



Best Practices for Internal & External Communications

Getting Your Message Through



“The two words *information* and *communication* are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. *Information* is giving out; *communication* is getting through.”

-Sydney J. Harris
Longtime journalist



Agenda

- Why, What, and How the Department Communicates
- Don't Recreate the Wheel
- Three Strategies to Get Your Message Through
- Control the Interview: Dealing with Media
- Getting the Most out of Social Media



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Why, What & How the Department Communicates

Why We Communicate

- To set a statewide **vision** about what is important
- We know that districts, principals, educators, and parents need **more** and **better** information.
 - We constantly hear this in the field from all groups.
- Our job is to **support** district communications while also providing high-level statewide messages **directly** to educators and parents.
- Because it is so hard for messages to get through, we must approach communication from many angles.
 - We are all in this together.

What We Communicate

- Statewide messages that set a vision or tone
- Technical and instructional resources
- News and updates
- Deadlines
- Opportunities for feedback
- Communications tools for districts

How We Communicate

ClassroomChronicles



EDUCATOR UPDATE

Sept. 9, 2015

Sept. 4, 2015

Commissioner's Update for Directors



Instagram

August 17, 2015

Commissioner's Update for Principals



TEAMTN
Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

September 10, 2015

How We Communicate

- Regular Newsletters
 - All but the *Commissioner's Update for Directors* are self-enroll

Frequency	Newsletter
Weekly	Commissioner's Update for Directors
Weekly	TEAM Update
Every other week	Commissioner's Update for Principals
Every other week	Special Education Director Update
Every other week	College, Career, and Technical Education Director Update
Monthly	Educator Update
Monthly	Consolidated, Planning, and Monitoring Update

How We Communicate

- Department Website
- Classroom Chronicles Blog
- Social Media
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Pinterest
- You Tube/School Tube Channel
- Listservs
 - Director-only
 - Elementary Principals
 - Secondary Principals
 - Supervisor
 - Role-specific (*school counselors, school nutrition etc.*)

Don't Recreate the Wheel

- Build off department communications to save your team time
 - Forward what you can
 - Some directors forward the Commissioner's Update for Directors to their leadership, flagging the specific areas they should pay attention to
 - Encourage your principals and teachers to sign up for department updates
 - Commissioner's Update for Principals
 - Educator Update
 - Save time rewriting things; copy and paste language from department communications



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Three Strategies to Get Your Messages Through

Three Strategies to Get Your Messages Through

- Diversify Your Channels
- Engagement Equals Action
- Tools to Increase Effectiveness

Diversify Your Channels

- Communicate with your audience in multiple ways
 - Use a variety of channels to reach teachers, parents, and students.
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Periscope
 - Email
 - Newsletters
 - Websites
 - Robocalls
 - In Person Meetings

Diversify Your Channels

- **COPE Strategy:** Create Once Publish Everywhere
- Create base language that you can modify slightly for different channels.
- Generate an anchor for all communications to point back to (link, PDF, picture etc.).
- Recycle. Recycle. Recycle.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blog Post Goes Live• Push link out on Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post link on Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send out in Teacher Newsletter

Diversify Your Channels

- Use your communications to point to each other
 - Social media buttons
 - Make sure they are prominent on your website
 - Preferably above the fold
 - Include them in your newsletters and emails

The image shows a screenshot of the CMCSS website. At the top left is the CMCSS logo with the tagline "The Defining Difference". To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for "Our Schools", "Students & Parents", "Faculty & Staff", "Departments", and "Employment". A search bar is located to the right of the navigation menu. Above the search bar, social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are circled in red. Below the navigation menu is a large banner for "CMCSS Career Academies" featuring a smiling young woman. To the right of the banner is a photograph of a teacher interacting with students at a table. Below the banner is a "Top Stories" section with a link to "High School Football Game of the Week". To the right of the "Top Stories" section is a "Site Translation" section with a globe icon and a link to translate the website. At the bottom right of the page is an "EDUCATOR UPDATE" banner dated "Sept. 4, 2015". Below the banner is a social media sharing bar with buttons for "Share", "Tweet", "Forward", and "Pin", which are also circled in red.

