

Professional and Personal Uses of Twitter

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After reading Chapter 13 of *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*, reading the papers on Twitter, and briefly using twitter for the first time, I can see some implications for the use of twitter in my classroom and for professional activities that support classroom instruction.

Twitter would not be appropriate for students to use individually in a high school classroom due to student lack of expertise with Twitter, low students calibration accuracy, and the need to maintain the privacy of student information when using the internet pursuant to Board of Education policies. Twitter can also be used for professional activities that support classroom instruction.

The students in my classes are freshmen and sophomores in high school biology. Twitter could be used to follow professionals in the subject throughout the school year. Students could try to search for professionals in specialty areas of biology they are interested in, follow them, and ultimately try to communicate with them. The students lack expertise in the use of Twitter, and with the subject matter. In informal polls of my class, only three students out of sixty had ever used Twitter. Twitter is an environment with complete learner control. Success is more likely when “learners have prior knowledge of the content and skills involved in the training.” (Clark & Mayer, 2008) Since the students have neither prior knowledge nor skills necessary, the only way that Twitter could be used – at least initially – would be through a class Twitter account. This would give me some degree of program control.

Having a class Twitter account would give me a degree of program control. Choices about topics of interest, and selection of experts to follow could be discussed and controlled. Students would have a choice, but the choices would be directed by the teacher.

The most important aspect about the use of Twitter is the need to not violate board policy. The school board policy regarding the acceptable use of technology includes “Identification of student work to be published will be limited to first name and grade level. Photographs and videos of students will not identify students by name or teacher.” (Regional School District #15 Board of Education, 2001) By its nature, if students had their own Twitter account, I would be unable to control their use to ensure compliance with Board policy.

As a professional, Twitter could be used to develop a social network for the development of a professional learning community (PLC). Users of Twitter “participate in communities which share similar interests.” (Java, Finin, Song, & Tseng, 2007) Professional learning communities in education enhance teacher directed sharing and learning of information between colleagues. Twitter could be used to expand the pool of professionals that could be used for collaboration within a PLC.

On both a professional and personal level, Twitter can be used to receive information about products used at home and in the classroom. According to Michelle Gershberg, many companies are using Twitter to rapidly communicate information about products in order to develop or regain the confidence of the consumer. (2010)

## Bibliography

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