Social Media Use by School Districts
Diving Beyond “Should We?” Discussions

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About the Author

After more than 10 years working with military public affairs programs, I transferred to the public school system in 2012. I’ve worked as an active duty Marine Corps photojournalist based in Hawaii, and then as a contractor coordinating an Army public affairs program in Qatar. I have more than 15 years of experience with photography, traditional arts, desktop publishing and digital media. During my undergraduate work at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I majored in journalism with an individualized focus on social media studies. Today, as a graduate student in critical and creative thinking at the University of Massachusetts Boston, I’m focusing on emerging media and online dialogue theory. Throughout my first year as a digital communications specialist for Falcon School District 49 in Colorado, I facilitated rapid growth of the school district’s Facebook page. I’m known to say, “Treat social media as an active participatory tool, not a passive broadcast.”

My philosophy hinges on the idea that the voice of the district’s taxpaying community is most important. In District 49, we provide accurate and timely information, and then host community collaboration about it. We ask our patrons for their input online, where we measure their understandings, respond to their concerns when appropriate, and ensure they know their feedback affects district decisions and policy. With effective dialogue leadership, a school district’s online community will become active, reflective and generative, allowing public relations practitioners to mostly relax their fingers as listeners. They can address praises and concerns, while identifying inaccurate statements, libelous remarks or inappropriate language. As hosted conversations expand, it takes a strategic plan, coupled with critical and creative thinking, to address the voices of judgment, fear and cynicism. Moreover, school districts leveraging social media must act as online dialogue leaders.

**My assumptions:** I assume you have a basic understanding of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube. You see participatory media as driving a fundamental shift in public relations. You’re interested in using social media as a community engagement tool for a public school district. When you share content about a school, you’re worried about what might happen next. You want to engage your community online, but not sure how.
Why Social Media?

In the United States, about half of the adults and three-quarters of the teenagers use social networking sites (Hampton, Goulet, Marlow, & Rainie, 2012). The decentralization of information is arguably the biggest change in communications since the printing press. In today's world, news is a conversation. And that calls for genuine and transparent communications from organizations on social media, as well as analytical skills to interpret the data produced. With the right strategy, school districts facilitate digital platforms that improve patron understanding – they encourage concerns and praises on official channels.

Falcon School District 49 educates about 15,000 students. Within participatory media, our time is invested in Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube. We also support distributed reporting services, such as CNN iReport and the Colorado Springs Gazette's FreshInk. Our most active online presence as a social organization is Facebook, the most popular social networking site. According to Facebook’s advertiser panel, there are 66,000 people registered within our zip codes, of which 22,000 identified themself as a parent (2013). There are 6,800 people classified as a parent of a child aged 19 or younger. As far as youth, there are 19,600 people identified with an age between 13-19. This data comes with several limitations, since it’s mostly based on user input. For example, our district contains 160 teenagers categorized as a parent of a child 16-19 years old, which is, obviously, biologically impossible.

Given these rough estimates, our goal is 10,000 “likes” – we're at nearly 4,800 now, up from about 500 a year earlier. We mostly use Facebook (www.facebook.com/District49) as an online newsroom, while occasionally polling and surveying our audience. On Twitter (www.twitter.com/District49), our following is growing organically, as we use it to connect with media, monitor keywords and send live tweets from public meetings. We regularly share photos and documents to our followers on Pinterest (www.pinterest.com/District49). Our YouTube profile (www.youtube.com/District49media) contains short videos about student and teacher activities, district events and updates, as well as public meeting footage.
We’re invested in earning connections in our district’s official social media platforms, where we inspire dialogue and monitor understandings. Our **brand advocates**¹ are partners, bringing a grassroots, trust-building influence with their energetic contributions. Our **brand adversaries**² routinely challenge that trust, but we treat their contributions just as important. When adversaries feel unsafe with connecting to an organization’s official social media page, they readily present their distrust in other online streams, or create their own. They find ways to fill conversational threads with complaints. Some do it knowing conflict and conspiracy draws attention, others simply want to feel heard. Below is the social media philosophy we’ve developed in District 49:

![Social Media Philosophy Diagram]

While these ideas have worked well in District 49, consistency is critical.