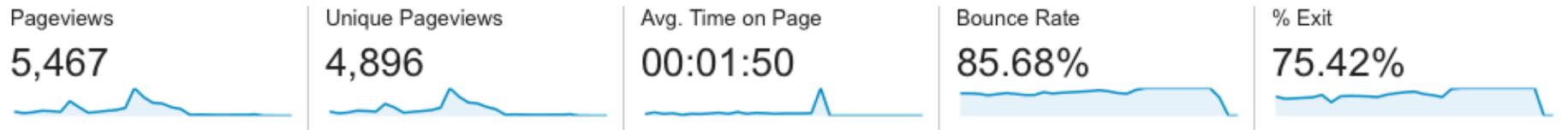
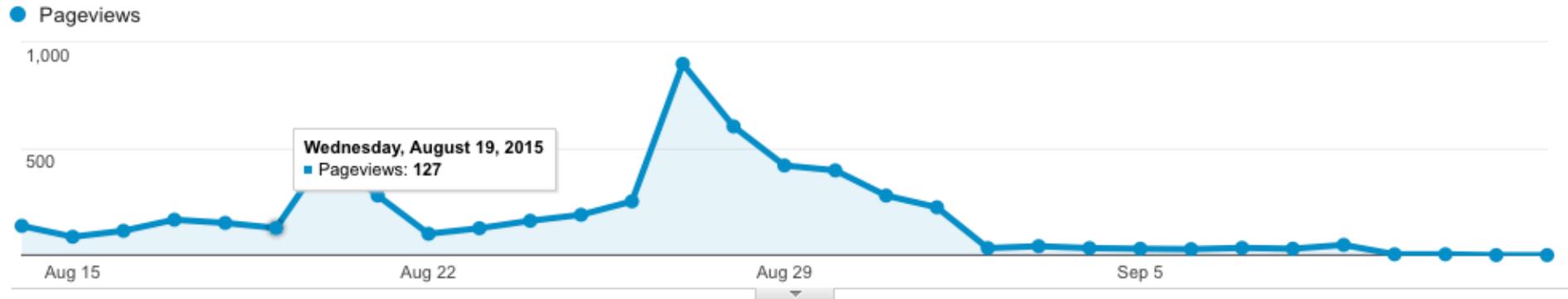
Engagement Equals Action

- Engagement is any **action** resulting from a communication.
 - When the CDC does a campaign on H1N1, they measure engagement by the number of people that get a flu shot.
 - Engagement for a district may mean that teachers are downloading specific documents off your website or having particular conversations with parents.
- Engagement is hard to measure.
 - In the private sector engagement equals revenue. Those numbers are easy to count.
 - Action is much trickier.

Tools to Increase Effectiveness

- Analytics
 - Services can help provide you data on what's working
 - Google analytics
 - Social Media Services (Hoot Suite, Sprout Social, CoSchedule etc.)
 - Free data on Twitter and Facebook
 - Email Services (Mail Chimp, Constant Contact)
 - You can use that data to inform your action
 - Maybe you see that teachers at one particular school aren't opening up your emails
 - You may notice that the subject line of your email matters
 - More people may open up your email at a certain time of day

Tools to Increase Effectiveness



- Site Content
 - Page ▶
 - Page Title
- Site Search
 - Search Term
- Events

Page	Pageviews	% Pageviews
1. /meet-members-assessment-task-force/	1,358	24.84%
2. /	1,008	18.44%
3. /seven-ways-prepare-child-tready/	646	11.82%
4. /favorite-apps/	255	4.66%
5. /gov-haslams-teacher-cabinet-holds-inaugural-meeting/	149	2.73%

