Twitter: An Ideal Platform for Delivering Educational Material in Today’s World

How Educators Should Engage and Educate the General Population

Tag words: Social Media; Twitter; Periscope; Education; Worldly; Social Impact

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Summary: Twitter is an ideal platform for delivering educational material in today’s world. With twitter, educators can extend their classroom beyond its walls providing a unique learning experience to both their students and students around the world. Anyone with a twitter account can gain access to information tweeted by educators on various topics anytime, anyplace. As an example of how educational information can be twitterized and delivered to the masses, we chose to break down information into tweets on what pet owners should do to prepare for their pets for emergencies.

Video link: https://youtu.be/ZhOlzCrCqkc

The Issue:
Gaining access to educational material throughout the world should be open to anyone in the public via the web.

Social Media
In today’s globalizing world, social media is playing an increasingly important role in growing public awareness of certain issues. Social media is defined as “A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (1). The continuous use of social media is changing the way people communicate and the way information is gathered. As of 2014, the global internet use per month is roughly sixteen hours. Nearly 22% of that time is spent on social networking sites, such as Twitter (2). With over 30% of the world’s population using internet, social media is quickly becoming the main source of information throughout the world. Social media can be utilized as a learning tool and a platform for increasing global awareness. Because social media is something that is widely used by the masses throughout the world, it is imperative to utilize this open form of communication as a way to inform and educate people.

Twitter
Twitter is a social media blogging site that allows users to send out messages, called tweets, in short blurbs of up to 140 characters per tweet. Users are able to follow one another, and create a timeline of tweets filled with people that the user follows. Users are also able to communicate by searching for hashtags (i.e. #rutgers) and see a timeline of information pertaining to that hashtag. Twitter is a personal method of social media and is catered to each users’ preferences:
Twitter is a non-prescriptive communication platform. Each user experiences “Twitter” differently depending on the time of day and frequency she checks her feed, the other people she follows, and the interface(s) she uses to access the network (2).

According to Twitter’s website, there are 316 million active monthly users, with 500 million tweets sent per day (3). Twitter has a massive global audience and it offers flexibility to the users. Because of this flexibility, users are able to find out information that they are solely interested in, instead of being bombarded with information that is either inaccurate, not what they asked for, or just not something they are interested in.

Benefits of Twitter

Twitter’s mission is, “To give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers” (3). What makes Twitter so user friendly is the level of personalization offered; it offers analytics for each user, and these analytics provide general statistics per user. By going to analytics.twitter.com, any user can see the various bits of analytical information:

- **Interests.** Twitter shows the top ten interests of followers, as well as the top five most unique interests of followers. Using these interests is a good guideline for content and ideas on how to reach out and gain more follower interaction.

- **Breakdown.** Twitter shows a breakdown of followers according to country and by state. There can be a high level of engagement while it is your night-time because it is someone else’s daytime. Knowing where the majority of your followers are located is a helpful demographic that can be used throughout all areas of business.

- **Engagement.** The two biggest ways to see follower engagement is through retweets or favorites. Retweets are when a user tweet the original tweet out to their own followers – it is a sign of value – it shows that the tweet was valuable enough to be shared with their own personal audience. Favorites are when users can “star” the tweet to show appreciation. The number of favorites shows how appreciated the tweet was – it is basically like a virtual high five.

The level of engagement involved in Twitter and its benefits for users and the general community can be utilized for social engagement. There are many issues that go unnoticed within a community, and providing readily available information to the entire community at once can be difficult. Using Twitter as a way to engage an entire town will ensure that not only will the information be shared, there will be a platform for the whole community to interact with each other in real time.

It is important for government officials to understand that social media is growing rapidly and is widely used throughout various places in the world. The idea of using Twitter as a platform to engage a community is being implemented in Mexico City. A woman tweeted a complaint about the lack of working lights in her local park and sends the tweet directly to the city’s Mayor. Instead of this tweet going unnoticed, the Mayor replied (on Twitter) to her complaint within hours. The Mayor then ordered the city’s public works department to take action. Several weeks
later, he posted photos of new lights being installed in the park and thanked the woman for bringing the problem to his attention (4).

This was not just a one-time fad, it is a continuous cycle that the mayor of Mexico City and its citizens use to engage one another and have issues solved. It is common for issues to get ignored and for people to feel as if they are not being heard by government representatives. The use of social media makes governments more accountable and transparent than ever before and it brings a new level of engagement to the community that allows everyone to have a voice. With this idea in mind, it is easy to see how using Twitter can easily translate to being used as an educational tool. The convenience, personalization, and level of engagement makes it an ideal platform to be used throughout the education system.

