- **Make a personal connection by sharing your favorite teaching resource, lesson idea, new book, blog post, etc.**
  - Sample tweet: The most exciting fiction book I've read this year is The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins. Recommend it to everyone age 12 and up.
- **Ask others for favorites.**
  - Sample tweet: What are your favorite Twitter tools for teachers?
- **Post requests for people to come and speak at your events.**
  - Sample tweet: Sign language experts needed for Deaf Awareness Assembly at our school.
- **Find summer work or school employment postings.**
  - If you see someone else looking for a job, retweet their request.  
Sample tweet: Anyone in the Orlando area in need of a tutor or summer babysitter? Certified teacher in need of a job with great recommendations!!  
Sample tweet: Anne Arundel County Public Sch is #hiring a TEACHER ASSISTANT-Annapolis,MD  
<http://tinyurl.com/qnzje4> #job #tweetmyjobs #jobs
- **Ask for something free.**
  - Post your classroom wish-list or tweet about your school fund drive and request online donations.  
Sample tweet: Fundraiser for Solidarity School win a \$600k villa + \$100,000 cash for \$50 ticket -  
<http://bit.ly/8NwNJ>
- **Join a Twibe.**
  - A twibe allows you to follow a group of like-minded people. As I'm writing there are 333 Education twibes for all kinds of people tweeting about education, but new twibes are forming all the time. To see the list of Education twibes, visit <http://www.twibes.com/category/education>.  
Sample tweet: Just joined a twibe. Visit <http://twibes.com/edtech> to join.

From MindShift (<http://blogs.kqed.org>)

- **Instant feedback:**
  - ReadWriteWeb and Mashable both featured Monica Rankin, a history professor at University of Dallas, and discussed how she utilizes Twitter to gather real-time feedback. Students send questions and input to the microblog, which end up projected right there during lectures; Rankin encourages them to study one another's insights.
- **Answering questions:**
  - In a similar strategy to the aforementioned information gathering, some educators streamline the process by allowing students to answer questions via Twitter rather than raising their hands. This greatly aids studying, too, as they can easily refer back via dedicated classroom hashtags.
- **Enabling discussion outside of class:**
  - University of Texas emerging media professor David Parry also talked Twitter with Mashable, lauding the ubiquitous microblog as an excellent way for his students to continue class discussions after they've already ended. And they frequently do!
- **Announcements:**
  - Rather than sending out a mass e-mail, many education professionals find it far easier to tweet changes, cancellations and other important announcements. Definitely avoids the dreaded spam filter that oftentimes prevents students from receiving time-sensitive messages.
- **Notifications about completed assignments:**

- Conversely, many students use Twitter now to alert their teachers about when they've finished their work. This strategy works especially well for online courses or classrooms taking advantage of internet-based technologies.
- **TwitLit:**
  - The 140-character limit offers a nice little challenge for students, and innovative educators and authors like have taken notice. Whether writing poetry, short stories or something else entirely, the site's unique structure offers up some excellent ways to stimulate creativity.
- **Word, trend or hashtag tracking:**
  - Staying on top of what people are talking about opens up users to an incredibly broad spectrum of perspectives. Requiring subscriptions to specific, relevant words, hashtags or trends is a simple (and free!) way to provide such a window into the world.
- **Follow conferences:**
  - Some educators may want their students to follow certain professionals and keep track of the various happenings at relevant industry conferences. The more active feeds might even provide links to streaming video or audio!
- **Communicate with professionals:**
  - Instead of asking students to merely follow industry insiders, ask them to actually tweet a response and open a discussion — or at least try to, anyways. For high schoolers and the college crowd, this assignment might very well help them discover some personal career goals.
- **Take notes:**
  - Similar to the example about facilitating extracurricular discussion, Twitter also provides a quick way for students and teachers alike to take notes. Keeping everyone organized in a list makes it easier than ever to supplement (not replace) reviews for tests, quizzes and assignments.
- **Share a story:**
  - Put a social media twist on an old classroom favorite by asking students to play some fun story-go-round games on the famous microblogging site. The first tweets a sentence, the next builds off of it and so forth; try assigning a hashtag to make reading everything faster.
- **Map trends:**
  - Combine social media and geotracking with Twittermap, which allows users a chance to plug in and track what people are talking about where. For sociology and marketing students, such technology helps them better understand demographic needs and wants.
- **Keep parents informed:**
  - When teaching the younger set, parents may like to follow along with what's going on in their children's day. Keep a Twitter feed updating them about the different lessons and activities as they happen for greater engagement between the home and the classroom.
- **Play a geography game:**
  - Ask eager and willing tweeps to give their location, and put together a project mapping out where in the world they share. For kids just learning about distance, this makes for a lovely way to get them to know more about where everything is in relation to their own cities and towns.
- **Set up a poll:**
  - Teachers might want to set up a Twitter poll for either their students or the broader microblogging community. The applications are limited only by one's own creativity; for an added bonus, combine the poll with some sort of geotracker.
- **\_\_\_\_\_ of the day:**
  - No matter the class, a vocabulary word, book, song, quote or something else "of the day" might very well make an excellent supplement to the day's lesson. When teaching younger kids, tell their parents about the Twitter feed and encourage them to talk about postings at home.
- **Start a book club:**