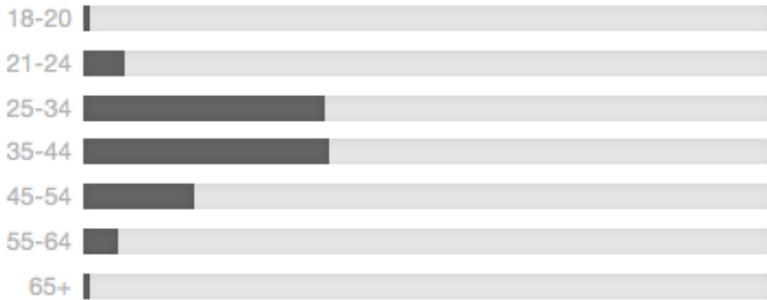
Tools to Increase Effectiveness

TWITTER STATS Stats for 1 Twitter accounts in the Tennessee Department of Education group.

FOLLOWER DEMOGRAPHICS

 **41%**
MALE FOLLOWERS

 **59%**
FEMALE FOLLOWERS



TWITTER STATS

 **238**
New followers in this time period.

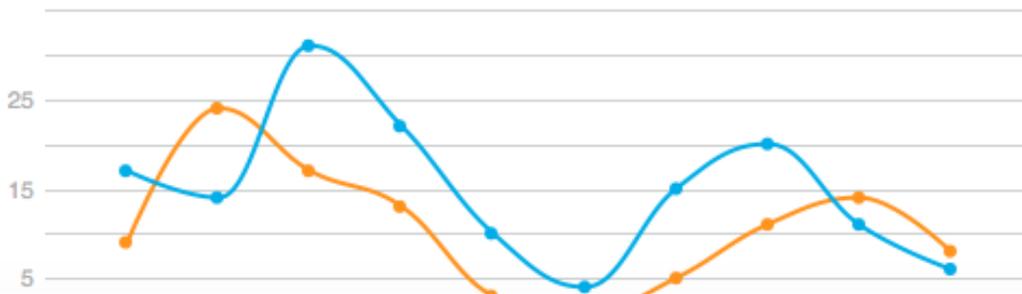
 **684**
Link Clicks

 **102**
Mentions

 **148**
Retweets

DAILY ENGAGEMENT

— @MENTIONS 102 — RETWEETS 148



OUTBOUND TWEET CONTENT

 **3** Plain Text

 **12** Links to Pages

Tools to Increase Effectiveness

Commissioner's Update For Principals, August 17

[Switch Report](#) ▾

[Overview](#) [Activity](#) ▾ [Links](#) [Social](#) [eCommerce360](#) [Conversations](#) [Analytics360](#)

2,081 Recipients

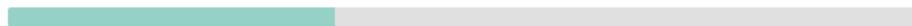
List: UDPATED Principals

Delivered: Mon, Aug 17, 2015 01:13 pm

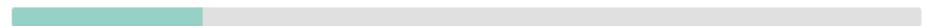
Subject: Commissioner's Update for Principals, August 17

[View email](#) · [Download](#) · [Print](#) · [Share](#)

Open rate **36.3%**



Click rate **21.3%**



List average 30.1%

List average 12.8%

Industry average (Government) 23.5%

Industry average (Government) 3.6%

715

Opened

419

Clicked

114

Bounced

1

Unsubscribed

Tools to Increase Effectiveness

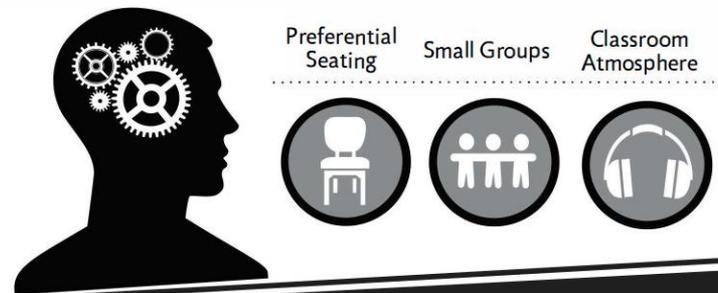
- Producing effective materials
 - You don't have to be a graphic designer to create graphics.
 - Our secret weapon is a website called **Piktochart**.
 - The site allows you to select pre-created templates for graphics or you can create your own from scratch.
 - This is how we created the TNReady Parent Guide.
 - It's a subscription site that is roughly \$30 a month.



