NSPRA’s 2017 National School Communication Awards Entry Form

GOLD MEDALLION AWARDS ENTRY

*Please include the information indicated with an asterisk on the entry cover page and mail a copy of this entry form with payment to: NSPRA, 2017 Awards Program, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855

*Name: Greg Turchetta

*Title: Executive Director, Communications and Community Engagement

*District/school/organization: Collier County Public Schools

*Address: 5775 Osceola Trail

*City/State/ZIP: Naples, Florida 34109

*Phone: 239-377-0185

*Email: turchg@collierschools.com

*Website: www.collierschools.com

*Title of entry:
Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time

* Number of PR/Communication staff: 8

*Type of School/Organization Submitting Entry (Check one)
- School district: Under 3,000 students
- School district: 3,001-10,000 students
- School district: 10,001-25,000 students
- School district: Over 25,000 students
- State County Office of Education
- Private/Charter school or individual public school
- VoTech center/Community college
- Education association
- Education service agency/Intermediate Unit/BOCES
- Business partner/Agency/Consultant (working with any listed)

*Entry Category (Check one)
- Comprehensive, Strategic, Year-Round Communication Programs
- Public Engagement/Parental Involvement
- Bond/Finance Campaign
- Crisis Communication
- Special Communication Projects/Campaigns
- Marketing Communication
- Specify topic:

✓ *Please consider this entry for a Golden Achievement Award.
SYNOPSIS

Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) is by many measures one of the most successful school districts in Southwest Florida. We lead our five-county region (Collier, Lee, Hendry, Glades, Charlotte) in graduation rate (86.7%). Over the last five years, our graduation rate has jumped 14 percentage points. We have out-performed the state average on 82% of state accountability test scores, placing us 14th out of 67 Florida counties; the highest in Southwest Florida. We have the most A-rated schools in Southwest Florida and do not have a single F-rated school! We excel in teacher recruitment, retention, and starting pay for teachers. We outpace many school districts in academic awards and we set a district record in 2015 with our senior class earning more than 34 million in scholarship dollars! It is important to note, however, that CCPS has achieved all of these accomplishments in spite of having the highest amount of migrant students and the third highest number of English Language Learners in the state of Florida. There are countless success stories our schools can tell!

So, why would a district performing this well need a social media campaign to prove it? This was a direct result of four very contentious school board races (two seats in November 2014 and two seats in November 2016). Some of the candidates ran on a change platform and there were many allegations, criticisms, and misinformation presented as facts. District staff, especially teachers, were upset that the narrative being told in the media by a vocal minority did not reflect the quality instruction and learning achievements they witnessed in their classrooms each and every day. We decided that creating a tidal wave of success stories would wash away a rip current of falsehoods and fictitious assumptions about our schools. We had to cement our #CCPSSuccess stories and who better to do it than the teachers in each classroom!
PROJECT OVERVIEW

In August 2015, CCPS launched Twitter accounts for all 50 traditional schools in the district. Subsequently, in August 2016, we debuted Facebook pages for those same schools. From lessons learned during our initial Twitter-launch effort, we knew that we would need more classroom content on a daily basis in order to feed a combined total of 100 school pages on the two social media platforms. School leadership teams did a great job, but could not get to the classrooms to post frequently enough within their normal duties. Events were covered, but not daily instruction. We needed our classroom experts to become classroom journalists.

After months of research and exhaustive planning, in July 2016, “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” was born. Our #tweetchers would provide content to their new classroom Twitter pages, the established school Twitter pages, and the new school Facebook pages. We wanted to capture the spark of learning. You know, that moment when you see a child get it! That moment when a student is totally enthralled in a hands-on science lesson. We also wanted to demonstrate for the world what we already knew – our teachers were masters of student engagement. They were incorporating proven Marzano instructional techniques, flipping the classroom and having students teach them, they were even creating amazing hands-on demonstrations and labs to cement learning. Our classrooms are digital playgrounds where students are an iPad away from meeting shark experts on research ships, interviewing a former astronaut, or learning from a giraffe expert in Africa. These were all learning opportunities above and beyond the state standards, and they were stories that needed to be told. Our teachers are truly selfless and never want the credit for anything. However, they did not like being called a failing school district by our critics. Their motivation to set the record straight was the opening we needed to launch our #tweetcher plan. This was a truly voluntary project. There was no teacher stipend. They would need to do it on their personal cell phones and they would need to fit it into their already busy days.

As we approached the development of the #tweetcher project, there was a laundry list of challenges to overcome and pitfalls to avoid. Quite frankly, it was a lot of change and a lot of moving parts to debut all at once at the beginning of a school year. A slow rollout was not an option. The political winds of change were swirling and we needed to quickly demonstrate our classroom success systemwide.

