

Using Social Media to Advocate for Community Schools

Social media is a powerful tool that is changing the way people absorb information, mobilize for advocacy, and raise awareness about issue campaigns. Within minutes, organizations and individuals can amplify a singular message and spread it quickly through social media. Community schools can benefit from how quickly information can be shared and how much their follower's networks can see their posts and activities. Online media engagement is only expected to increase in the coming years; making social media communications a valuable tool for the Federation and community schools to integrate in our advocacy efforts.

Getting Started on Social Media

If you or your community school is not already on social media, the first step is to sign up for a free account. The steps to set up an account are basic, but both [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) have "help" pages that will guide you through the process and give you a better understanding on how the platform works.

Once you have created an account, before you start posting content, make sure that you have a clear process for determining who will be the primary account user: Resource Coordinator, Program Staff, or Lead Partner Agency staff. There is no "right" or "wrong" person to manage your social media account; it is up to you to determine who in your group is able to take on the responsibility.

What can I tweet about? Anything you'd like to share about community school! However, if during your first trial you are unsure how things work or what content is appropriate for you to post, take some time to get a feel for how the platform works. Monitor comparable users and discover what you think works well and what does not. A good way to being putting content on out while learning how to use the platform is to share or repost what the Federation for Community Schools has posted on Twitter and Facebook. Once you start posting your own content, remember that it is all about creating engagement and conversation. You want to appeal to your audience and get their attention on issues that matter to them. Social media is a great tool to build community school awareness, both at a local and national level; it is effective for membership growth, membership participation, volunteer development, and most importantly advancing and advocating the amazing work your community school does!

Facebook

Facebook is an online social network that connects people and organizations. Users connect by friending each other or liking public figures and organizations. Members can communicate with their audience through messages, personal updates and public wall posts.

Facebook is a great way to connect to community school advocates. You can quickly share useful information with your network, and better understand how your content is performing and how you can spread your messages farther.

There are lots of ways to engage your audience on Facebook. This platform allows you to:

- Share links to articles, petitions, surveys, and slideshows.
- Post photos and videos that showcase your community school and students.
- Tag other users or specific places. **This increases your pages reach and visibility.**
- Make your messages conversational and brief. **Get your audience members engaged and informed.**



The Federation for Community School is on Facebook!
Check out and "Like" our Page - <https://www.facebook.com/ilcommschools>

Twitter

Twitter allows users to share short messages in 140 characters or less. Due to the brevity of its messages, Twitter is a great tool for breaking news, tracking specific topics, like community school research and initiatives, engaging with people in your field, and sharing information.

Twitter is an ideal tool for advocacy campaigns because information is delivered and received in real time. Community school advocates can live tweet from an event or meeting to give followers updates and information about the setting. This platform allows you to:

- Bring your message to the attention of another user, like your elected officials, funders, and other community school advocates. You can reply or “retweet” a post to include these individuals or organizations.
- Share links to articles, petitions, surveys, and slideshows.
- Post photos and videos that showcase your community school and students.
- Join or create a conversation about a specific topic by adding a hashtag (#) to your tweet. Some important hashtags to follow and use for the Federation are: #Communityschools, #Invest3to6, and #Opp4All.



The Federation for Community School is on Twitter!
Follow Us - [@ILCommSchools](https://twitter.com/ILCommSchools)

Dealing with Negative Comments¹

Negative comments are an inevitable part of social media, especially around issues that people feel passionately about, like community school funding and cuts. To be a successful advocate on social media, you have to be willing to take the good with the bad and recognize that you cannot control what others say – you can only control how you react to those comments. Engagement on social media is a sign that your advocacy efforts are attracting attention and that people are interested in sharing their opinions, both positive and constructive.

In many cases, you might be inclined to delete a post that you find disagreeable or contrary to your own opinion. If you delete every post that you find objectionable, you may escalate the problem or alienate users on your page. Grounds for deleting a post include:

- Use of profanity or derogatory language.
- Personal insults or disrespectful language against another user
- Spam
- Overly solicitous content

Interactions with Elected Officials

It is okay to interact with elected officials, at both the Federal and state levels, on social media. In fact, using your community schools' Facebook and Twitter accounts to reach out to your elected officials to support or oppose legislation is an excellent way to make your voice heard for every child and youth you represent. **Our Sample Social Media Posts includes the Twitter handles for your State Senators and Representatives.**

¹ National PTA Advocacy Toolkit <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3892>
Federation for Community Schools
Advocacy Toolkit

Sample Social Media Posts - Twitter

Make your voice count!