TNReady

Our goal is for all Tennessee students to be ready for college and the workforce. We give assessments in order to ensure that our students are on a path to success after graduation. Since 1988, students have taken the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) test to assess their progress. We have improved the TCAP in order to better measure what our students know and can do. This new and improved TCAP assessment is called TNReady, and it will replace the math and English language arts assessments for grades 3-11.

TESTING CONDITIONS



Every child deserves to have a comfortable, distraction-free testing environment. This could mean testing in a small group, preferential seating, or being seated at special furniture.

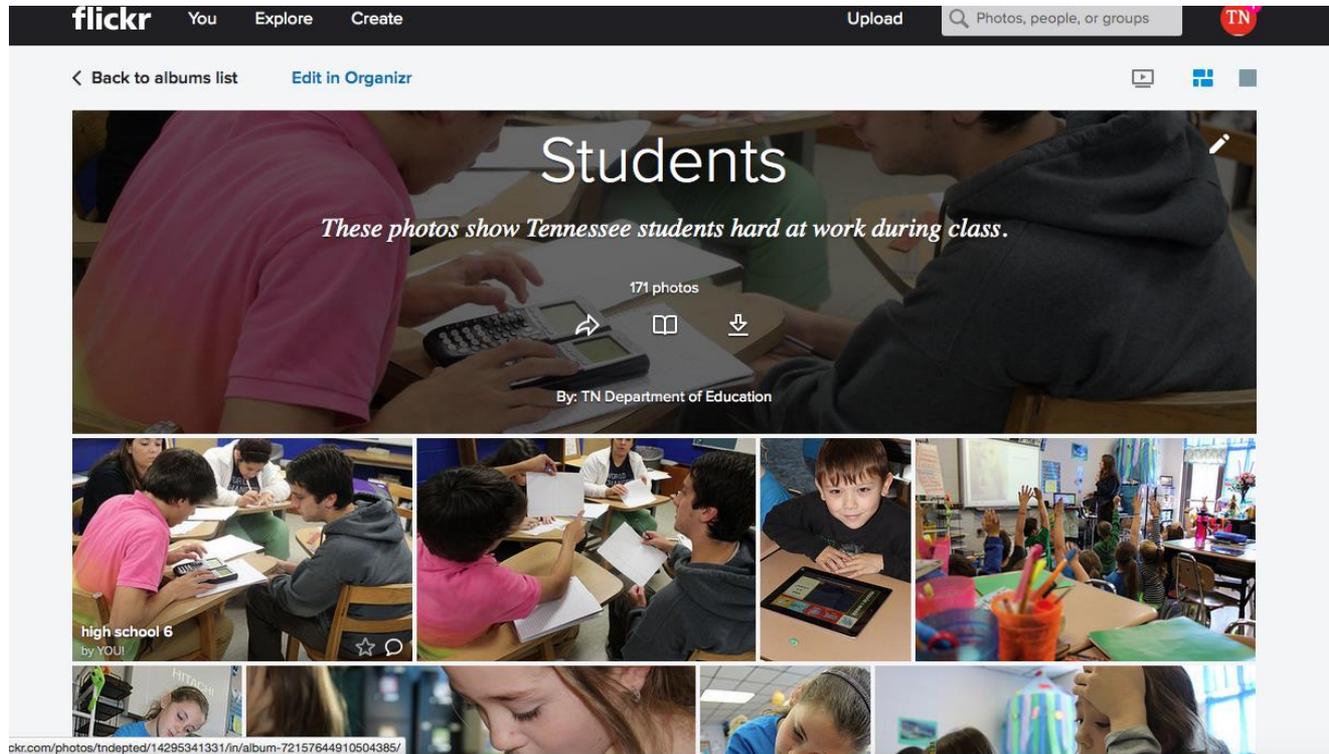
Additionally, in an effort to keep the environment familiar for students, teachers no longer have to cover up their classroom walls. This means that posters, word walls, graphic organizers, encouraging quotes, and reminders can remain visible during the test.