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¹ A brand advocate is a highly satisfied patron who recommends your organization or its services without pay or incentives. They enjoy giving their opinion, and knowing it matters.
² A brand adversary is an unsatisfied patron who attacks an organization or its services.
Patron Expectations

School district’s must meet the information needs of their community, not their own. Shelving flattering news often takes great discipline, until a commitment to their needs matures. Combining 20 years of research into patrons in districts of all shapes, sizes and socioeconomic conditions, DeSieghardt found a handful of topics that routinely surface and created an information pyramid. The top concerns cover the use of tax money, efforts to communicate, as well as activities and facilities affecting classroom learning (2012, p. 9). Some of the less leading concerns may transition to essential when events put them into question, such as student safety or Board of Education conspiracies.
Be Leaders, Not Moderators

“If people are to cooperate they have to be able to create something in common, something that takes shape in their mutual discussions and actions, rather than something that is conveyed from one person who acts as an authority to the others, who act as passive instruments of this authority.” David Bohm

Everyone is a potential publisher today. As Bohm warns, our explosion of information can seem like a collection of trivial and almost unrelated fragments, possibly a harmful source of confusion and misinformation (2004, p. 2). People are rapidly obtaining, distributing and interpreting data. While participatory media sites like Facebook allow administrators to remove or hide fragments of user-generated content, those cover ups consistently create more confusion, pushing people toward frustration more than mutual understandings and trust. The goal must not center on acting as a gatekeeper to ideal conversations, but rather a leader of an authentic exchange of ideas. For organizations funded by tax dollars and donations, mutual understandings and trust are critical. At times, misconceptions severely impact a school district’s ability to educate its children, such as struggles to construct and staff new schools by gaining voter approval for a mill levy and bond issue. As dialogue leaders, public relations practitioners can leverage social media to accelerate a community’s appreciation for collaboration, acting as a tool that inspires deeper understandings of ideas. Social media requires online dialogue leaders, not moderators.

The term “moderator” has been used to define those who accept an authoritative role in online communities, weeding out unwanted behaviors. While online moderators may metaphorically hide or delete an opinion, its underlying issue remains. Unless attempts to connect offline are concurrently coordinated, they’ve failed to appreciate and address the situation: someone is upset. Even if the patron is acting outside a rational context, blocking their adverse opinion motivates their migration to other platforms. Online discussions must display transparency and accountability, exhibiting trustworthy and collaborative discussion. During the past year on Facebook, where District 49’s subscriber numbers surged 10-fold, we’ve only removed or hidden about a dozen posts, mostly due to harsh language. One conversation violated our defamation rule, after a principal pointed out how a parent purposefully and maliciously posted false and misleading information. School officials contacted the parent offline, hoping to work through their patron’s fears that way.

DeSieghardt says a school district should expect 20 percent of its patrons to speak up regularly (2012, p. 1). He calls half of them “The Happys,” people who usually participate in their schools and thank its teachers – the raving moral boosters (p. 2). Districts will retain
The Happys as brand advocates unless they deliberately alienate them. The other half of this vocal population contains the “The Unhappys.” While DeSieghardt suggests focusing on turning up the voice of the silent majority, the other 80 percent, district’s can use their tough talkers to carve a container that encourages more input from everyone. To do that, social media managers must watch how their patrons conduct a conversation and offer alternatives and feedback, redirecting their ideas toward new avenues of consideration.

Using social media, school districts must strategically uproot attitudes stuck in past experiences, such as powerful controversies surrounding administration changes or funding decisions. In District 49, we’ve had several of our brand adversaries become advocates by encouraging new perspectives to their opinions. We don’t get caught in “who’s right and who’s wrong” debates. We don’t act presumptuous enough to say, “All is good.” Instead, we explain “All is as little bad as possible,” while continuously delivering extra context until new understandings emerge – using a multimedia approach: news stories, photojournalism, video interviews and so forth. As people sustain interactions under a rational context, as reasonable receivers of new data, they allow a disruption of their existing understandings. Effective online dialogue leaders facilitate the development of mutual understandings and trust, protecting conversations from breakdown. Breakthroughs that redirect public opinion rely on a stream of objective, accurate and timely content. And then, they depend on listening to adjust efforts as needed.