Social Media as an Information Hub
Through the use of social media and its ability to connect everyone in the world, being able to share information and create broad awareness is the reality we live in. Through the use of Twitter, social, economic, physical, and cultural barriers are being broken down and is allowing new connections to be built in order to advance progress on many different issues in many different areas. Using Twitter allows there to be an awareness that was never before reached which allows for more engagement and knowledge of campaigns. According to the World Health Organization, more than 40 percent of the world's population is at risk from dengue—a mosquito-borne infection that causes flu-like illnesses. In order to hinder the growth of dengue cases in Latin America, the UBS Optimus Foundation will launch the Dengue Torpedo; which is a mobile-based tool that will crowdsource mosquito breeding sites in Rio de Janeiro. Through gameplay and interactive tools—including mini-blogs, social networks, and maps—the application plans to organize and engage more than 1,000 households across 10 neighborhoods in an effort to eliminate breeding sites (5).

The mobile based tool, Dengue Torpedo, is an example of how social media can be used to provide important information to the community. Through the use of Twitter, a very similar approach can be used to provide information. The personalization of Twitter will allow the information to be broken down by topics that pertain to members of a sub-culture that are interested in that topic around the world. The Dengue Torpedo application is a prime example of what happens when social media applications are used to inform the public. When used successfully, [Twitter] can rally world-wide supporters to engage in actions that advance a common goal on various different topics (6). The flexibility and the control that Twitter offers to its’ users allows for it to become a platform to communicate ideas and other revolutions that can change the new world.

Engagement
As previously mentioned, one of the benefits of Twitter is its various ways of engaging users and opening lines of free-flowing communication. Because of the functions Twitter offers, the users are able to quickly find information on a certain topic, or flip through various “trending topics.” This level of engagement can be utilized as a platform for the whole world. During the 2009 Iranian Revolution, many protesters took to Twitter and other social media sites to broadcast the protests and the violence surrounding them. These protests were quickly nicknamed “The Twitter Revolution” because of the activist’s reliance on the social network for communication.
The search for “Iran” on Twitter generated over 100,000 tweets per day and over 8,000 tweets per hour. (7). Twitter is capable of high levels of engagement from around the world, and it should be utilized more to provide information and rally support for various issues in the world – whether they be protests similar to the Iranian Revolution, advocating for animal rights, or just general information about what is going on in the world. It is a way for people to gain insight and gather information from people who are experiencing something, as opposed to finding out information on new channels where everything is presented in a repetitive loop.

Since Twitter is so popularly used, it is an easy tool to use to spread information to the masses. Many people check Twitter frequently and get a constant feed of information on a timeline right in front of them. A prime example of how Twitter can be used to engage and inform the masses is through a short story, The Right Sort, by David Mitchell. Prolific author David Mitchell published a short story in July 2014 in Twitter’s 140 character bursts for seven days. In total, Mitchell’s short story was completed after 280 tweets. When Mitchell was asked about his platform choice he said, “…obviously, you’re limited to 140 characters. Secondly, the tweets are visually sequential, and I think this alters how the text is read…” (8). There were various articles written about using Twitter as a new writing platform and Mitchell’s twitter account gained 14,000 new followers throughout the duration of his short story. This gain shows the reach that Twitter has on the public. There are various articles online that sequentially added images and links of each of the tweets that make up the story so people are able to read and access it whenever, wherever.

Mitchell’s short story was a fresh perspective on providing something for the masses, but he was not the first writer to tweet out a story. “Twitter Fiction” was a challenge for writers to craft entire stories in just 140 characters, and it has stemmed into something more than a challenge, it has become a Festival, where writers compete and the best piece of writing wins. Jennifer Egan tweeted out a spy short story over several days in 2012, and then published the piece in the New Yorker. Elliot Holt crafted a murder mystery as part of the Twitter Fiction Festival; Holt read some other tweeters’ responses to the story and asked for input on the ending to the story. Twitter allowed for this engagement between writer and readers, and it allowed for those reading the tweets to feel more involved and become a part of the process. The Twitter Fiction Festival is just an example of how Twitter can be used to reach the masses and how people are not only engaged in what is being tweeted, they take that information and they apply new ideas and fresh perspectives (9).