Tools to Increase Effectiveness

The screenshot shows the Piktochart website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Piktochart logo, a user profile for 'katybridger', a notification bell with '1' alert, and links for 'Pikto Templates', 'My Saved Piktocharts', and 'Featured Piktocharts'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with icons for 'INFOGRAPHIC', 'REPORT', 'POSTER', and 'PRESENTATION', along with a search bar labeled 'Search infographic'. The main content area displays a grid of infographic templates, each with a 'NEW' and 'FEATURED' badge. The templates include: 'Visual Storytelling Works' (Why Visual Storytelling?), 'Student Time Management' (Study Session Length), 'Education Around The World' (South Korea), 'Education and Poverty in America' (46.2 Million Americans), 'First Time Pregnancy' (Pregnant for the first time), 'Grains' (What are Grains?), 'Organic Year' (Make 2015 Organic Year), 'Recruiting Strategy', 'Tech Savvy Traveler', and 'William Philip'.

Tools to Increase Effectiveness

- Develop a photo bank
 - Our team shares approved photos with department staff that build communications through a private Flickr account



Tools to Increase Effectiveness

- Prepare for your big moments and capitalize on them.
 - There are obvious opportunities like back to school and report cards, but don't forget smaller opportunities.
 - Snow Days
 - Sporting Events
 - Use these moments to push people toward your social media accounts or valuable resources on your website.
 - What are the most visited pages on your website?
 - Put a link to sign up for robo calls or a parent newsletter on this webpage.



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Control the Interview: Dealing with Media

Control the Interview: Dealing with Media

- Pretend you can write the headline.
- Pivot back to your main points.
- Ask yourself the tough questions first.
- Silence is okay.
- Develop relationships.

Pretend You Can Write the Headline

- Think about three main points you want to drive home.
- How would you write these as a headline?
 - Tennessee students hit five-year high on ACT
 - Tennessee, fastest growing state in the country on NAEP
- Anchor all of your answers around your headlines.
 - Repeat
 - Rephrase
 - Repeat

Pivot Back to Your Main Points

- You can control the interview; only talk about what you want.
- Pivot sentence starters:
 - That's a good question, but one that needs asking is...
 - That's an important point because