Social Listening

It cannot be overstated: it's critical for school districts to pay attention online. Online conversations quickly reach thousands of people. Hampton et al. found that Facebook users who share with a “Friends of Friends” feature enabled will explain their experiences to a mean average of 156,569 people (2012). The study, combining server logs and survey data, proves that people have a voice that could carry across a population the size of Lakewood, Colo. – that’s just Facebook. Anyone invested in reputation management must listen to participatory media, whether reading blogs, story commentaries, Facebook posts or Twitter
updates – wherever the Internet holds data that helps harness public opinion. By hosting a social media site, school administrators must commit to listening.

Dialogue leaders listen to encourage a desire to change, alter opinions and challenge theories (Gunnlaugson, 2013). They fuel an emotional charge, sparking the curiosity needed to recognize problems and inspire a sustained action to solve them. They guide people through creative problem-solving processes, ensuring problems are well defined, neither too narrow nor too broad. With a properly stated challenge, they help find facts, form ideas and discover solutions. Successful leaders dissolve the fears inhibiting creativity. They clear up ambiguous and false statements. They inspire divergent thinking, keeping thoughts flexible. They make the familiar strange, exhibiting a genuine and contagious respect for fresh interpretations and innovative ideas. They support the traits of an objective, open-minded observer, and not a protective participant. They encourage an acceptance of new possibilities and improved collaboration, while reducing anxiety about breaking habits. Appreciating creative solutions to problems requires a tolerance to risk, so leaders help people rationalize how both failures and successes are acceptable, each offering teachable opportunities. They promote a culture where ideas evolve and new evidence is explored. Improving understandings through reflective and generative dialogue is their ultimate goal.

As explained by Gunnlaugson, dialogue coaching involves five key processes: **listening, mirroring, summarizing, questioning** and **catalyzing** (2013). Coaches listen to gauge understandings, and mirror situations and conclusions. By summarizing conversations, they inspire people to appreciate their positions. Questioning helps propel the process, imparting opportunities to re-examine assumptions and challenge thinking, while calling for clarity and insight. Coaches provoke comprehensive conclusions or alternative perspectives by pointing at a situation from different viewpoints. They catalyze conversations by exciting passion. It all starts with listening.
Crawford outlines three modes of online listening: **background listening**, **reciprocal listening** and **delegated listening** (2009, p. 526). Background listening is “tuning in” to the constant flow of information, becoming aware of the patterns of speech, activity and thought (p. 528). Organizations may gain access to a sense of intimacy once reserved for close friends and family. Listen to pronoun and verb choices to discover feelings of anger or sadness, pleasure or resentment.

Reciprocal listening occurs when we respond to comments and direct messages (p. 530). This type of interaction is what truly separates participatory media from broadcast, as the latter leaves no room for conversations with patrons. People who routinely attack an organization’s credibility are often seeking a sense of acknowledgement.

Lastly, delegated listening is a mode when the organization is perceived as listening, while not investing the time required to remain fully present (p. 531). This outsourced form of listening keeps conversations moving through the organization, without a direct connection. A school district may empower brand advocates to ask questions for its Board of Education. Schools might leverage leaders from community engagement groups or student councils, ensuring patrons feel heard. Various social media listening software is also available, like Social Mention. HootSuite sends Twitter alerts based on keywords and locations of tweets. A timely response to a concern about a school that’s voiced in a district’s coverage area shows a powerful commitment to listening.