The mission came down to a single sentence repeated in every training to every teacher who was about to agree to voluntarily join the #tweetcher movement: We must demonstrate the innovative teaching techniques and exclusive learning opportunities happening in our classrooms each and every day.
The “why” was essential for teacher buy-in, but the “how” we would accomplish it was far more complicated. In our research phase, we quickly learned that there was no school district that we could find who had rolled out Twitter and Facebook to 50 schools and was going to enroll teachers as classroom journalists. We needed a simple tool that would allow our #tweetchers to post video, pictures, and information to school Twitter and Facebook pages without freely handing out administrative passwords. We asked our parent messaging software vendor to help pioneer a system that countless school districts have since called to learn about and want to emulate. With the help of Blackboard, CCPS developed a special teacher permission within the parent messaging software that allows our #tweetchers to log in and post content using their district computer network credentials. Principals were comfortable with this solution, it was easy to use, and it kept account password safeguards in place districtwide.

Once we had the tool, we needed to get it in as many #tweetcher hands as we could, as fast as possible. The rollout and training tour began two weeks prior to the start of the 2016-17 school year. The district’s Executive Director of Communications and Community Engagement personally conducted the training tour that touched all 50 schools in just six weeks, spanned over 1,100 miles of travel, and included presentations to full teacher staffs and late night coaching calls with Principals of how to set their school culture around the #tweetcher effort.

The overall plan had one detail that brought all 50 schools together. All content would be posted using the hashtag #CCPSSuccess. It was essential for this effort to be a collective lift, creating one place for parents, staff, and community members to see into classrooms across the district. Use of the single hashtag provided that collective lift. This single hashtag idea had several other amazing benefits such as new teachers using it to look into other classrooms and borrowing effective teaching practices. It also served as a meeting place for schools to create and share academic challenges across the district.

Fast forward nine months and the #tweetcher initiative exceeded all expectations. It has changed school and district cultures. As will be outlined in the following pages, the effort has positively changed classroom instruction and learning. Parents feel better connected to our classrooms - more than ever before! It has silenced the critics. The most recent accolade came just a month ago in February 2017, when our social media effort was acknowledged by the AdvancED team that visited Collier County Public Schools for the district's re-accreditation. The team deemed our communication efforts as one of four of the district's powerful practices. CCPS was called a model district and in their exit report, the team cited that parents are “buying ownership in the success of the district.” #CCPSSuccess Mission Accomplished!

In the following pages, we will demonstrate in detail the hard work behind building the “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” initiative and the strategies it took to accomplish this first-of-its-kind project.

CHECK US OUT ON

@collierschools
@newsboss
#CCPSSuccess
#CCPStweetchers

Mike Davis Elementary opens the window into a 5th grade classroom.
RESEARCH

Parent surveys from 2014-2016 showed a five percentage point decrease (84% to 79%) in parents who agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel informed about Collier County Public Schools.” The district’s social media effort was in its infancy in 2014, with only one district account. In 2015, CCPS rolled out Twitter profiles to all 50 schools. The accounts showed solid growth, but suffered from a lack of daily content. We realized that we needed more “boots on the ground” producing content to accomplish the mission in short order.

Numerous challenges were identified and needed to be overcome before our #tweetchers could ever send their first tweet or Facebook post.

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

1. Past prohibition of social media use - In 2013, the district blocked Facebook and Twitter in all 50 schools and prohibited staff from using them during the school day. The new plan would have to address a change in permitted usage and ease the fear for teachers to participate.

2. Superintendent and Cabinet concern - Our Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and the majority of our 19-member Cabinet team were not active on social media and many had great concerns about allowing it in the schools. Our plan would have to have the blessing of top district officials or it would be dead on arrival.

3. Coalition of the willing - The district was not in a position to provide a monetary stipend to teachers willing to participate. We would need to identify and recruit key tech-savvy teachers who would be willing to jump in and be a part of the effort voluntarily.

4. Device use - District-provided phones/devices were not available for this effort; therefore, we would need to make sure teachers were willing to use their own personal cell phones to download the Blackboard APP and post to the prescribed social media channels. In addition, we would need to help users set up personal phones to designated district Wi-Fi networks.

5. Reluctance from school-based administrators - Principals did not want any school-based content creators (i.e. #tweetchers) to have administrator rights to the school Facebook or Twitter pages. We needed a content posting platform that would allow teachers the ability to post to school Facebook and Twitter pages without granting them any administrator rights. Through conversations with our parent messaging software vendor, we identified that the Blackboard system could address this challenge, but we needed to collaborate with their software development team to make their system work at this large scale with as many schools as we were including. As a solution, #tweetchers would log into the district’s new ParentLink Messaging APP using their district network credentials and post to the school Twitter and Facebook pages. They would be excluded from having mass-messaging capabilities which made Principals comfortable with the plan.
6. **Pilot group of teachers needed to test the new content sharing system** - The district identified a team of digital leader teachers to interview and help us understand the challenges in the plan. We then used them as a pilot group to test the newly developed content posting system prior to the mass rollout to all willing #tweetchers.

