

This guide will help you tap into the reach and visibility that social media offers to spotlight Linked Learning. Every work-based learning experience, district, school, and student is rich with storytelling opportunities. By sharing this content through social media, you have the power to help others reimagine what learning can look like. Social media channels—including Facebook and Twitter—will help the Linked Learning field connect with allies and colleagues and raise awareness to build support for Linked Learning.

Please note that both Facebook and Twitter periodically change their requirements for image sizes used in your profile or in your feed. For the latest image sizes for social media, visit sproutsocial.com.

Establish an Online Voice and Tone

Before determining which social media tools should be used to reach each target audience, ask what voice and tone is best suited to reach these audiences. Every piece of content you create has the potential to put a personal face on the happenings in the Linked Learning field. To demonstrate your broader message, look for opportunities to be warm and personal. For example, introduce followers to student voices, teachers, work-based learning partners, as well as other partners involved in your work. Their stories can help spotlight broader insights, recent news, and new data that impact the field.

Create Meaningful Content

Follow the below tips to create memorable content that gets online followers talking and prompts them to share your updates with their networks.

- **Tell stories.** Your work is about the lives you touch, and there is no better way to describe your efforts than by introducing the world to the students, educators, and partners who support Linked Learning. It's about the connections students make from the classroom to the workplace. It's about the sense of accomplishment students experience and the confidence they develop when they learn real-world skills. It's about connecting classroom learning to California's industries.
- **Take us on a journey.** For every conference, event, or speaking engagement, you have the opportunity to share updates from the front row with your followers. Through tweets and Facebook posts, you can include photos or videos that connect your work to what's happening at the event. Please see page six for more tips about tweeting from an event.
- **Spotlight measurable progress and milestones.** From new data to pivotal student, school, and partnership accomplishments, updates about your work will engage followers and your community.
- **Be a resource.** In all of your communications and content, look for opportunities to highlight how your organization is part of a broader Linked Learning field that's bringing life into the classroom. You can refer audiences and followers to resources that illustrate the field's shared vision for Linked Learning. You can become a go-to resource by sharing interesting links, engaging thought leaders, and spurring meaningful dialogue amongst users with shared interests.

Integrated Social Media Approach

To reach a broader community of educators, community leaders, families, business leaders, and policymakers who support your work, utilize multiple social media platforms.

- **Extend your reach by amplifying the content of your partners.** To expand your following, echo what Linked Learning partners are saying through retweets, likes, and cross-posting content on your organization's website. You can also wedge into ongoing conversations by using trending and relevant Twitter hashtags and handles within your own tweets.
- **Cross-promote social media accounts.** Driving traffic to your website is essential, but there are times when you want to put emphasis on building your social media properties by linking to your Facebook page from Twitter or linking to your website from Facebook.
- **Mirror appropriately.** Share messages concurrently across Facebook and Twitter, but tailor them to each medium and the audience who follows those pages.
- **Be proactive, stay flexible.** Use a calendar of events to proactively develop messages that can be automated, such as event launches, major milestones, or media announcements. It also is important to keep up with breaking national and local education news.
- **Interact with followers.** Participate in relevant and timely opportunities to engage with target audiences. Posing questions or conducting fun polls on Facebook are effective ways to engage followers on an ongoing basis. Responding to important stakeholders on Twitter also increases meaningful interactions and will make them more likely to share your content in the future.
- **Like and follow stakeholders' Facebook and Twitter pages.** Once you've liked your partners' pages, consider tagging them in posts, including messages of support and congratulations. These posts appear on their feed or wall and are visible to an even larger audience.
- **Layer outreach.** Continue to support the website by using the social media channels to talk about and link to new content or featured topics.
- **Drive traffic to desired websites.** Facebook and Twitter are great ways to link readers to more information, such as new materials on the website, blog posts, news stories, and announcements.
- **Use visuals.** Photos personalize and humanize campaigns. Short videos, including partners' videos, engagingly spotlight people or schools. This content is compelling to readers and is more likely to be shared and repurposed. Also consider sharing interesting infographics to convey information with complex comparisons, numbers, or other measurements about education.
- **Link.** Make sure to link to relevant Linked Learning website resources and communications materials such as e-newsletters.
- **Promote the properties internally.** Make sure to link Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube pages from relevant communications materials such as e-newsletters and email signatures.