Manish Mehta ✓

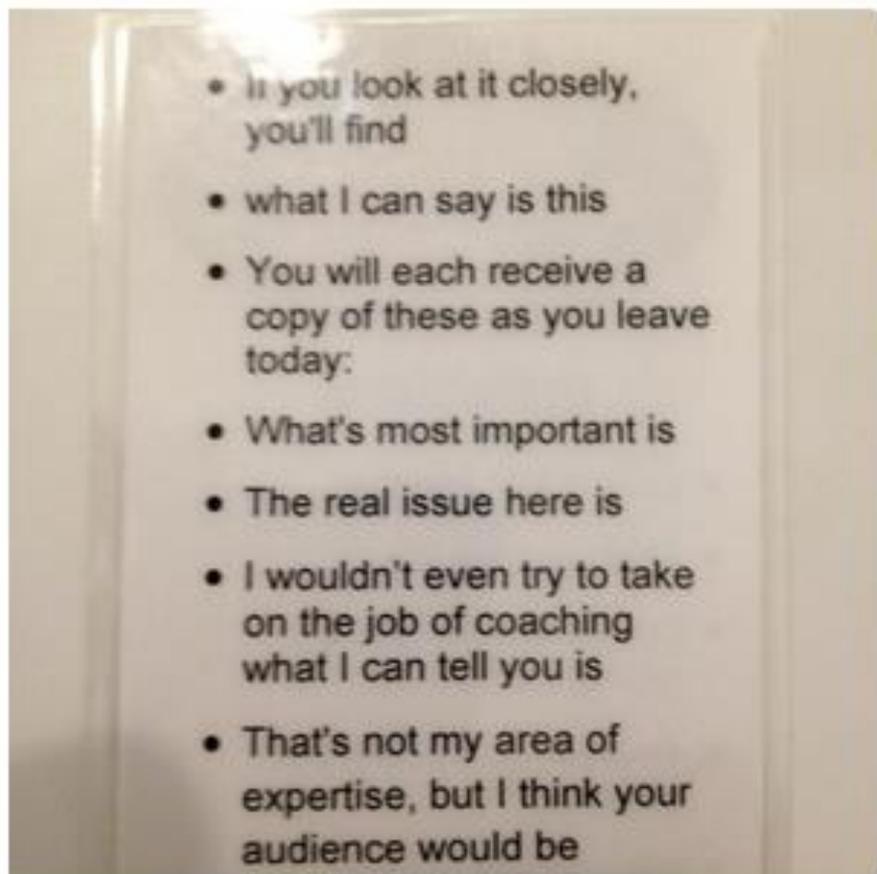
@MMehtaNYDN



Follow

Jets "Media Bridges" card given to all players: Phrases to use w/reporters #nyj

Front: Back:



Pivot Back to Your Main Points

- Here's how not to pivot...

Ask Yourself the Tough Questions First

- Pivot back to your headlines when possible.
- If you know you have an interview at 3:30, meet with a colleague at 3 and talk through potential questions.
- Jot down your answers.
- Practice.

Silence is Okay

- Reporters want to give you space to produce a good soundbite.
- If you finish your answer and the reporter isn't saying anything, be silent. They're purposefully waiting for you to add more.
- Their last question is typically, "Anything else I should know?"
 - People often feel like the interview is over and answer candidly. Remember, the interview is *not* over.

Develop Relationships

- Be on a first name basis with local media.
- Don't forget they are a reporter and a person.



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**Get the Most out of
Social Media**

Get the Most out of Social Media

- Have a Strategy
- Avoid Acronyms
- Jargon Doesn't Jive
- Pictures Talk
- Hashtags Help

Have a Strategy

- What is the purpose for your social media presence?
 - Highlighting the good work happening in your schools
 - Informational updates
 - A place to ask questions
- How will your social media account strengthen your brand?
- Know who your audience is on each medium (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc.) and develop your strategy accordingly.

Have a Strategy

Twitter	Both	Facebook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share news headlines (both hard and soft stories)• Push to resources• Primary users are business leaders, community leaders, legislators, & educators• Recommend posting multiple times a day• Be prepared for the 140 character limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use hashtags• Share pictures, video, & graphics• Recognize things people are already talking about (i.e., holidays)• Share critical updates for kids and schools (i.e., school closing, safety messages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post softer news• Share multiple pictures• Ask questions and have the answers publically displayed beneath your post• Primary users are parents, teachers, students• Recommend posting once a day• Be prepared for haters

Avoid Acronyms

- People. Do. Not. Know. What. They. Mean.
 - LEA
 - SSTS
 - PLC
 - SRSD
 - CEP
 - SPI
 - ELA
 - SBE
 - IDEA
 - IEP
 - FRPL

Avoid Acronyms

- Original:
 - My firsties taking their SRSD cold write today. Have a lot of work to do & I can't wait! #SRSD @ExpectMoreTN @TNedu
pic.twitter.com/uD3TsEjwpr
- Revamped
 - My firsties answering their first writing prompt. Have a lot of work to do & I can't wait! @ExpectMoreTN @TNedu
pic.twitter.com/uD3TsEjwpr