7. **Connectivity issues** - Our school and district buildings are concrete fortresses! Staff knew from personal experiences that wireless connectivity was an issue, especially for LIVE event coverage. Schools were set up for district wireless device use in classrooms, but many areas had connectivity issues for personal cell phones. We had to collaborate with the district’s Technology Services to address wireless network access and unblock social media channels. Then, we had to train school staff on how to connect and which Wi-Fi network to use.

8. **Three fears** - Through interviews and group discussions with Principals and our teacher pilot group, three potential fears quickly surfaced that could possibly stifle teacher interest: 1) fear of technology, 2) fear of student privacy violations, and 3) fear of making a mistake that would lead to discipline. It was clear that we would need to address all three of these fears in our rollout trainings and follow-up coaching sessions.

9. **One more thing?** - We needed to have a compelling argument in order to get teachers to voluntarily add another duty to their already overflowing daily to-do lists. It would be critically important to explain the “why” of our effort in order to be successful.

10. **Social media policies and procedures** - The district did not have an established School Board policy specifically addressing social media. Our district general counsel and human resources leaders decided that our Code of Professional Conduct and Digital Technology Use policies provided adequate coverage for employee social media use and misuse. We determined that it would be essential to create a brand new Communications Guide for schools, including best practices for social media.

11. **Uncharted waters** - Through our research, we could not find another school district of our size that had previously attempted a 50-school rollout of Facebook and Twitter, and we could not find a district that gave teachers access to post content to school social media pages. We quickly realized that we were writing a blueprint that, if successful, other school districts would emulate.

**MEASURABLE GOALS**

- Launch 50 school Facebook pages by August 1, 2016. (two weeks prior to the start of school)
- Conduct initial training and hand over account control to school teams by September 1, 2016. (two weeks into the school year)
- Demonstrate a 10% monthly growth on all school and district social media pages.
- Identify a #tweetcher at every grade level at every school and have them create their own professional Twitter account in order to be a part of the team producing content for their school Facebook and Twitter accounts by the end of the 2016-17 school year.
• Have CCPS’s Executive Director of Communications and Community Engagement visit all 50 schools within a six-week period in order to conduct Facebook, ParentLink, and Twitter trainings. These trainings provided direct communication with teachers, explaining the reason why the effort of “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” was vital, and helped ease fears and concerns in order to garner participation. We felt that it was imperative that this grassroots campaign effort be done personally by the Executive Director of Communications so teachers could hear the vision right from its founder. It also subliminally reinforced the idea that if he took time out of his schedule to visit each school, then this effort must be a very important project for the district.

• Count number of news stories generated by social media posts. (at least one per month)

• Create one professional development opportunity for teachers each month in order to increase social media skills.

• Generate enough quality content on social media channels to garner positive attention from parents, students, staff, and community members, and hopefully the planned visit from AdvancED in February 2016.

OVERALL GOAL

To align Collier County Public Schools’ public image with its academic results by demonstrating daily the innovative teaching techniques and learning opportunities happening in classrooms. This assault of visual proof would push aside the fictitious narratives and cement our district’s #CCPSSuccess.
INTERNAL GOALS

• Give CCPS #tweetchers an avenue to speak directly with the community every day.
• Create a greater sense of pride in the work our 3,200 teachers do every day.
• Provide a place where the district’s additional 3,800 employees can see how their support services impact student achievement.

EXTERNAL GOALS

• Create additional channels for parent/teacher communication.
• Provide images and information that could lead to increased parent engagement.
• Give parents real-time access to classrooms to provide dinnertime conversation starters, as well as to reinforce their choice to put their children and trust in Collier County Public Schools.
• Increase awareness of #CCPSSuccess.
• Fight back against the constant stream of negative attacks and false claims about the quality of our district’s schools.
• Provide images and narratives of academic excellence that would generate dialogue and conversations and be shared amongst parents, students, staff, and community influencers.
ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

PLANNING TO ADDRESS THE NEED FOR THE PROGRAM
The “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” initiative was an extension of Collier County Public Schools’ ongoing communication effort to tell our own story. The critics in our community were allowed for too long to tell our story and/or create false narratives for political gain. Our efforts were directed so we would no longer need to rely on the media to tell our district’s success stories when and if they could make it out to an event. We would instead tell multiple engaging stories of success from 50 schools each and every day!

TARGET AUDIENCES

- 3,200 teachers
- Superintendent and 19 Cabinet Members
- School leadership teams
- Parents
- Community thought leaders
- Community members
- Media

SPECIFIC ROLE OF KEY LEADERS AND RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Superintendent of Schools** - Collier County Public Schools’ Superintendent, Dr. Kamela Patton, identified that her support of this initiative early in planning was a critical link. Initially, she was not a fan of social media, only using her Twitter account at major district events. It was imperative that she communicate to district and school leadership teams that the risk of rolling out this districtwide social media effort was necessary and worth the reward. She had to acknowledge this was an abrupt shift from the social media ban three years prior.