**Periscope**

Periscope is a live video streaming application that offers various interactive tools. This application was acquired by Twitter in January 2015. Anyone can have a Periscope account, they just need to connect it to their Twitter account. Periscope users can stream a video of them doing whatever, whenever, and share the video to the public or chose to make it viewable only to certain viewers. There is an interactive tool where viewers can “heart” the video and make comments, which pop up on the screen and both the users and watchers can see the comments while still watching the stream. Four months after Periscope was launched, it was reported that there were over ten million accounts, and that forty years of videos being watched per day. The power of Periscope is in the users’ hands, which is a control and flexibility that people like. People can select videos by location, users, topics, or by seeing what is most popular. Because it
is a live streaming video application, people are able to see what is happening in the world in real time and can communicate with each other to discuss and educate themselves in a way that was not thought possible before.

The main powerhouses in society, such as global leaders, organizations, academics, corporate brands, listen to what the general population responds to and tailor the decisions it makes based off of that response. Not only is Twitter and Periscope able to engage users and the general community, it can be used as a way to educate within a classroom. Social media education in a classroom is becoming more and more prevalent. Will Richardson is quoted in the February 2011 *Educational Leadership* article stating, “Social media [allows for] the opportunity for all children with online access to contribute to the world in meaningful ways, do real work for real audiences for real purposes, find great teachers and collaborators from around the world, and become great teachers in their own right” (10). Not only will the users of these applications be able to connect with one another, they will be able to connect with other people who can share more insight.

**Twitter and Periscope in the Classroom**

It may seem illogical to integrate social media in the classroom; there are many studies claiming how much of a distraction social media is and how students spend a good amount of time using these applications. Instead of changing the technological culture that is already inscribed in students, it is better to change an outdated structure. Social media is extremely integrated in day to day life, 70% of high school students are on social media sites and an average of 22% of a student’s day is spent on those social media sites (1). Engaging students is seemingly becoming more difficult, but it is because many educational structures are going against the grain of what is common culture. If technology is readily available and a person has access to it, a whole new community becomes available and it opens the door to forming connections with anyone in the world at any time and any place (11). Instead, integrating social media in the classroom will allow educators to engage students by providing new ways to provide information on a platform that is already popularly used by those students.

In the classroom, Twitter has many added benefits that will be explored. In recent research, there were three significant benefits to using Twitter in the classroom. The research found that [1] Twitter use by students allowed for a better connection of those students to the content being learned, [2] Twitter promotes student engagement in courses, and [3] Twitter use in higher education classrooms allows for quick response to various issues (12). The personalization and built in engagement that Twitter offers as a social media application can be translated into a learning tool. Students can ‘follow’ experts in a certain field and can connect with those experts in a way that was not done before. Twitter can also be utilized for projects and to gain insights; for example, a student can create a fake Twitter profile of a famous historical figure or icon and ‘tweet’ things that the historical figure or icon would say. In an educational setting, the use of continuous tweeting allows for more communication as a team and more interactive engagement within the learning process (13). Utilizing Twitter in this manner will allow educators to engage students on a new level and it will allow students to gain further insight and dig deeper on certain topics.
Periscope is a live, interactive, video streaming application. All of these functions combined make Periscope an ideal platform to be used as a learning tool. On its own, Periscope users can choose which videos they want by user or by content; the content of the videos open up a whole new insight as to what is happening anywhere in the world at any given moment. In a study, social media as an instructional approach showed increased student exposure to current topics not found in textbooks because of the nature of current news (14). This revolutionary function is ideal as learning tool. Educators can have virtual guest speakers for students to listen to. Periscope will allow educators to live stream events or discussions happening anywhere in the world that are related to any class discussions.

**Spread of Misinformation**

Although there are many positive factors for the use of social media – specifically Twitter and Periscope – there are negative factors that coincide with it. The biggest negative side is the spread of misinformation. While there is an increased awareness, this awareness may cause personal information to come to light or for inaccurate information to be spread. It is easy to fool people into believing something is true, especially when it is through the internet. It is possible for someone to present an idea as fact, and so many people agree with it that it soon becomes presented as fact entirely when there is no evidence to back it up since it was just an idea. There are benefits and downfalls of utilizing a social media platform for communication on worldly issues. Social media can be used to provide real-time information to people, but it can also be used to spread misinformation. Most importantly, when it is used properly, it can be used to spread information and increase awareness of an issue worldwide.