Jargon Doesn't Jive

- Everyone can't define these:
 - Fluency
 - Intervention
 - Phonemic awareness
 - Non-summative assessment
 - Framework
 - Task
 - Remediation
 - Differentiation
 - Cohort
 - Exemplar
 - Systemic
 - Benchmark

Jargon Doesn't Jive

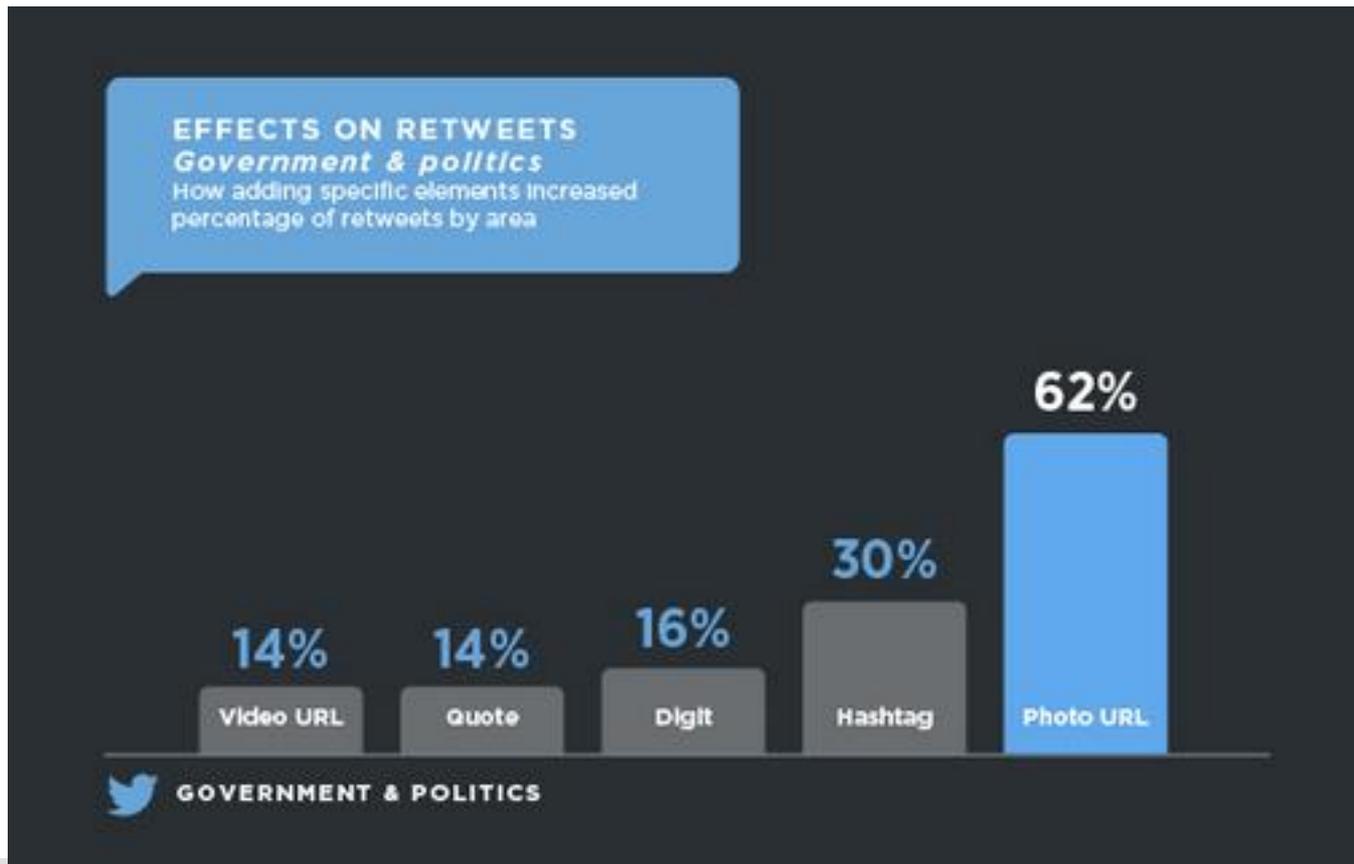
- Identifying jargon is half the battle.
- Say what?
 - *Assess & Adv Questions 4&5 Math Reoffer* in Rogersville [TNedu #TNCore #summerlearning #forthekids pic.twitter.com/tm5Dj6yllf](#)
 - *IFL leading Core Coaches* on a *trajectory* of learning to *differentiate* math *instruction* [#TNCore pic.twitter.com/DbarXZUKPd](#)