  On July 27, 2016, at our district’s start of school leadership meeting, Dr. Patton told Principals they were the Chief Marketing Officers of their schools. She told Assistant Principals that if they aspired to move up in leadership positions, they would have to know how to showcase the achievements of their schools. Dr. Patton then followed that up by paying keen attention to the district’s social media growth each month. Her buy-in even increased as she visited schools and saw the many different ways they were advertising their efforts and documenting her visits on social media.

- **Deputy Superintendent** - The district’s Deputy Superintendent is not a fan of social media. As a former Principal, he is keenly aware of what can happen when it goes wrong. In his current position as the immediate supervisor of the principals, we needed him to remain neutral on the effort. He, in fact, became a student again and started learning more about social media as Principals were discussing their marketing and communications efforts in conversations with him. He also saw the power of it during emergency situations, as the district could push out important information using multiple channels immediately.
• **Executive Director of Communications** - As the visionary behind the effort, the Executive Director of Communications had to become a technology expert, head trainer, and social media champion. It was important that he continue to push innovation in this effort. This year, he became the “social media guy” and on every school visit he was stopped repeatedly with social media questions. He continues to be the social media “helpdesk,” with emails and text messages coming in at all hours of the day. His constant involvement and immediate response is a critical piece to sustain the growth of this initiative. You have to fix problems fast before a **#tweetcher** grows frustrated and stops posting.

• **Principals** - The biggest lesson in all of this was the following: Principals do not have to be a part of the social media content team, but they must bless the effort. They had to have an eye on showing off their success stories, if for no other reason than to retain top-tier students whose parents were contemplating experimenting with new charter schools. The schools that lagged behind in social media growth were always schools where the Principal was neutral or did not embrace it. Many of the successful schools had Principals who blessed the effort and Assistant Principals and **#tweetchers** who carried the content load.

• **Assistant Principals** - Assistant Principals were critical in identifying teacher leaders and recruiting teachers onto the tech teams. They knew which teachers were innovative in their techniques, already digitally savvy, and able to handle the added workload.

• **Academic Coaches - Science, Reading, Math** - Our Academic Coaches are administrative team members in training. They teach our teachers best practices and intervention techniques. These coaches were identified as critical content creators because they had the time to post and had access to lesson plans and all classrooms. Some of the best social content has come from our Academic Coaches.

• **Tech team leaders** - Tech team leaders were the front line of our coalition of the willing. They were constantly recruiting more teachers and leading by example.

• **Teacher team leaders** - Each grade level has a teacher team leader. We identified them as thought leaders and targeted them for early recruitment into the **#tweetcher** effort.

• **Communciation Specialists** - When the Communications Department phone rang, we needed trained social media professionals available to help. The district’s two Communications Specialists took part in months of training regarding proper social media content creation and the ParentLink messaging system that school-based administrators and teachers would be using. Both Specialists were integral pieces of the plan and became resources to all 50 schools. We fielded questions daily for 90-120 days as more and more **#tweetchers** and tech teams came online and had minor hang-ups in their efforts.

---

@NewsBoss Exec. Dir. of Communications providing training.

Tech leaders learning how to use Twitter and best practices for social media posting.

© VOE Panthers Tech Team Leaders!
COMMUNICATION VEHICLES SELECTED

- Communication of the #tweetcher effort was critical from day one. Internal audiences needed to hear a consistent message and needed to follow key best practices for this effort to work. Equally important, parents needed to be informed prior to any classroom becoming active on social media. The parent letter was our most critical tool. Parents had already signed a media waiver form, but we needed to make sure they were not surprised when their child came home and said “MOM, I am on Twitter/Facebook today! Go look!” (see example of letter on next page)

- The Executive Director of Communications also offered every school a promise. If any parent called and had a problem with their child being on social media, the Principal could call him 24/7 and he would help address the concerns. It did not happen. This is because we had multiple layers of communication and messaging to keep parents in the loop prior to going social.

- This communications effort became a standing agenda item at monthly Principal meetings. Each month, we discussed the social media push, best practices, and case studies of successful efforts.

- The district’s social media channels (@collierschools) were used to showcase best #tweetcher posts and to recruit a larger audience to follow fledgling school and classroom social accounts.

- Back-to-School parent nights were set up so computer labs would be available to showcase social media pages and assist parents in creating their own Twitter accounts.

- Communication between teacher and parent was a basic building block for growth. If the teacher clearly explained the purpose of posting to social media and explained how parents could easily participate, and then the critical part, the teacher actually did post daily, growth was almost assured.