- Within the industry but outside the classroom, some educators band together via Twitter and host their own book clubs. A common hashtag and communicative network is all it takes to share insight and recommendations.
- **Follow politicians:**
  - Well...ones that won't "treat" the class to a faceful of wiener, anyways. All the same, though, following them on Twitter provides students with a quick glance at the lives and opinions of people shaping their countries for good or for ill.
- **Keep up with current events:**
  - Similarly, educators can set up lists with different news sources, allowing their students to stay on top of current events. Separate them by field for quicker access and even more comprehensive organization.
- **Capsule reviews:**
  - Challenge kids (and adults!) alike to write up reviews for books, films and other materials consumed in class. The 140-character limit teaches them how to remain concise while getting their main points across — and educates their followers in turn.
- **Communication between classes:**
  - Beyond facilitating communication within the course itself, teachers may like the idea of connecting with similar ones in other cities, states or even countries. Set up a communal hashtag for students and professionals alike to use and exchange their views and lessons.
- **Host a Twitter scavenger hunt:**
  - For fun and education, get students moving and organize a sort of Twitter scavenger hunts — maybe even see if other classrooms or professionals want to get involved. As with many of the projects listed here, such an activity can easily be applied to a wide number of grade levels and academic subjects.
- **Fun with historical figures:**
  - Some instructors ask class participants to set up feeds roleplaying as significant figures in history, approaching microblog technology "in character." Although one could easily incorporate scientists, artists, literary characters and plenty more into the fold as well.
- **Start a meme:**
  - Memes actually existed long before the internet, but the virtual world certainly played a major role in bringing the phenomenon to public attention. Anyone studying communications, sociology and psychology can certainly benefit quite a bit from tracking or creating their own examples.
- **Supplement foreign language lessons:**
  - Twitter's unique spacing limitations make for an interesting way to nurture foreign language acquisition. Tweet a sentence in a foreign language at the beginning of the day or class and ask students to either translate or respond in kind as a quick, relatively painless supplement.
- **Review:**
  - Nursery school teacher Ana Dominguez of Colegio de Alfragide likes using the popular microblogging tool to review the day's activities and inform them of anything interesting other tweeps have to say. Not only does it help them reflect on their lessons and their world, but it also serves as a nice, guided introduction to social media.
- **Help students get their names out:**
  - College professors hoping to nurture the professional future of their juniors and seniors might like the idea of teaching them the role of social media in job hunting. Business students into the whole "personal branding" fad will particularly benefit from comprehensively exploring such things.
- **Create a twibe:**
  - Build networks beyond Twitter itself and set up (or have students set up) a twibe, bringing together other classrooms or professionals. These networks not only serve to broaden one's perspective, but offer an interesting lesson in how online communities come together, sustain themselves or fall apart.

