



Equitable  
Access  
Support  
Network

# State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

## Social Media Tips Sheet

October 2015

Strategic use of social media can be an important engagement strategy for communicating with a broad group of stakeholders and encouraging their involvement in furthering equitable access to excellent educators across a State. Effective social media use can enable State education agencies (SEAs) and stakeholder groups (e.g., educators, parents, students, community organizations, and policymakers) to discuss and share information about key topics related to equitable access. Stakeholder groups have valuable insights and ideas to share, but may lack opportunities to engage in formal conversations about equitable access to excellent educators in their State. Social media presents an easily accessible way for stakeholder groups to learn about equity-related updates, participate in real-time conversations with SEA staff, and inform ongoing work.

This document is intended to help SEA staff use social media to share information and engage stakeholders in conversations about their State Equity Plans and ongoing work to ensure equitable access to excellent educators. This document focuses on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube since most SEAs are already active on these media platforms. However, SEAs that actively use other forms of social media may also choose to apply these strategies to those channels.

### How can States use social media for stakeholder engagement?

As part of a broader stakeholder engagement plan, social media strategies and tactics can help SEAs **involve** key stakeholders in shaping relevant policies, programs, and practices; **inquire** into their opinions and perspectives; **inform** them about relevant policies, programs, and practices; and

**inspire** them to understand and support the State's equitable access efforts. More information about this communications and engagement framework developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Reform Support Network (RSN) can be found [here](#).

#### Facebook

SEAs may use this platform to share news about the planning process and the implementation of equity-related strategies, and to disseminate data points, resources, and other information such as dates and times for stakeholder meetings. In addition, SEAs can encourage stakeholders to visit their Facebook Page to ask questions and share feedback about the State's Equity Plan and equitable access in general. The comments section on the Page's Timeline or beneath SEA status updates offers a platform for people to engage in conversations with the SEA and each other. People also may send private Facebook messages to SEAs about ideas or concerns they may have about equitable access.

#### Twitter

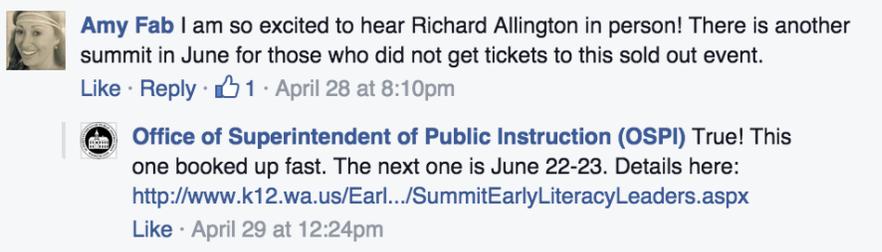
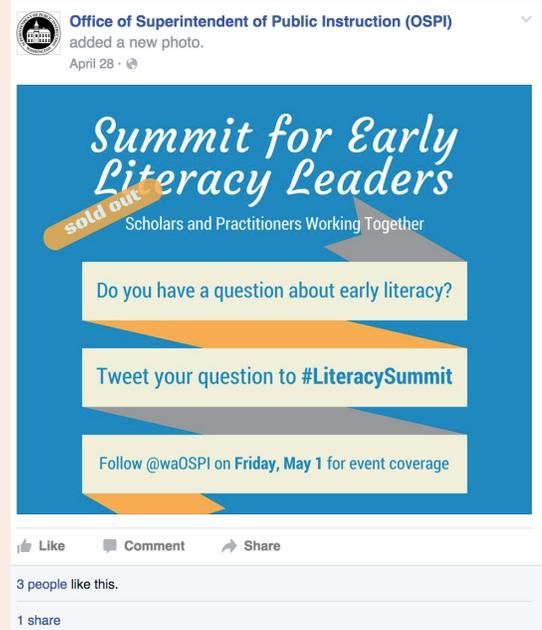
Through 140-character messages, SEAs can use this platform to quickly communicate information to the public about the planning and implementation process, and to disseminate fast data points, links to resources, and other information related to equitable access. For example, an SEA could tweet real-time comments from the State superintendent during a visit to a school involved in implementing State equitable access initiatives. In addition, SEAs can encourage stakeholders to tweet at their account (also called a "handle") to ask questions and share feedback about the State's Equity Plan and equitable access in general. People include the "at" (@) symbol before the user's handle when they want

**The Equitable Access Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, offers collective and individualized technical assistance (TA) and resources to all 50 States and their districts. The Network will assist in the development and implementation of statewide equity plans and will provide assistance to States as they put in place strategies to ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students.**



## State Spotlight: Washington

The **Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)** in the State of Washington uses Facebook to share news, highlight local stories, and provide resources and event updates. OSPI has used Facebook to promote an upcoming event with opportunities for real-time conversation via Twitter. OSPI also monitored comments and responded with additional information. It is important to note that not all engagement through social media is positive. Some Facebook posts elicit negative feedback from stakeholders and States should monitor these comments closely for opportunities to respond, if appropriate, or to gather insights to inform their planning and ongoing communications. According to Niquette Kelcher, Content Strategy Manager for OSPI, “The OSPI Communications team uses Facebook to share positive news about K-12 public education. However, OSPI does not shy away from negative comments posted to the Page, which are tolerated as long as they do not violate the Page’s comment posting policy. Questions or inaccurate comments are viewed as an opportunity to engage with followers and provide good customer service. For instance, OSPI may reply to a comment with a clarification or a hyperlink for more details.”



to tweet at specific accounts. These tweets, called “at” mentions (@mentions), are public, but users can also send private direct messages to specific users when a more personalized response is appropriate. SEAs can also use Twitter to monitor real-time conversations about equitable access that their stakeholders are having online. SEAs can conduct keyword searches and follow hashtags such as #edequity to find relevant tweets and handles, join conversations, and discover insights or resources to inform their planning process.