- Students were used as the stars of the videos posted so they could go home and tell parents all about it. Some schools began sending stickers home when classrooms were Tweeted in order to encourage parents to follow and stay informed.

- Local print and broadcast media were used to explain and promote the effort.

- District and school websites have a social media widget on their homepage that showcases their respective Facebook and Twitter accounts. Additionally, social media feeds were also embedded into the district’s mobile APP.

- School-produced printed materials mention to follow the school and teachers on Facebook/Twitter.

- School and district Twitter handles are included in district-produced publications printed in the local newspaper.

BUDGET AND RESOURCES

The #tweetcher effort has been no cost to the district! Training hours were absorbed within pre-existing Communication and Technology Department budgets.
Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our class will be using Twitter as a way to open the classroom window and show you, the parent, all the great things that your children are doing each day! Check out our pictures and videos on Twitter by searching for @XX. Make sure that you also follow the school (@XX) so you can see all of the great things that we are doing here at XX! Did you know that XX is also on Facebook? Give us a “like” www.facebook.com/ccpsXXX!

NEW TO TWITTER? HERE’S HOW TO SIGN UP:

To create an account on the web:
1. Go to http://twitter.com and find the sign up box.
2. Enter your full name, phone number, and a password.
3. Click Sign up for Twitter.
4. In order to verify your phone number, an SMS text message will be sent with a code. Enter the verification code in the box provided.
5. Once you’ve clicked Sign up for Twitter, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter). Type your own or choose one suggested. It will tell you if the username you want is available.
6. Double-check your name, phone number, password, and username.
7. Click Create my account. You may be asked to complete a Captcha to let the computer know that you’re human.

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. I look forward to sharing all of the great activities and adventures of our classroom with you.

Sincerely,

Mr./Mrs. XX
COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

April 2016

- ParentLink system was built and implemented. It was tested by Communications staff for 30 days.
- Met with Principals to identify interested pilot schools and gather their final input into the plan.

May 2016

- Began pilot of the effort in four schools. School leadership teams and two pilot #tweetchers began using ParentLink to access and post to school Facebook and Twitter pages.

June 2016

- Incorporated results of the pilot to create the districtwide rollout plan for #tweetchers.
- Met with Technology Services to ensure all wireless connectivity was ready for the content surge coming from all 50 schools.

July 1, 2016

- Debuted and presented the districtwide rollout plan to district leadership for final approval.

July 27, 2016

- Debuted the entire plan and new technology for access to school leadership teams at the district’s annual school year kick-off meeting.

August 8, 2016

- Presented a specific rollout schedule to school leadership teams.
- Began setting up immediate training dates for school leadership teams and dates for presentations to teachers during beginning-of-the-year full-staff meetings.
- Created new student media waiver forms to include social media.
- Created #tweetcher parent letters that teachers could send home to inform parents of the use of social media in the classroom.

August-September 2016

- The Executive Director of Communications visited all 50 schools within six weeks to roll out Facebook pages, install new ParentLink APP on school leaders’ phones, and train school staff.
- Explained rollout of the “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” initiative and recruited #tweetchers.
- Helped teachers create classroom-level Twitter pages and trained tech teams on how to use the ParentLink APP to post social media content to school pages.
- Conducted 30 full-staff and 20 partial-staff presentations in an effort to recruit #tweetchers.
October 2016

- Conducted 41 small group #tweetcher trainings at schools that required follow-up visits, including classroom training of what makes a quality post and how to record and edit video.

November 2016

- Conducted an additional 29 small group training sessions, including classroom training of what makes a quality post and how to record and edit video.

- Attended the district’s 2016-2017 STEAM Conference and presented two social media training sessions called “Social Media Boot Camp for Parents” and “Social Media Boot Camp for #tweetchers.”

December 2016

- Conducted an additional 21 school site visits to train #tweetchers how to evolve from pictures to planning video shoots around visual lesson plans.

January 2017

- Conducted iMovie training for schools.

ONGOING TRAINING

- Social media presentations are given to every subgroup teacher training session the district scheduled including Instructional Resource teachers, Media Specialists, and the Digital Leaders of Collier teacher groups STEAM trainings (300 participants).

- The effort is discussed monthly at Principal and Assistant Principal meetings where we share social media standings and hand out awards for growth, innovation, and #tweetcher success.

- The Executive Director of Communications uses his personal Twitter account as a continuous professional development channel to provide #tweetchers a centralized repository of the best, most creative, and most effective social media posts made by their colleagues.

- Created the “How Did They Do That?” social media post series in an effort to share innovative techniques used by our #tweetchers with all schools.

COMMUNICATION COMPONENTS

- We established early on that all schools would use the hashtag #CCPSSuccess for branding and consistent messaging. This gives parents and #tweetchers one place to see all the incredible things happening in CCPS classrooms. (see examples on page 14)

- Schools push their social media effort at all school events.