Listening also involves identifying digital influencers. Social media allows anyone to drive action. It democratizes information, therefore influence, too. Klout is an online service that measures influence across social networks. Klout Scores, a number between one and 100, places a metric on how people impact those connected to them. It also allows an organization to pinpoint the moments when its content influenced people. From January to April 2013, the most influential moments in District 49’s networks were on Facebook. Our leading post involved an original photograph showing a late season snowfall over our Front Range community. Our second most influential post explained an anonymous bomb threat that caused the evacuation of a high school.
Patron Actions

Dialogue leaders keep harmony and productivity within a group discussion, thereby supporting the emergence of generative actions. Kantor's four-player conversation model suggests actions a person may take during a conversation: **movers** initiate ideas and transition the conversation; **opposers** challenge ideas and the conversation; **followers** complete ideas and support the conversation; **bystanders** provide perspective on the ideas and conversation (The Kantor Institute, 2013). Movers and opposers are the actors best suited to set direction. The mover is like a skipper charting new waters, while the opposer drops anchors to explore the current waters. Bystanders and followers mostly provide crew support. When a compelling perspective is voiced in online conversations, a pause in posting sometimes occurs, opening a door for actors to change roles. Followers are least relevant in asynchronous online communications, since there’s adequate time to respond and an accessible archive of ideas.

In District 49, our initial Facebook following was led by movers and opposers, known as conversational advocates. They’re eager to identify mistakes, illegalities, moralities and waste – hammering on one point, raising another. To open the doors to inspiration, we attempted to increase comfort levels with also acting as bystanders and followers. Through several exchanges about closures due to winter weather, people acknowledged that they’re initial combative attitude was excessive and they appreciated our responsiveness. Several people apologized; some said they didn’t expect anyone to actually respond.
Scharmer identified four fields of conversation to illustrate the path people take toward conversational flow (2009, p. 236). Before that flow can occur, a container must be created for which dialogue may emerge. Conversations often start with downloading, where a relationship is established based on politeness and empty phrases. People choose words that worked well in the past, using assumptions without a commitment to understanding. Debate takes place when people defend their ideas, sharing what they think. Dialogue begins when people transcend the conversational container established with debate. They open up to new, collaborative understandings. They start seeing themselves as part of a system of inquiry, rather than a self-centered exhibit of ideas. With presencing, people start sharing within evolving understandings. A generative flow unfolds, unleashing a collective creativity through authentic and shifting identities. How might this process relate to online conversations, and how can understanding it help school districts? To lead change, we must recognize these patterns of conversation online.
Downloadings

When the energy invested into a relationship is low, people conform. To attract such conversations, social media managers only need to conform to prevailing views. According to Scharmer, much of how we communicate is based on habitual patterns of action and thought (2009, p. 119). When facing a familiar situation, we tend to act in a familiar way. Hampton et al. analyzed 269 random Facebook users and found people like to “like” content (2012). A third of their sample clicked “like” at least once per week, and slightly more had their own content liked by a friend. Clicking “like” on Facebook or Pinterest, or “favorite” on Twitter, is a passive action that brands a person with existing ideas. Their association is shared among their social networks, while keeping the doors to dialogue shut. To truly build understandings and affect public opinion, those doors must eventually open.

In District 49, we look for ways to pose a question with Facebook updates, or inspire dialogue with a short narrative.

To leave the field structure of downloading, dialogue leaders help people start paying attention and open up to new realities. Scharmer says four learning barriers prevent people from seeing their realities (2009, p. 126):

1. **Not recognizing what you see** – To decouple perception and thought, present information in an objective manner that encourages the sharing of perspectives and collaboration. When sharing an event, ask how it might benefit a community.

2. **Not saying what you think** – To decouple thinking and talking, present information that encourages people to discuss how their ideas are connected to their experiences. Encourage divergent opinions on topics, while clearing up misunderstandings.

3. **Not doing what you say** – To decouple talking and “walking,” provide ways for patrons to act on their social media contributions. If a community rallies around an idea, clicking “like” and “favorite,” suggest a way to act on that positive momentum.