**Community Action: Utilizing Twitter to Educate the General Public**

**Delivering Educational Material/Information.**

With the expansion of Web 2.0 and various social media sites, the world is more interconnected than before. More information is trafficked through social media than more “out-dated” platforms like newspapers. Utilizing social media sites, like Twitter, as an instruction tool will be beneficial for Twitter users throughout the world. Any educational or instructional information can be tweeted out in 140 character blurbs and can reach a massive audience. It is with this mindset that there should be a movement for Twitter users in which more informational content is being tweeted out.

**Tools to Aid the Conversion of Text to Tweets**

Once the content is decided on, the issue is figuring out how to tweet out the information in a way that still gets the point of the information across but also meets the 140 character limit. There are various websites and tools that specialize in condensing tweets to meet the character limit. There are five tools in particular that are extremely convenient when needed (15):

1. **140it.** This service condenses text on Twitter by replacing it with internet slang or abbreviations to prevent reaching the character limit. While certain slang words may not be appropriate for informational content, abbreviations can help give out the content without compromising the meaning behind it because of the limit.
2. **Tweet Compressor.** This tool shortens tweets by combining two or three letters into a single character that looks the same. It allows replacements for things such as roman numerals and scientific abbreviations.

3. **Twonvert.** This platform converts lengthy tweets to shorter ones using text messaging (SMS) shorthand language or acronyms.

4. **Tweet Shrink.** This tweet shortening service is much like the previous ones in which it shortens length Tweets with the use abbreviations or with shorter representations (i.e u instead of you).

5. **Twitter Eyes.** This is a Firefox add-on (only works on Mozilla Firefox browser) that keeps track of a users’ character usage when tweeting and assists the user in shortening the message if necessary.

**Example on How an Educator Could Provide Information to the General Public Using Twitter**

We chose to provide information on how to prepare pets for emergencies. The text that we prepared to be converted to 140 character tweets is below:

**Prepare your Pet for an Emergency NOW Before a Disaster Strikes!**

**Step 1. Fill out your Pet’s Vital Information**
- Pets Name and Picture
- Birth Date
- Breed, Color, Distinguishing Marks
- Medical Information, Medical Conditions, Medications and Doses
- Special Diet, Feeding Directions
- Allergies, Vaccination History, Rabies Vaccination Date, Rabies Tag Date, Rabies Due Date, Other vaccinations & dates
- Pet Insurance policy #
- Names, Phone Numbers, Street Address, Email Address for the following Emergency Contacts
  - Owner
  - Vet
  - Emergency vet clinic
  - Boarding facility
  - Animal shelters
  - Pet-friendly hotels
  - Nearby and out of area family/friends willing to care for your pet

**Step 2. Put your Pet’s Vital Information in a sealed plastic bag affixed to the side of your pet’s crate**
- Have a separate carrier for each pet - it must be large enough for your pet to stand up, lie down and turn around.
• If you don’t have a crate (can be a collapsible), get one today.
• Have current ID on your pet or attached to your carrier. Make a copy of your Pet Vital Info and put on your smartphone and in your Pet’s “Go-Bag” (see Step 3)

Step 3. Prepare your Pet’s “Go-Bag”! Place contents below in a backpack or duffle bag. Place near or on crate near exit or have readily accessible (17)

Gather:
• In a sealed plastic bag, place your Pet Vital Info with a current photograph of you together with your pet microchip number plus the name of the company and phone number.
• Write your emergency contact information on the back of the photograph, copy of your pet’s medical info with important test/lab results including heartworm test.
• Have a pre-signed veterinary medical treatment authorization, which will aid a veterinarian if your animal must be treated in your absence.
• 2 weeks of medication, name of the vet and drug, drug dose, route and frequency - rotate as needed to keep fresh.
• Leash and collar (+Rabies tag ON your dog’s collar or harness). A separate muzzle for each (even friendly) dog is advised.
• Enough Pet Food and Water Food for two weeks plus food and water bowls.
• Put food in a sealed container plus necessary dietary supplements with feeding instructions and supply purified water bottle
  o 50 lb. dog typically consumes 25 oz. of water/day, a 10 lb. cat will consume 5 oz. of water per day
• Spoon and manual can opener, if needed. Refresh food and water every 6mo or by expiration date.
• Other: Flashlight and extra batteries. Newspaper to line carrier/crate. Disinfectants and paper towels for clean-up. Blanket, toys, treats and an extra leash. Garbage bags. First aid supplies for your dog (as recommended by your vet).