- Schools with high Spanish and Haitian Creole populations post to social media in three languages. (see example on page 14)

- We advertised our social media efforts in a guest commentary, the district’s inserts in our local newspaper, school and district websites, flyers home, letter home from #tweetchers, and kid stickers. We included the #CCPSSuccess hashtag everywhere! (see examples on page 15)
Can you make a paper clip float? [link](https://twitter.com/MrMerrillsClass/status/781550273688928256)

Solution Swap Challenge [link](https://twitter.com/MrMerrillsClass/status/788750412266496004)

Halloween Balloon Challenge [link](https://twitter.com/MsBrasileLPE/status/7855738070104884736)

Bird Projects [link](https://twitter.com/MrsMamone/status/803996091226161152)

Raw Egg and Vinegar Lab [link](https://twitter.com/LoerzelA/status/82209914347867079)

4th Grade Homework Challenge [link](https://twitter.com/MsBrasileLPE/status/7881037254130897)

Rocket Balloon Lab [link](https://twitter.com/MrsMamone/status/819922113230438400)

Understanding the Human Body [link](https://twitter.com/mrswilliamspe/status/80836690432463617)

Blubber Island [link](https://twitter.com/MsOwsiany/status/79602802877120256)

Butterfly Metamorphosis [link](https://twitter.com/LoerzelA/status/78950726009424384)

Text Structure Rap [link](https://twitter.com/MrsBlountGSE/status/7843300926744947)

Super Reading Challenge 1 [link](https://twitter.com/Serral1/status/7811587217582528)

Super Reading Challenge 2 [link](https://twitter.com/MrMerrillsClass/status/78079675986394640)

5th Grade Scientists at Work [link](https://twitter.com/MrsMamone/status/776541607390769152)

Singing in Science [link](https://twitter.com/AudraBartonau/status/82462839193663553)

Physical/Chemical Experiments [link](https://twitter.com/MsOwsiany/status/827138898576994304)

Tiger Tail Beach Field Trip [link](https://twitter.com/MsOwsiany/status/804138533648736256)

Investigating Sink vs. Float [link](https://twitter.com/MrMerrillsClass/status/793462680631869440)

Rocket Launch [link](https://twitter.com/MRWEST_13/status/839837348383636848)

Learning about Energy [link](https://twitter.com/MsOwsiany/status/839911925987293330)

Force and Motion [link](https://twitter.com/MrsMamone/status/838754494917853186)

Quiz Quiz Quiz Trade [link](https://twitter.com/leesoCPE1/status/839625604312020346)

Static Electricity Races [link](https://twitter.com/MrsMamone/status/837369663709396992)

Static Electricity in the Playground [link](https://twitter.com/Queenie501/status/838774325523578880)
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Promoted school social media on district website homepage, linking to list of accounts. (www.collierschools.com/Page/8775)

Example of school marketing efforts. Flyer sent home in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

Mike Davis is on Social Media
MDE is Thinking, Reaching, and Shining on Social Media. So many of our teachers are posting the amazing things that are going on here at our school. This is a great way to take a peek into your child’s day and see what they are learning! We are working hard to increase the amount of followers that we have and want the most amount of our followers to be our MDE families!

Please make sure that you are following us!

@MDE_Stars
@MDEStars

Signing up with Twitter

To create an account on the web:
1. Go to http://twitter.com and find the sign up box.
2. Enter your full name, phone number, and a password.
3. Click Sign up for Twitter.
4. In order to verify your phone number, an SMS text message will be sent with a code.
5. Enter the verification code in the box provided.
6. Once you’ve clicked Sign up for Twitter, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter).—type your own or choose one suggested. It’ll tell you if the username you want is available.
7. Double-check your name, phone number, password, and username.
8. Click Create my account. You may be asked to complete a Captcha to let the computer know that you’re human.

Included list of school Twitter in district’s Parent Guide and other print publications.

Local media coverage of social media effort.

Social media widget on all school webpages.
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Provided all school-based administrators with a new Communications Guide outlining all communication efforts, including social media.

Social media is not a fad—it is here to stay!

Parent engagement is key to student success. Parents want to hear from administrators about what is happening in the classroom, and they want to know if their child is engaged and doing well. However, do you do it yourself? The response is “No.” Social media provides parents with the opportunity to ask more targeted questions of the school.

The social media tips can be broken into two broad categories:

- Provide the information for your students
- Connect with your students

- Provide the information for your students
  - Your students can see your updates in the school
  - Your students can ask questions
- Connect with your students
  - Your students can share the information
  - Your students can connect with you

Social media is not a fad—it is here to stay!
EVALUATION

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- Monthly monitoring of social media growth - This data is displayed and analyzed during monthly Principal and Assistant Principal meetings. The Superintendent asks schools at the bottom of the standings what is being done each month to grow their followers.