4. **Not seeing what you do** – To decouple perception and action, eliminate the blind spots that prevent your patrons from accepting reality. Blind spots keep people from appreciating complexities and disruptions in thinking. It may be as simple as providing more context, or require the hosting of a reliable problem-solving activity that creates a sense of sustained partnership.
Talking Tough

During confrontation, the energy invested into a relationship increases. Dialogue leaders must methodically keep emotionally challenging situations from resulting in conversational breakdowns. Just as downloading relies on conforming, debate depends on a desire to take a stance. When people feel comfortable with speaking their mind, debates are invigorated by views that challenge common perceptions. Within the structure of debate, people start arguments to beat or best opposing views. Debate is useful, because different views are expressed and a conversational container is created. By welcoming conflicting opinions, collaboration is seeded. Moreover, by hosting tough talkers, public relations practitioners prove they’re not in the business of censorship, or advocating a false sense of achievement. The best tool to eliminate rivalry is truth. When communities divide, they form rallying points for doubt and error. When truth is evident, factions fall. Nobody disputes whether there is daylight at noon. A long dispute may suggest both parties are wrong.

Correa, Hinsley and de Zúñiga found emotional instability predicts regular social media use, especially by men (2010). Compelling evidence also implies neurotic people tend to prefer asynchronous forms of online communication (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). It’s likely related to a sufficient time to respond. Since neuroticism is linked to loneliness, it’s likely that anxious and nervous people use social media to seek support and company. With the right leadership they’ll join a culture of inquiry. Debate won’t carve a path to conversational breakdowns; it’ll create a container for emerging understandings. To facilitate a move away from the boundaries of “My Position,” Scharmer says people must feel safe to change their point of view (2009, p. 274). Bohm suggests helping them suspend their view: “so that you neither carry them out nor suppress them. You don’t believe them, nor do you disbelieve them; you don’t judge them as good or bad” (2004, p. 23). Online conversations sometimes carry a feeling of group therapy.

District 49 shares a set of conduct norms with its Facebook participants: they will not bully, intimidate, or harass any user; they will not post content that is hate speech, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence; and they will not do anything unlawful, misleading, malicious or discriminatory. Language that’s commonly understood as cussing, words that’d be inappropriate in middle school environments, are automatically hidden from the community.
Reflective Dialogue

When a community moves from talking tough to reflection, they slow down and pull away from owning their point of view. Hampton et al. found the longer someone uses Facebook, the more frequently they interact with content (2012). What’s more, there’s a subset of Facebook users who are disproportionately more active. While only 5 percent of power users use all the communication tools – sending friend requests, pressing the “like” button, sending private messages, tagging friends in photos – about 20-30 percent specialize in one activity. On average power users are most likely to comment. Correa et al. noticed increased social media use in extraverted people, particularly those open to new experiences (2010). Ryan & Xeno support the claim that Facebook users tend to be extraverted, as well as exhibit higher levels of total narcissism, exhibitionism and leadership than nonusers (2011). Extraverted people tend to use social networking sites as a means of social extension. To build a culture of inquiry, they must feel safe to question their views and those of others. To dive into deeper layers of conversation people must overcome three barriers: voice of judgment, voice of fear and voice of cynicism (Scharmer, 2009, p. 246).

To fight those voices, dialogue leaders must identify the resistance that keeps conversations from reaching their greatest potential, away from safe phrases or combative listening. All assumptions must be aired with invitations to create new, collaborative understandings. Facilitating a shift to reflective dialogue requires a profound understanding of your community. Why do they refuse to hear a contrary point of view? How can we help them inquire about the point of views of others? How do we encourage empathic listening skills so as to constantly create and evolve a collective effort?

On April 3, District 49 posted a Facebook survey asking our online community about funding priorities (Facebook, 2013a). Roughly 4,100 people were connected to our page. By April 11, the survey reached 4,801 unique people, while 259 unique people clicked on the post and 209 liked, commented or shared it. On April 8, we posted a poll with the top 10 responses (Facebook, 2013b). It attracted 14,520 unique people with 1,241 engaged and 455 talking about it. The most supported comments involved a pay raises for educators, no-fee bus transportation and more vocational programs and activities. By April 11, when a report was generated for the Board of Education and district leadership, pay raises were catching up to no-fee bus transportation, 143 to 158. A change in collective opinion was emerging, as people explained their ideas. The district’s social media manager recognized patron efforts to act as dialogue leaders and facilitate new understandings. Two weeks later, as the poll dropped from being the center of attention, the gap continued to close, 153 to 160.
Generative Dialogue

When we truly value a connection, we expend the energy necessary to keep that relationship reflective and generative. We invest a lot of effort to constantly relate and collectively connect. Communal respect thrives in safe environments, where people feel comfortable placing their attention beyond themselves. It leads to creative conversations. According to Scharmer, generative dialogue contributes to two long-term outcomes: “a unique, deep bond among those who participated; and often significant accomplishments by both entire groups and individuals” (2009, p. 280). People obtain a long-lasting quality of connection.