- **Tweet about upcoming due dates or assignments.**
  - One of the simplest ways that teachers can use Twitter in their classroom involves setting up a feed dedicated exclusively to due dates, tests or quizzes.
- **Provide the class with a running news feed.**
  - Subscribe to different mainstream and independent news feeds with different biases as a way to compare and contrast how different perspectives interpret current events and issues.
- **Create a career list.**
  - Set up an interesting assignment requesting that students set up Twitter lists following feeds relevant to their career goals and keep a daily journal on any trends that crop up along the way.
- **Track memes.**
  - As inane as Justin Bieber's popularity is, at least an educational opportunity lurks around the corner. Instructors concerned with communication and sociology issues can easily find a number of different lessons on how ideas and fads spread throughout different media sources.
- **Coordinate assignments.**
  - Rather than keeping up with an e-mail train, students can use Twitter to collaborate on different projects and keep a quick reference on any changes.
- **Track a hash tag.**
  - More ambitious educators may want to incorporate Twitter in lessons that track hash tags for another interesting lesson in how trends spread and the various ways in which people use social media to communicate ideas.
- **Connect with the community.**
  - Partner up with local government or charitable organizations and use Twitter to reach a broad audience discussing the latest cultural or educational events in the area and encourage others in the community to attend.
- **Follow the issues.**
  - Bring a little technology into debates by asking the class which issues they would like to follow. Subscribe to relevant hash tags and accounts from all perspectives and compile an updated resource cobbling together as much research as possible.
- **Write a story or poem.**
  - Many writers and poets have experimented with Twitter's 140-character format to bring new, serialized works in small chunks to attention-divided audiences. Some educators may like the idea of asking their students to apply their creative writing skills to a restrictive social media outlet.
- **Live tweet field trips.**
  - Sick kids or paranoid parents may like the idea of following along with class field trips on Twitter, and smart phone-enabled teachers can keep them engaged with pictures and descriptions of the lessons learned.
- **Ask questions.**
  - Monica Rankin at University of Texas-Dallas uses Twitter as a way for her students to keep a running stream of questions going during lectures – an application that works in any computer-enabled K-12 classroom.
- **Set up a foreign language news stream.**
  - Keep foreign language students informed of current events from relevant nations while simultaneously challenging them to use their translation skills by keeping a specific news feed.
- **Role play.**
  - Computer-savvy teachers can keep history lessons engaging for children by asking them to tweet ideas and quotes from their favorite figures. Alternately, they can also pretend to be famous fictional characters as well.
- **Take and share notes.**

- Classrooms with enough resources can allow students to tweet their own notes during lessons and share with their peers – perhaps even printing them out for home use if they do not have internet access.
- **Sync with a blog.**
  - Wordpress and other free blogging websites sync with Twitter, posting notices of new entries. Educators who require students to keep their own blogs may want to follow updates using Twitter rather than having to click through bookmarks for each one.
- **Chat with industry professionals.**
  - Older high school students who need to explore their career options before spiriting away to college benefit from real-world discussions with professionals in paths they're considering. Twitter helps them connect with primary sources and facilitates educational communication.
- **Connect classrooms.**
  - Teachers and students from around the world can collaborate on projects using Twitter as a communication tool that simultaneously educates students in different classroom and cultural protocols.
- **Facilitate research.**
  - Typing keywords into Twitter's search engine wields every microblog entry on the subject, providing an excellent way for students to research ideas, opinions and movements as they happen.
- **Engage parents.**
  - Parents of K-12 students interested in daily classroom activities can follow teacher tweets discussing some of the lessons learned and any progress on projects with one quick and handy trip to a dedicated Twitter feed.
- **Become politically active.**
  - Any teachers responsible for educating kids in politics or government may like the idea of encouraging their students to use Twitter as a forum to make society aware of issues that affect them by retweeting relevant events, news stories, blog posts and other media revolving around a chosen theme.
- **Track the government.**
  - Numerous local and national government organizations maintain their own Twitter feeds, and educators working within any of their related subjects may like the idea of compiling them all into 1 convenient space for a quick reference.
- **Write reviews.**
  - Any media studies classes – including literature – can use the Twitter format to write microreviews of the different movies, books and music devoured.
- **Post sample questions.**
  - Save paper by using Twitter to post up sample questions for upcoming exams for students to research and consider without ever having to put down their computers.
- **Post supplementary materials.**
  - Retweet articles, news stories, opinions and other interesting tidbits relevant to a specific class as an excellent, convenient supplement to classroom lectures.
- **Facilitate discussions.**
  - Take supplementary material postings one step further by requiring students to post their own succinct responses to the main theses and open up intelligent discussions with one another.
- **Play the stock market game.**
  - High school economics teachers frequently use stock market games as a real-world project involving the fundamentals of investing. Students can use Twitter to follow the businesses, markets and analysts that help them make wise choices with their (fake) money.
- **Live tweet a book or a movie.**
  - Ask students to use the microblog format to record their initial reactions and responses to movies and books as they indulge in them for class. It certainly makes for an excellent lesson in how perceptions change over time as more information and perspectives become available.