Step 4. Practice (18)
• Familiarize your pet with being placed in a carrier/cage a few times per year and take them for short rides.
• Become familiar with evacuation routes.
• Sign up for automatic alerts from your local Office of Emergency Management website.

Twitterizing Emergency Information
Each of the four steps previously listed need to be condensed into 140 characters and made into tweets. In order for the most information to be accessible, we decided to tweet out the information each step at a time over a period of a week. Each step has been broken down into various tweets, and are tweeted out every hour.

Step 1: Monday: 1 tweet an hour starting at 10 am

Tweet 1: Pet Info:Name and pic,birthdate,breed,color,unique marks,special diet,feeding directions,allergies,medical conditions,pet insurance policy#
Tweet 2: Medical Info: medications and doses, vaccination history, rabies vaccination date, rabies tag date, rabies due date, other vaccinations & dates

Tweet 3: Owner Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 4: Vet Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 5: Emergency Vet Clinic Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 6: Boarding Facility Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 7: Animal Shelters Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 8: Pet-friendly Hotels Info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Tweet 9: Out of Area Family/Friends willing to care for pet info: Name, Phone #, Street Address, Email Address

Starting on a Monday, every hour, Step 1 was tweeted out for a total of 9 tweets. The first two tweets reached the 140 character limit, and the following tweets were well under. Collectively, when Step 1 was in list format, it reached over 500 characters. When broken down into tweets it reached somewhere around 300 tweets and all of the information was still available.

Step 2: Tuesday: 1 tweet an hour starting at 10 am

Tweet 1: Put your Pet’s Vital Information in a sealed plastic bag affixed to the side of your pet’s crate

Tweet 2: Have a separate carrier for each pet - it must be large enough for your pet to stand up, lie down and turn around

Tweet 3: If you don’t have a crate (can be a collapsible), get one today.

Tweet 4: Have current ID on your pet or attached to carrier. Make copy of Pet Vital Info & put on your smart phone & in your Pet’s “Go-Bag” (see Step 3)

Step 2 of the pet preparedness information will begin on Tuesday with the same format as Step 1: one tweet every hour starting at 10 am, for a total of 4 tweets. As a list, Step 2 was around 450 characters, but it was easily condensed into four tweets, each tweet below the 140 character limit.

Step 3: Wednesday: 1 tweet an hour starting at 10 am

Tweet 1: Prepare your Pet’s “Go-Bag”! Place contents below in a backpack or duffle bag. Place near or on crate near exit or have readily accessible
Tweet 2: In sealed plastic bag, put Pet Vital Info with a current photograph of you with pet microchip number & the name of the company & phone number

Tweet 3: Write your emergency contact information on back of photograph, copy of pet’s medical info with important test/lab results

Tweet 4: Have a pre-signed veterinary medical treatment authorization, which will aid a veterinarian if your animal must be treated in your absence

Tweet 5: 2 weeks of medication, name of the vet and drug, drug dose, route and frequency - rotate as needed to keep fresh

Tweet 6: Leash and collar (+Rabies tag ON your dog’s collar or harness). A separate muzzle for each (even friendly) dog is advised

Tweet 7: Enough Pet Food and Water Food for two weeks plus food and water bowls

Tweet 8: Put food in a sealed container plus necessary dietary supplements with feeding instructions and supply purified water bottle

Tweet 9: Spoon and manual can opener, if needed. Refresh food and water every 6 months or by expiration date

Tweet 10: Extras: Flashlight and extra batteries. Newspaper to line carrier/crate. Disinfectants and paper towels for clean-up

Tweet 11: Extras: Blanket, toys, treats and an extra leash. Garbage bags. First aid supplies for your dog

Step 3 of the pet preparedness information is the step with the most information being provided. Because of this, each of the tweets is right around the 140 character limit, adding up to a total of 11 tweets. Step 3 will begin on Wednesday, one tweet an hour every hour starting at 10 am.

Step 4: Thursday: 1 tweet an hour starting at 10 am

Tweet 1: Practice

Tweet 2: Familiarize your pet with being placed in a carrier/cage a few times per year and take them for short rides

Tweet 3: Become familiar with evacuation routes.