Tapping into presencing, a uniquely collaborative experience, takes time. But it’ll create a real force in community engagement. In his theory of communicative action, Habermas says every act of speech that strives for mutual understandings consists of three validity claims: truth, rightness and sincerity (1985, p. 99). Claims of truth must pass the test of continued discourse, as conversationalists carefully examine evidence. Rightness is tested through discussing what we ought to find acceptable, legitimate and moral. Sincerity is confirmed by probing the actions of those sharing their ideas. If people cannot collaboratively test the validity claims, they cannot change their understandings.

Mutual appreciation requires a claim to pass the validation test of each participant in the dialogue process. For that reason, an understanding cannot be reached unless claims are open to vibrant exchanges — debate and inquiry. Additionally, when people stop criticizing their own ideas, they suspend their desire to understand. And an acceptance or blending of ideas requires comfort in the actions the new understanding implies. If someone is spreading rumors, or complicating crisis communications with unconfirmed updates, lead a conversation about the ethical and progressive use of social media in their school district.

Final Note

We’re highly connected today. Every day, more than 500 terabytes of data is sent to Facebook (Facebook, 2012). Millennials expect immediate updates and open lines of communication. These digital natives are tomorrow’s community and business leaders. Social media sites will keep evolving as collaborative platforms, where information and influence is democratized. Online dialogue leaders are needed to improve information literacy and problem-solving processes. School district’s that demonstrate online leadership will improve mutual understandings and trust. Their social media sites will also model effective online communication for their students, who must learn 21st century soft skills.
Works Cited


Social Media Use by School Districts

Diving Beyond “Should We?” Discussions
Why Social Media?

About Half of the Adults and Three-Quarters of the Teenagers Use Social Networking Sites
Why Social Media?

- Falcon School District 49 Educates 15,000 Students
- 66,000 Registered on Facebook In Zip Codes
- 22,000 As Parent
- 19,600 As Aged 13-19
- 6,800 As Parent of Child Aged 19 or Younger
- Goal: 10,000 “Likes”; Nearly 4,800 Now, Up From About 500 a Year Ago

Note: Demographical Data Limited By User Input
Source: Facebook, June 2013
Screen Capture: June 2013
Social Media Philosophy

**Truth**
- Share Timely Photos, News and Feature Stories that Uphold Journalism Standards
- Quickly Clear Up Ambiguities or False Information; Remove Slander
- Be Objective, Factual, Consistent

**Rightness**
- Promote Reflective and Generative Dialogue; Improve Understandings
- Avoid Self Flattery, Implied Perfection; Meet Patron Information Needs
- Ask Questions, Always Listen, Respond Often

**Sincerity**
- Build a Participatory Platform; Stay Patron-Centric, Collaborative
- Encourage Contributions, Interactions
- Protect Opinions, Encourage Them
Patron Expectations

**Essential**
Teachers, School Facilities, Quality of Education, Preparedness of Students for the Next Phase of Life, Taxes, District’s Efforts to Communicate with Patrons.

**Important**
Principals, Student Safety, Class Sizes, Technology for Student Use, District Promises Made and Fulfilled, Responsiveness to Patron Concerns, Spending Balance

**As Needed**
Extracurricular Activities, News About Central Office, Superintendent and BOE

Source: Ken DeSieghardt
Be Leaders, Not Moderators

“If people are to cooperate they have to be able to create something in common, something that takes shape in their mutual discussions and actions, rather than something that is conveyed from one person who acts as an authority to the others, who act as passive instruments of this authority.” David Bohm
Be Leaders, Not Moderators