- Quick follows and retweets of #tweetchers and their best posts to the district’s accounts - Being quick and responsive was critical because it rewarded the effort of our #tweetchers and let them know when their content was worthy of being seen districtwide. It also helped their growth by showcasing their use of social media to the 6,000 district followers on Twitter and our 5,600 Facebook followers.

- Constant monitoring: 18 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week monitoring of social media by the Executive Director of Communications - Constant monitoring is critical in order to preempt potential problems from surfacing, to make sure our #tweetchers are not posting anything inappropriate, and to deal with any issues swiftly without harming the overall effort. The Executive Director of Communications gave #tweetchers and school leaders a 24-hour-a-day promise that if anything went wrong, they could call him and let him fix it. It was time-consuming and the phone rang a lot in the beginning, but it helped smooth out the process and reinforce him as their adviser and advocate.

- School and #tweetcher award structure - As this communications initiative progressed, we felt that it was important to add a series of awards to acknowledge the efforts and innovation of our social #tweetchers. For the past two years, we have handed out monthly “Hashtag” awards and the “Where It’s @” award for school social media growth and innovation in posts. This year, we added the now-coveted “Golden Hashtag” #tweetcher award. This award went to a single teacher whose content stood out as cutting-edge and showcased innovative teaching and exclusive learning opportunities. We made a big deal out of each award presentation by going to the recipient’s school to hand out the “Golden Hashtag”. We got the kids involved and excited, and took a class picture with the award. The photos included below show how the kids loved making the hashtag hand sign!
• School and #tweetcher award structure (continued) - In addition, we awarded our socially savvy Principals with the opportunity to showcase their effort nationally by writing success stories for the NSPRA Principal Communicator newsletter. We shared our #tweetchers’ best work at state and national conferences, which brought them additional recognition and reinforced the effort. We even branded the initiative by making and distributing #tweetcher bracelets. When a school reached at least 15 #tweetchers, our “prize patrol” went to the school and handed out the bracelets to each #tweetcher in their classroom. The surprise tour to hand these out was powerful and provided some of the most moving pictures of the year. This simple 13-cent bracelet meant so much to our #tweetchers and their students! It also became a conversation starter with parents when they visited and saw the #tweetchers wearing them.

MEASUREMENT INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
The results of the #tweetcher initiative since August 2016 are beyond our projections and wildest dreams!

Twitter Followers - As of March 1, 2017
- Combined Total School Followers: 27,281 (7,300 followers added since August 2016)
- Total District Followers: 6,267 (1,702 District followers added since August 2016)

Facebook Followers - As of March 1, 2017
- Combined Total School Followers: 11,303 (11,303 followers added since August 2016)
- Total District Followers: 5,803 (2,757 District followers added since August 2016)

#tweetchers
- Total #tweetchers added since August: 717
Feedback from Principals

• “Social media has opened our schoolhouse doors and created a dynamic relationship with our families! The posts allow us to capture the daily learning and update our families like never before. It promotes a celebration of our teachers and their hard work and preparation to make each day at our school amazing!” Ronna Smith, Principal, Corkscrew Elementary (@CESCorkyBears)

• “Lake Park Elementary has never been more publically positive, and I believe trusted, by our stakeholders as they are getting real glimpses of the amazing teaching and learning which happens here, thanks to these social media tools. A great bonus for me is as an instructional leader, spotlights tend to make folks, be it adults or children, work hard and show their best work which ultimately improves the instruction and student academic growth.” Chris Marker, Principal, Lake Park Elementary (@LPEPanthers)

• “Social media, particularly Twitter, has given us the opportunity to market the school daily. With over 400 followers, and because we tweet in three languages, this tool has impacted our ability to reach a larger audience and aids us in exponential growth in parent engagement. We had over 1,000 parents and children attend our back-to-school night event, up from 150 four years ago.” Tamie Stewart, Principal, Parkside Elementary (@ParksideProud)

Feedback from teachers

• “When the camera comes out, I know my Mom is going to see it.” First grade students in Mr. Merrill’s class are used to seeing their work highlighted on social media, but what started out as a communication tool for parents, has evolved to much more. Mr. Merrill explains, “There are no walls in our classroom, just windows. We utilize social media to bring information in, as much as we use it for putting information out. If I am able to find volunteers who are willing to give my students a few minutes of their expertise, now I’ve enriched teaching a lesson to creating a memory. The parents see what’s happening in the class and it creates a great dinner conversation. It removes the question of ‘how was your day,’ and instead asks, ‘tell me how you did that today.’ Academically, it holds my students accountable and engages them in ways that normal lessons don’t. It’s a great feeling when a student understands how much fun learning can be in our class. This contagious joy easily rubs off onto the parents.” Joe Merrill, Teacher, Lake Park Elementary (@MrMerrillsClass - member of #tweetcher test pilot program)