Pictures Talk

- A **good** picture can anchor your post.
- You don't need to be a photographer to post engaging images.
- Good pictures are...
 - Specific
 - Authentic
 - Relevant

Pictures Talk

- According to Twitter, a photo or graphic increases retweets by **62 percent**.



Pictures Talk

- Example Tweet:
 - [@LaudCoSchools](#): Teachers at Ripley Elem. do cartwheels after being named [@TNedu](#) Reward School! pic.twitter.com/A0vFlmj5cl"



Pictures Talk

- Example Tweet:
 - **@HaunMelissa:** Learning Leaders at Stewarts Creek HS collaborating to get READY for TNReady!! #summer learning



Tweets we can tweek...

Pictures Talk

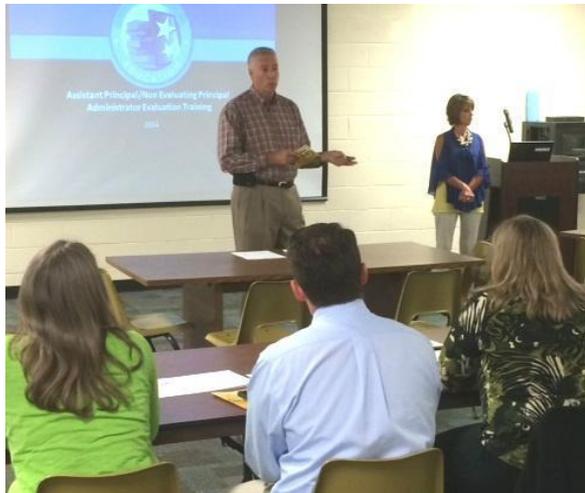
- Original:
 - Teachers are ramping up reading skills with [rti2! @RyanMathIsCool @TnRti2 @TNedu pic.twitter.com/0fODqPR2Er](#)



How does this relate to reading?

Pictures Talk

- Original:
 - Eval training for regional asst principals...two sessions today. Welcome![@TNedu pic.twitter.com/tGMFxYIV5q](https://twitter.com/tGMFxYIV5q)



Does this make you wish you were there?

Hashtags Help

- Increase the **visibility** of your tweet
- Can serve as **a call to action**
- Use on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram
- **Spread** like wildfire:
 - #SuperBowlXLIX
 - #TGIF
 - #TNteachersRock
 - #PublicSchoolProud

Hashtags Help

- Create a district specific hashtag
 - #BeNice
- Create a community hashtag
 - #ManchesterStrong
- Create a hashtag around something already happening
 - Teacher Appreciation Week
 - Back to School
 - Graduation

#iLoveTNteachers



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Questions?

Resources

- Department communications team
 - Ashley.M.Ball@tn.gov , Director of Communications
 - Katy.Bridger@tn.gov, Deputy Director of Internal Communications
 - Chandler.Hopper@tn.gov, Deputy Director of External Communications
- Resources mentioned in this presentation:
 - <http://mailchimp.com/>
 - <https://sproutsocial.com/>
 - <http://piktochart.com/>
 - <http://www.google.com/analytics/>
 - <https://www.flickr.com/>