- Everyone is a Publisher
- People Rapidly Obtaining, Distributing, Interpreting Data
- Removing, Hiding User-Generated Content Creates Confusion, Frustration
- Don’t Be Gatekeeper to Ideal Conversations
- Be Leader of Authentic Exchanges of Ideas

- School Districts Should Expect 20 Percent of Patrons to Speak Up
- Leverage Tough Talkers to Carve a Container that Encourages More Input From Everyone.
- Watch How Patrons Conduct a Conversation, Offer Alternatives, Feedback, Redirect Ideas Toward New Avenues of Consideration
Be Leaders, Not Moderators

- Turn Adversaries Into Advocates, Encourage New Perspectives
- Don’t Get Caught in “Who’s Right and Who’s Wrong” Debate
- Don’t Say, “All is Good,” But “All is as Little Bad as Possible”
Social Listening

- Facebook Users Who Share With “Friends of Friends” Enabled Explain Experiences to Mean Average of 156,569 People
- Dialogue Leaders Listen to Encourage Desire to Change, Alter Opinions, Challenge Theories

- Read Blogs, Story Commentaries, Facebook Posts, Twitter Updates – Wherever The Internet Holds Data That Helps Harness Public Opinion.
Social Listening

- 5 Coaching Processes:
  - **Listening** to Gauge Understandings
  - **Mirroring** Situations, Conclusions
  - **Summarizing** to Inspire Appreciation in Positions
  - **Questioning** to Propel Process, Re-examine Assumptions, Challenge Thinking, Call for Clarity, Insight
  - **Catalyze** Conversations by Exciting Passion

Source: Olen Gunnlaugson
Social Listening

- **3 Modes of Online Listening:**
  - **Background Listening** is “Tuning In” to Flow of Information,Awareness of Patterns of Speech,Activity and Thought
  - **Reciprocal Listening** is Responding to Comments, Direct Messages
  - **Delegated Listening** is the Perception of Listening, While Not Fully Present

Source: Kate Crawford
Social Listening

- Four-player Conversation Model Suggests Actions a Person May Take During a Conversation
- **Movers** Initiate Ideas, Transition Conversation
- **Opposers** Challenge Ideas, Conversation
- **Followers** Complete Ideas, Support Conversation
- **Bystanders** Provide Perspective on the Ideas, Conversation

Source: David Kantor
“Dialogue is not always going to be entertaining, nor is it doing anything visibly useful. So you may tend to drop it as soon as it gets difficult. But I suggest that it is very important to go on with it – to stay with it through frustration.” David Bohm
Navigate Four Fields Online

I. Downloading
   Talking Nice

II. Debate
    Talking Tough

III. Dialogue
     Reflective Inquiry

IV. Presencing
    Generative Flow

Source: Otto Scharmer
Navigate Four Fields Online

I. Downloading

• Conversations Often Start with Downloading
• Relationship Established on Politeness, Empty Phrases
• People Choose Words that Worked Well in the Past, Using Assumptions Without a Commitment to Understanding
• Click “Like,” “Favorite”

II. Debate

• Debate Takes Place When People Defend Their Ideas, Sharing What They Think
• Emotional Instability Predicts Regular Social Media Use
• Neurotic People Tend to Prefer Asynchronous Forms of Communication
• Enforce Reasonable Expectations: No Harassing, Hate Speech, Unlawful Acts, Etc.
Navigate Four Fields Online

III. Dialogue
• Dialogue Begins When People Open Up to New, Collaborative Understandings
• Seen as Part of a System of Inquiry
• Fights Voices of Judgment, Fear, Cynicism

IV. Presencing
• With Presencing, People Start Sharing Within Evolving Understandings
• Generative Flow Unfolds, Unleashing a Collective Creativity Through Authentic and Shifting Identities
• Passes 3 Validity Claims: Truth, Rightness, Sincerity
Navigate Four Fields Online

