

Some “Tweet” Educational Ways to Use Twitter

By Heidi Horsman, Grade 4 Teacher, Frank L. Bowser School

This summer my plan was to relax, play with my new iPad, hit the beach, do a bit of scrapbooking... clean a room or two. You know how it goes. There is a list a mile long of real work to be done, but hobbies are so much more fun! With all this rain, beach days have been few and far between, which leaves me playing with the iPad a bit more than I expected. That is how I discovered my very own, personal learning network. Yep, that's PLN for short.

You see it all started when I discovered Twitter. I must say, friends, I do not like Facebook, so I did not expect to like Twitter. Why is Twitter my newest craze? Let me tell you, I love that it puts me in contact with teachers all over the globe. I also like that I can silently follow conversations and learn from them, or I can contribute my thoughts by sending a tweet.

I started by creating my identity @HeidiHorsman, then I searched for people I wanted to follow on Twitter. Once I found @NBTeachersAssn,

for example, I could look at the list of who they follow and see if I would also be interested in following communications from any of those contacts. Indeed, I connected to some tech mentors that way, who in turn led me to other techie teachers throughout North America and even Australia!



Some people tweet more than others. Some tweet personal anecdotes while others tweet mainly

about technology and learning. I decided to create a twitter identity to use when I follow my PLN, and a separate one for personal tweeting with friends. I even made an identity to use for parent communication this year!

I teach Grade 4 so I have been following #elemchat and #4thchat for a few weeks. These are scheduled chats that happen over the course of an hour and anyone can read them or tweet responses during that hour. You don't even have to be available while the chat is happening, you can type in those "hashtags" (#) anytime and read the archived discussion. Many times a tweet will include links to a teacher's blog or other great resources. One discussion mentioned a symposium that would be held online with hundreds of educators from North America and Europe. Free PD, in the comfort of my jammies....it was worth a try! I enjoyed three sessions that ignited my excitement to try new things in my classroom. All because of Twitter!