- **Add “Share This.”** For each aspect of your website, users should be able to easily click an icon to share that specific story or interior webpage—if you catch people right after they’ve read something, they are more likely to share it if it just requires a quick click of the mouse.
- **Save time: schedule ahead.** Using a third-party application, such as TweetDeck or Facebook’s mobile app, can increase efficiencies for scheduled posts. These resources also allow you to strategically post during peak times. You can also consider other new tools like Tweriod, which tracks the best times to tweet based on your followers.

Facebook Best Practices

Facebook has reached a billion users worldwide and by one estimate has more than 13 million users in California alone. It is one of the best platforms for content sharing, community-building, and organizational communication and outreach.

When you create a public Facebook presence, be sure to create an organizational page. The more Facebook fans interact (e.g., like, share, or comment) with your posts, the more often their newsfeeds will include your updates.

We recommend the following to maximize your visibility:

- **Image is everything.** Posts with images attract more views and actions than posts with just text. When at events, snap photos on your phone and upload posts while you’re on site or shortly after. Be sure to tag other relevant users or organizations in your posts.
- **Think headline.** Grab readers’ attention with short, pithy sentences and follow with a question, call to action, photo, or link. Remember that it is important to follow up with a response.
- **Post every day or every other day.** To keep your audience engaged and to maintain interest, post at least every other day.
- **Share stories.** Real and compelling stories are memorable. Student stories profiled in text, images, and videos increase awareness and understanding of Linked Learning. Consider posting “behind the scenes” stories and photos. Facebook users tend to be more interested in informal insights.
- **Plan ahead.** Use an editorial calendar to help guide frequency and subjects of posts. Scheduling posts in advance is smart, but be sure to vary timing slightly to see which posts get more interaction.

Twitter Best Practices

Much like the objectives for Facebook, the Linked Learning field’s Twitter presence should focus on increasing awareness of Linked Learning, engaging and cultivating relationships with new users, and facilitating an active conversation with them. On Twitter, it is essential to go beyond simply tweeting messages and content; engagement with other users and developing a personality is vital to fostering growth. Though education reform models such as Linked Learning carry serious undertones, it does not preclude levity on occasion and sharing personal tidbits about your work. The goal is to use Twitter to amplify content by pushing it out to new audiences in unique networks.

Twitter Terms

- **Handle.** A person or organization's username on Twitter. Handles are written using the @ symbol.
- **Retweet (or RT).** The act of forwarding another user's tweet to all of your followers. People do this if someone has said something especially valuable and they want their own network to see the information, too. When you retweet, you also have the option of adding a comment on top of the tweet which allows you to add your own thoughts on top of the other user's message.
- **Modified Tweet (MT).** A tweet by another user that signals you have slightly modified the original tweet. This is often used to spread news or share valuable findings on Twitter with your personal comments added.
- **@Reply.** A tweet posted in response to another user's message, usually posted by clicking the "reply" button next to their tweet in your timeline. Always begins with @[HANDLE].
- **Tweet a specific person by inserting @ before the person's handle.** By putting @[HANDLE] at the beginning of your tweet, that person knows you are following them. Any @replies you receive will go into your Tweets and replies tab and will be seen by your followers. When using a handle at the beginning of your tweet, place a period before the handle. (E.g., .@linked_learning)
- **Hashtag (#).** The icon that is used to organize conversations on a given event or theme. A hashtag combined with a word, acronym, or phrase acts as a way to categorize your tweets and allows them to be found through searches. Ideally, use at least one hashtag per post (e.g., #LinkedLearning). The idea is to become part of an existing conversation or to start a new conversation of your own.
- **Direct Message (or DM).** A private message sent from one Twitter user to another by either clicking the "message" link on their profile or typing "D @[HANDLE]." Note that you can only send a direct message to users who are following you.
- **Lists.** Curated groups of other Twitter users. Lists are often used to tie specific individuals on your Twitter account. They can be useful to organize and highlight partner organizations, such as others who work in the Linked Learning space. You can set lists to be either private or public—depending on whether you want other users to be able to find and follow your lists.