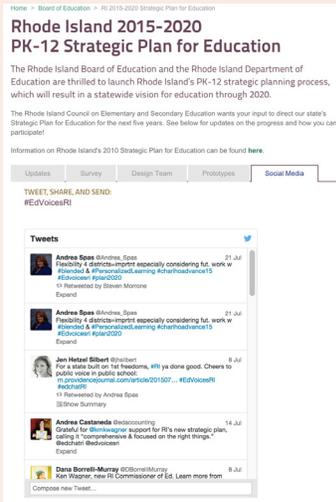
### YouTube

SEAs with video development capabilities can create short videos on State efforts to ensure equitable access to excellent educators and post these videos to YouTube. SEAs also may consider sharing their videos on their websites and other social media channels to increase views and to supplement written content. SEAs may wish to create videos that describe their commitment to and process for ensuring that all students have equitable access to excellent educators. They also may choose to use videos for specific



## State Spotlight: Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Education and the Rhode Island Board of Education launched Rhode Island’s PK-12 strategic planning process to develop a Statewide vision for education through 2020. As part of this process, the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education requested input from stakeholders on the State’s plan, using the hashtag #EdVoicesRI to consolidate feedback shared via Twitter.



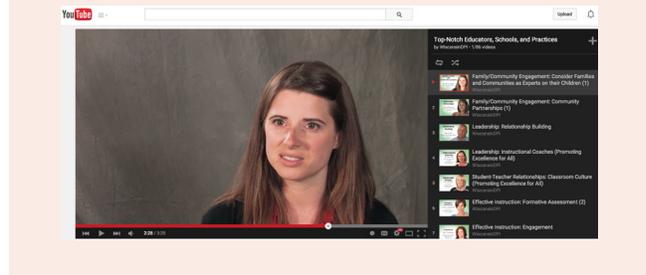
strategies, such as showing the governor or schools chief honoring the teaching profession and celebrating teacher achievements as a means of marketing and improving the teacher recruitment pipeline. In addition, States may encourage stakeholders to submit videos and share the submitted videos more broadly on the State’s website and social media channels to give voice to the stakeholder perspective. Video content may be especially useful for stakeholder engagement since videos can increase people’s understanding of products or services.

These social media platforms also offer detailed analytics about impressions, engagement rates, clicks, traffic sources, and more. SEAs can review these analytics on a regular basis to understand which topics resonate most with stakeholders, which content was most engaging, and which strategies and platforms prove to be most effective for engagement with particular stakeholder groups. This information can inform the planning process by identifying key topics to discuss with stakeholders and to address in State Equity Plans and strategic ways to disseminate updates



## State Spotlight: Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a YouTube playlist titled “**Top-Notch Educators, Schools, and Practices.**” Videos in this playlist feature teachers, principals, and other school leaders discussing successful practices in schools, including practices related to educational equity and closing the achievement gap.



to stakeholders for maximum impact. For additional information about measuring your State’s social media efforts, download the RSN tip sheet [here](#).

## What best practices can States follow to reach and engage with more stakeholders on social media?

Many SEAs already use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate with stakeholder groups. The following tips are broadly applicable to social media communications, regardless of the subject matter, but may be prioritized in stakeholder engagement efforts to maximize reach and engagement. Greater reach and more engagement increase opportunities for people to discover equitable access updates and share their feedback and ideas.

### Facebook

- Include photos, infographics, videos, and links in Facebook posts as often as possible.
- Keep posts short. Share links to websites and articles for additional information.
- Post questions to encourage conversations, which could yield valuable information and insights.

## Twitter

- Include photos, graphics, videos, hashtags, and links to yield higher engagement rates.
- Save hashtag and keyword searches to monitor relevant topics and conversations.
- Use free tools such as [Hootsuite](#) or [TweetDeck](#) to schedule tweets, to monitor engagements, lists, and searches, and to facilitate teams working together on social media account management.

## YouTube

- Create short videos (one to two minutes long).
- Frontload longer videos with the most important information.
- Develop a video series to share more complex topics or ideas in segments.

## All Platforms

- Integrate social media content about equitable access into existing content calendars.
  - » Many organizations develop social media content calendars to determine how often they will post to a channel and what they plan to post. These calendars help organizations develop steady content streams, post at optimal times, and diversify the topics they discuss and resources they share. Integrating equitable access posts into content calendars ensures that the topic is prioritized without overwhelming the feed.
- Maintain a steady content stream on all social platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook. This indicates to people that they should check the channel regularly for the latest information.

- Diversify writing and video production strategies. For example, some tweets can be posed as questions, while others can share interesting statistics. This variety helps keep social feeds interesting for followers.
- Monitor for comments and respond promptly (within 24 hours). Stakeholders may post negative comments, and States should be prepared to respond to tough questions, transition conversations offline, or elevate issues through the appropriate platforms.
- Ensure links to social platforms are prominently displayed on the SEA's website and on presentation slides.

## Where can my State find more information?

The Reform Support Network (RSN) has created a series of social media tip sheets to help SEAs and local education agencies expand their efforts to communicate and engage with key audiences on reform topics via social media. These resources are available [here](#).

The RSN has also collected exemplary tools, practices, and strategies to support State efforts to communicate about education reform initiatives. This collection includes social media and video resources. These resources are available [here](#).

More information about incorporating social media within a broader equitable access stakeholder engagement strategy can be found in the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders online Stakeholder Engagement tool available [here](#).

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