Tweet 4: Sign up for automatic alerts from your local Office of Emergency Management website
Step 4 is the practice stage, and it is condensed into only four tweets. Each tweet is below the 140 character limit and will begin on Thursday, one tweet an hour every hour starting at 10 am

**Searching for Tweeted Educational Material**

Using Twitter to deliver educational material can only work well if there is a search engine for users to be able to find the material. While Twitter already has a search function enabled into its application, it is very general and shows all tweets or users that are related to the tweet. To find solely educational material by topic, there is a need for a more sophisticated search engine. Users can search phrases or hashtags, and have information related to that hashtag appear (19). The main issue with that is that there is no way to filter out general Twitter chatter from tweeted out educational material.

The use of hashtags as a search filter can only go so far. Searching a hashtag allows for a user to see all of the tweets that use that filter, but it does not differentiate comments from the actual educational material. Certain hashtags, like #iamascientistbecause, have researchers and other scientists tweet out praises and reasons why they are interested in science using the hashtag. Biologists, physicists, geologists, and others proclaimed why they love the work they do and what events inspired them to become scientists. They highlighted the exciting places they get to go and the neat tools they get to use. By utilizing the #iamascientistbecause hashtag, users can find information from scientists about the particular field they are in (19). With this idea in mind, creating a hashtag that coincides with the educational information being tweeted out is necessary. It is also on the Twitter Company to create a filter of sorts that will allow a user to search a hashtag and see the educational content easily and conveniently.

**References**


**Letter to the Editor**

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) represents higher education faculty in all sectors of education. AFT serves for the interests of higher education members to the larger organization. The mission of the American Federation of Teachers - High Education division - is “to help our affiliates and their members prosper in the face of political, economic, and technological forces…” (20). Mary Ricker is someone who is passionate about the continuing education of students and works to seek out and distribute information to educators on how best to do so.

The AFT supplements publications on matters that affect higher education and on the educators themselves. Mary Ricker is the Executive Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers. She was elected to the position in July 2014 she has championed innovative, teacher-built solutions that improve teaching and learning as well as strengthen public education (20). For these reasons, she is the best fitting candidate to learn about and inform educators about utilizing Twitter and the concept of Twitterizing educational material. AFT publications do not have one letter to the editor as it is a contribution based publication and there are many editors for each piece. I e-mailed this letter to both the publication office and to Mary Ricker herself on November 3, 2015. Unfortunately, there has been no response and it has not been published.

Dear Mary Ricker,

In today’s globalizing world, society is constantly bombarded with many different social media platforms. These platforms are mainly used for simple sharing of photos and catching up with old friends. Social media sharing sites, such as Twitter, reach a massive global audience and there has been little done to address the impact and the importance of this type of tool. Recently, Twitter bought out a company called Periscope. This live-streaming video application allows any user, anywhere in the world, to click on a video by a specific user or pertaining to a specific topic. These videos allow people to hear experiences of what someone is going through, have open discussions, and see real-time videos of what is happening somewhere in the world. This open form of communication is an essential learning tool that should be implemented in classrooms – it is a way to show students what they are learning about first hand instead of just reading about it in a textbook.
Because social media is becoming more popular, it is imperative that there becomes a more useful, meaningful purpose and utilization of this platform. Utilizing social media in a classroom may seem foolish, as there is a perception that students will misuse the privilege and use it for mindless socializing as opposed to learning. But with proper guidance and training, social media can be used for something more; it can show a student that there are real issues occurring in the world and allow them to learn something that is not directly under their nose. The information a student can gain through the use of social media applications such as Periscope can inspire someone to seek active change, it can start a movement – the impact social media can have as a learning tool is endless. The use of social media applications, such as Twitter and Periscope, should become a fundamental learning tool that aids teachers in explaining and providing more detailed, insightful information to students.

I urge you to explore and examine the impact that social media has on students and how utilizing it to mold and educate the future can have many benefits. There is an overwhelming amount of information in the world and knowledge to be gained; utilizing Twitter and Periscope in classrooms is something that will expand the minds of students. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Michelle Matyash

On December 9, 2015, we received a response from The American Federation of Teachers that stated:

Michelle,

The editors of American Educator would like to thank you for your thoughtful letter.

We’re on the lookout for such a topic, but thus far there hasn’t been a lot of solid research about the benefits of such tools or technology in general. You might be interested to know that we do plan to run an article on what we do currently know about technology and learning in our Spring 2016 issue.

Thank you again for your support of American Educator.

Sincerely,
Lawrence McMahon

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