- 4,100 “Likes” on Facebook
- Posted Survey About Funding Priorities, Reached 4,801 People
- Posted Poll with Top 10 Priorities, Reached 14,520 People
- Most Supported: Educator Pay Raises, No-fee Bussing, Vocational Programs and Activities
- People Explained Their Ideas, Change in Collective Opinion Emerged
- Pay Raises Caught Up to No-fee Bus Transportation
Fifth grader Elija Tollison, 11, explains Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy for second graders May 10 at Banning Lewis Ranch Academy in Falcon School District 49. While kindergarten-fourth grade students entered the academy's gymnasium, groups of fifth graders welcomed them to "European extravaganza." They encouraged them to visit their country-themed tables, where they'd present research and stamp "passports." The daylong event started with classroom presentations of slideshows and magazine projects, combining world cultures and language arts studies.
Navigate Four Fields Online

**Debater 1**

- “Should they learn about America's economy first?” (Mover)
- “There is life outside of the U.S. of A.!” (Bystander)
- “They're in second grade....they should learn about their home first.” (Opposer)
- “Learning about the world around you ... Opens your eyes to more then what's in front you ....... learning of different cultures makes one very well rounded .... ! Keep up the good work .... !” (Opposer)
- “In second grade its not important to teach them about an economy they don't exist within.”(Opposer)

**Debater 2**

- “Second grade, [Opposer]...second grade. Our tax dollars!!! Are they anywhere near thinking about their OWN finances? Have they already learned how to balance their checkbook and how the stock market works?!?!” (Follower)

*Note: Movers and Opposers Will Advocate, While Bystanders and Followers Will Inspire*
Navigate Four Fields Online

• How Might We Respond?
• How Might We Lead Authentic Exchanges of Ideas?
• How Might We Turn Adversaries Into Advocates, Encourage New Perspectives?

Remember: Tens of Thousands of People Might Be Watching
Navigate Four Fields Online

**Debater 1**
- Single Male, 26, Agnostic
- High School Graduate
- Worked 4 Years on Graveyard Shift at Grocery Store
- Now Works in Window Care
- Enjoys Box Office Hits, Like Shawshank Redemption, Saving Private Ryan and Braveheart, as well as Physiological Thrillers
- Watches South Park, Seinfeld, Simpsons, Family Guy, House, Scrubs
- Affiliated with Mitt Romney, Scientific Discussions

**Debater 2**
- Married Male, 45
- High School Graduate
- Spent Youth in Illinois
- Enjoys Cult Classics, Like Office Space, Blade Runner, Braveheart, Alien, Buffalo ‘66 and Eraserhead
- Watches Two And A Half Men, Pawn Stars, Iron Chef and Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations
- Plays Chess
- Affiliated with Tea Party
- Linked to Same Company as Debater 1 (Owner or Supervisor?).

Source: Facebook, April 2013
Navigate Four Fields Online

**Separate From Idea**
- Both Show Characteristics of Appreciating Divergent, Comical Ideas
- One Might Lead the Other Due to Possible Family, Business Connection
- Each Asking for Reflection on Quality of Education and Use of Tax Dollars

**Create Mutual Understanding**
- Ask Questions – Don’t Tell Them They’re Wrong
- Redirect Dialogue to What’s Reasonable
- Focus on Preparedness for Career, Not College
- Consider Conservative Political Values
Dialogue Leader: “Hi [Debater 1], [Debater 2]. You bring up a great educational issue for discussion. During this event, each group of fifth graders provided an overview of European countries. Most provided their schoolmates with their research into introductory topics, like geography, government, communications, transportation and economy. Several dove into some interesting transnational issues. Some chose to focus more on topics that often define a country, such as Italy's ancient Rome, or Spain's World Cup successes. When do you think children should start learning about societies outside their own borders? As the fifth graders move onto middle school next year, could this foreign national experience help them think more critically and creatively about their own country? /Dustin”
Final Note

We're highly connected today. Every day, more than 500 terabytes of data is sent to Facebook. Millennials expect immediate updates and open lines of communication. These digital natives are tomorrow’s community and business leaders. Social media sites will keep evolving as collaborative platforms, where information and influence is democratized. Online dialogue leaders are needed to improve information literacy and problem-solving processes. School district’s that demonstrate online leadership will improve mutual understandings and trust. Their social media sites will also model effective online communication for their students, who must learn 21st century soft skills.