- **Make recommendations.**
  - Benefitting both students and their parents, teachers may like the idea of using Twitter to discuss films and documentaries or books to check out at home – preferably as a family. Doing so especially benefits younger students, as they typically perform better in high school and college if their parents are involved in their lives and educations.
- **Plan field trips.**
  - Encourage parental engagement by asking them to voice their opinions on where to go and where to avoid when it comes to planning field trips. While it is impossible to please everyone, moms and dads will appreciate the transparency and ability to connect more with what their children are doing and learning in school.
- **Design a background.**
  - Art teachers curious about how Twitter can benefit their classes may like the idea of asking students to design their own creative backgrounds for friends and family – either digitally or using traditional media scanned into a computer.
- **Compare religions.**
  - Because so many religious figures and institutions use Twitter to discuss their beliefs and teachings, it stands as an awesome resource for liberal arts educators to compare and contrast the various faiths that have shaped humanity since its inception.
- **Post syllabus changes.**
  - E-mail inboxes often filter out important messages as junk and students lose papers or miss class for various reasons, meaning that some of them may miss out on important announcements regarding any changes to the syllabus. Twitter keeps a permanent record of any new bits of information so nobody has any excuse for missing out.
- **Take a poll.**
  - Teachers who enjoy polling their students on what activities to do or their opinions on current events may want to keep a running tab of results they find when working in conjunction with SurveyMonkey or another similar site.
- **Hook up with Google Earth.**
  - Numerous educators have found creative ways to blend Twitter and Google Earth together for human and physical geography lessons where they use the former's "location" feature to learn all about new places on the globe.
- **Teach probability.**
  - One immensely creative teacher discovered a way to introduce his students to the basics of probability by asking a broad question and charting the answers he received through @ replies.
- **Go on a scavenger hunt.**
  - Narrow the old, reliable internet scavenger hunt to cover only Twitter, varying the degree of difficulty depending on the age range of the students. Much older kids may appreciate the added challenge of deciphering riddles that pull from their lessons.
- **Get a little bit postmodern.**
  - Another way English teachers can stimulate their students with Twitter involves having them compile and edit coherent stories based on pre-existing tweets by other people.
- **Channel that inner Lois Lane.**
  - Send journalism students out into the world of microblogging and assign them to poll fellow students or ask questions of experts for use in assignments on trends, opinions and current events and research.
- **Track weather patterns.**
  - Set up a class Twitter feed that discusses the weather in different areas, charting the findings on Google Maps or Google Earth and making note of the patterns that crop up along the way.
- **Create a character.**



- Creative writing or English students of all ages can participate in making up a story character of their very own, with each individual contributing a sentence or 2 towards a personality or back story. Teachers can then ask them to write their own stories based on this collectively created literary figure.
- **Create a progressive poem.**
  - Similar to the collaborative character mentioned above, students can also compile their own poetry where everyone contributes one line that flows with the one written before.
- **Play word games.**
  - Post a daily challenge asking kids to unscramble anagrams, contribute synonyms or antonyms or give a definition for any vocabulary or spelling words as another way of getting them more involved in their language lessons.
- **Post math puzzles.**
  - Math, chemistry or physics teachers need not feel left out from playing games and posting teasers on Twitter. Like their literate contemporaries, they can microblog a daily problem for students to solve and tweet back the answer.
- **Post videos.**
  - Educators with access to digital video cameras may like the idea of using Twiddeo to post in-class skits, walkthroughs of field trips, clips of their travel exploits and anything else relevant to their students' lessons.
- **Create an online art gallery.**
  - Kids studying art and the humanities can curate their own shows based around creators, movements, regions, time periods or thematic elements that they enjoy, using Twitter as a way to show the world what they think belongs in a specific exhibit.
- **Play with TweetStats.**
  - TweetStats allows users to input a specific account name and look at a bar graph of the microblog's activity. Students can search for tweeps in their school or town and gather data on how and when their neighbors use Twitter.
- **Network with other educators.**
  - Beyond using it for lessons, teachers who Twitter have at their disposal a vast network of like-minded professionals with whom they can trade ideas and insights regarding social networking in the classroom and other topics.
- **Direct message students and parents.**
  - Because e-mail filtering frequently ships important messages off to the trash can, some educators may prefer talking privately with kids and their parents via the direct message feature on Twitter instead.
- **Join #educhat**
  - One of the best ways to connect with other teachers and keep up with the latest trends and philosophies regarding education by subscribing to the #educhat hash tag and participating in the community.
- **Summarize.**
  - At the conclusion of each lecture, ask students to type a 140-character or less summary of what they have learned and perhaps pose any questions to be considered in the next class.