• “Social media has completely changed the way I plan, teach, and share my ideas with others. It has given me the opportunity to share out the amazing things that are happening daily in my classroom. Social media has become one of the driving forces that motivates my students. It has engaged them and connected them, but even more importantly, it has given them a place to share their creativity and engage their curiosity. It is an infinitely diverse platform—a tool we utilize daily. It is a tool that enables us to communicate, allows us to relay challenges and information to other schools, both in our district and abroad. It is a tool that gives students a sense of confidence when they are able to post an accomplishment or achievement. It is a tool that acts as a window for parents to look into, providing them a way to see our daily lessons and learning objectives. Most importantly, it is a tool that allows me as the teacher to simultaneously motivate my students, share best practices with others, and learn how to constantly stay innovating and on top of my game.” Kristin Merrill, Teacher, Lake Park Elementary (@FriendsinFourth - member of our #tweetcher test pilot program)
Feedback from parents

- “Gone are the days of asking how their day was and receiving the typical answer of ‘good.’ Through social media, I am now aware of various activities, such as the recent voting polls, that have happened throughout the day which is a great conversation tool. It's wonderful to hear from them all the things they are learning and experiencing!”

- “The schools’ posts are a little splash of happiness that show up in my newsfeed, reminding me that my child is in a great environment that they are flourishing in.”

- “With four kids, we have been inside the walls of CES for 14 straight years now and as a parent I feel more connected than ever, being able to see some of the fun things that take place during the school day, and from receiving up-to-speed info from the page!”

- “As a first-time mom, the social media pages help me feel connected to my son's day-to-day activities and also help me become familiar with the school and teachers. So far I am beyond thrilled with the communication, I feel connected and informed. Thank you!”

Feedback from kids

- “Pelicans after the vocabulary parade! They wanted a hashtag pic and told me to tweet it!”

AdvancED Accreditation Feedback

The ultimate confirmation of success was the results of our district’s recent AdvancED accreditation in February 2017. The accreditation review team named communication, and in particular our social media efforts, as one of four powerful practices.

“The district was also praised for prioritizing communication with the community through social media, a television program, comprehensive websites and brochures. AdvancED Lead Evaluator, Dr. Edlow Barker, said this had resulted in a community that is ‘buying ownership in the success of the district.’”

This was the highest confirmation that our efforts are successful and have successfully reached our intended audiences.

NEXT STEPS

- Gather best practices and strategies that were used by top-performing schools and share them with all schools. We accomplish this with quarterly school visits to all schools.

- Conduct remedial training visits for struggling schools. Engage the Superintendent to encourage our lagging schools. During this school year, mid-year Principal changes served as a stimulus for struggling schools when a new Principal was promoted from a socially-savvy school.

- Conduct ongoing training for digital leader teachers, instructional resource teachers, media specialists, science teachers, and math teachers from across the district during monthly professional development sessions.
• Conduct LIVE #tweetcherchats. This effort was started by our pilot teachers in order to continue the professional development and encouragement of #tweetcher learning in peer-to-peer sessions.

• #tweetchers produce tutorial sheets for other teachers.

• Began the “How Did They Do That?” Twitter video series. We created weekly Twitter videos to show how to replicate the innovative practices of our most effective and engaging #tweetchers.

• Permeate the use of social media into everything the district and our schools are doing. Our recent AdvancED accreditation visit and the review team’s singling out this effort as a powerful practice was very encouraging and validated our work. Furthermore, our Superintendent and many Cabinet Members are now on social media, and our local newspapers and television stations monitor our social media channels for news stories and broadcast the best images on the news!

• Evolve the effort by having #tweetchers create social media academic challenges between classes at different schools.

• Assist in new teacher professional learning (CCPS hires between 200-300 new teachers each school year). New teachers appreciate our collective use of one hashtag (#CCPSSuccess) so they can scroll through and learn new teaching techniques from their more experienced colleagues. They have shared with us that they visit Twitter at night and employ new innovative teaching techniques the very next day. This professional learning piece has been an incredible unintended consequence to our effort. We are now encouraging all teachers to use this as a tool!

OVERALL PROJECT GOAL

The “Opening the Classroom Window, One #tweetcher at a Time” initiative has exceeded all of our expectations. It has changed the culture of Collier County Public Schools and has made all employees an integral part of the communication process. It has given teachers and students a voice to share their teaching and learning, and has given parents and community members a new view of their neighborhood schools.

As our 2017 AdvancED accreditation report noted, Collier County Public Schools’ social media effort is a demonstrated powerful practice. We have become a model for other school districts to emulate! We have heard from countless districts who want our plan. We have done national webinars and presented at state and national conferences telling our #tweetcher story. We look forward to bringing our story to San Antonio, as we will be presenting this plan at the NSPRA annual conference this summer!