Tell your Senator and Representative how 21st CCLC supports Community Schools in Illinois

As Congress moves to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind, it is critical to students, families and communities in Illinois that the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program is maintained as a separate and specific federal funding stream for school and community partnerships that provide vital afterschool and out-of-school time programs.

Rep. John Kline (R-MN), who leads the House Education and the Workforce Committee, is moving towards a vote on the House rewrite of ESEA soon. This debate provides the perfect opportunity for community school advocates to take action and support funding for afterschool programs. With significant cuts being proposed to dedicated afterschool and 21st CCLC funding in both the House and Senate, community schools are expected to respond to increasing needs with fewer resources; affecting thousands of low-income students and their families in urban, suburban, and rural communities in Illinois and across the country.

What can you do? We are asking community school stakeholders to use social media to share with their Senators and Representatives why 21st CCLC is important for students and families in our state. You can make an even greater impact by sharing this action with your friends and family too! It's simple, and only takes 140 characters!

Here are a few Tweets to get you started:

(Be sure to insert your Representative's handle from page 2)

- #21CCLC provides #afterschool programs to low-income students & families in #IL. @InsertRepHandle, support #communitieschools #Invest3to6!
- @InsertRepHandle -1 Million kids in #IL could benefit from an #afterschool program. #Invest3to6 so #communitieschools can meet this demand!
- @InsertRepHandle, #Invest3to6 to keep kids safe and engaged in #afterschool programs. #Communitieschools can't afford #21CCLC cuts.
- In #IL, 65,000 students & 11,000 adults count on #communitieschools each day. @InsertRepHandle, #Invest3to6 - don't cut #21CCLC funding!
- 84% of parents support public funding for #afterschool programs. @InsertRepHandle, keep #communitieschools strong in #IL! #Invest3to6!
- #21CCLC allows #communitieschools to *[personalize this Tweet!]*. @InsertRepHandle, #Invest3to6!

These sample tweets include hashtags (#) that connect the work of community schools and afterschool supporters here in Illinois, to a greater national movement that has the potential to make a real impact. Join us and be part of a national campaign to support afterschool and 21st CCLC funding!

Thanks for your support,
The Federation for Community Schools Team

Find your Senator and Representative on Twitter

House		
District	Name	Twitter Handle
1	Bobby Rush	@RepBobbyRush
2	Robin Kelly	@RepRobinKelly
3	Dan Lipinski	@RepLipinski
4	Luis Gutiérrez	@RepGutierrez
5	Michael Quigley	@RepMikeQuigley
6	Peter Roskam	@PeterRoskam
7	Danny Davis	@RepDannyDavis
8	Tammy Duckworth	@RepDuckworth
9	Jan Schakowsky	@Janschakowsky
10	Robert Dold	@RepDold
11	Bill Foster	@RepBillFoster
12	Mike Bost	@RepBost
13	Rodney Davis	@RodneyDavis
14	Randy Hultgren	@RepHultgren
15	John Shimkus	@RepShimkus
16	Adam Kinzinger	@RepKinzinger
17	Cheri Bustos	@RepCheri
18	vacant	

Senate		
	Dick Durbin	@SenatorDurbin
	Mark Kirk	@SenatorKirk

Community Schools in Illinois

TAKING A LOOK AT: **The Community School Initiatives in Illinois**

1 Aurora
2 Bloomington
3 Blue Island
4 Champaign
5 Chicago
6 Cicero
7 Evanston and Skokie
8 North Chicago
9 Olney
10 Palatine
11 Peoria
12 Plano
13 Sycamore
14 West Chicago
15 Zion

THE FEDERATION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The Federation for Community Schools
December 24, 2014 · 🌐 ·

There are over 200 Community Schools in Illinois. Learn more about community schools in your area at bit.ly/1x4e2kr

👍 Julie Schifeling, Autumn Berg, Deborah Chesler Moroney and 4 others like this.

\$10 Million for Community Schools Campaign

Communities + Schools = Success

PLEASE FUND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS!
\$10 Millions for Community Schools

The Federation for Community Schools
December 31, 2014 · 🌐 ·

Join the movement! Tell ISBE why community schools are important in Illinois. Sign a postcard today! To download the letter go to: buff.ly/1AY1ewA

👍 Deedee LaGitana and Gabe WeekendGabe Mendoza like this.