Twitter Strategies

- **Length.** The maximum length of a tweet is 140 characters. If you add photos or videos to your tweet, they will take up some of your characters.
- **Frequency.** Industry standard currently recommends posting one or two times per day. In general, it is helpful to post tweets at the beginning of the work day (8:00-9:00am), around lunch (12:00-2:00pm) and at the end of the work day (3:00-5:00pm). However, once you're established, you might see other patterns of activity that will help you determine more specific timing about when to post.
- **Establish consistent hashtags.** Insert a hashtag, such as #LinkedLearning, to which people can direct their tweets. Using hashtags will help create a real-time conversation about the latest news.

- **Repurpose positive mentions.** Thank reporters for mentioning Linked Learning. Retweet or quote positive mentions or positive stories about how the pathways have improved lives and are building a better California.
- **Host real-time conversations on Twitter.** Invite key stakeholders (e.g., Linked Learning teachers) and local reporters to engage in a real-time conversation about what is happening in the classroom. Tie this conversation to statewide media outreach conducted by the Linked Learning Alliance.
- **Save space.** Use a URL shortener such as bit.ly (www.bitly.com) or ow.ly (www.ow.ly) to keep posts succinct and to measure analytics.
- **Plan ahead.** Use a tool like TweetDeck to help guide frequency and subjects of tweets, as well as identify a target list of followers with whom to engage on Twitter. Scheduling tweets in advance is smart, but be sure to vary timing slightly to help your content appear live.
- **Retweet.** Consider reposting something interesting that someone else has said about Linked Learning or related topics on preparing young people for success in the future.
- **Ask a question and invite feedback.** People love to have their voices heard. Tweet out questions and be sure to respond when users engage.

General Twitter Tips

Keep these general best practices in mind:

- Content is limited to 140 characters, but make sure to leave room for a link, photo, or video
- Stick to one or two hashtags at most
- Use abbreviations when necessary, but don't go overboard
- Not all your content has to be original – liking or retweeting content can be just as effective, and help connect you to the original author
- Utilize multimedia content whenever possible
- Even with a character limit, it's important to attribute your quotes, but paraphrase if character limits won't allow full quotes

Social Media Start-Up Kit

To successfully use Twitter, you have to engage your followers and transport them to your space. Strategically insert your voice into existing conversations, engage established thought leaders, and create a regular stream of relevant tweets.

To help you get started, below is a list of Linked Learning Twitter users you can follow, including partners, policymakers, business leaders, and media. Once you follow these users, Twitter will suggest other like users for you to follow as well.

@linked_learning	@LAAreaChamber	@JerryBrownGov	@latimeshiltzik
@NAFCareerAcads	@SoCalHospNews	@TorlaksonSSPI	@MelodyGutierrez
@ConnectEdOrg	@localbusinesscouncil	@Localcitycouncil	@EdSource
@IrvineFdn	@localchamber	@schoolboardmembers	@edutopia
@SmarterBalanced	@americas_edge	@districtsuperintendents	@ed100
@CaliforniaCTE	@howardblume	@localeducationreporter	@localbusinessreporter

Be sure to use the hashtags identified below whenever you tweet. Use the hashtag that is most-relevant to your tweet and always use at least one. By using hashtags that are already part of the existing conversation online, you can be sure that your content will be visible to a desirable community.

#linkedlearning	#lausd	#backtoschool	#teacher
#edchat	#Porterville	#HSgraduation	#students
#edu	#yourcity	#ccss	#localdistrict
#edreform	#stem	#collegebound	#collegeready

Once you've identified the Twitter handles of influential Twitter users, be sure to follow them, retweet them, tweet at them with content relevant to their interests, and create follower lists. Tweeting at these users allows your tweets to be seen specifically by them. To tweet at someone, simply insert @[HANDLE] into the text of your tweet. Creating Twitter lists of partners, key media, and political figures will help manage the influx of information and ensure you monitor and connect with the right people.

Planning Content and Monitoring Your Account Using TweetDeck

It's impossible to plan every tweet and often you will need to be prepared to respond to unexpected situations. Though Twitter is meant to be dynamic and responsive, there are a few tools to help you plan and schedule tweets as well as monitor your followers, those you follow, and topics of interest.

After launching your Twitter account, you will be able to use TweetDeck, which automatically links with your account. To access the tool, visit tweetdeck.twitter.com and log in using the same credentials you use to log in to your regular Twitter account. For help setting up your account, visit support.twitter.com.

Tweeting During Linked Learning Events

Making sure people fully engage at your Linked Learning event is critical to its success. By engaging your audience through Twitter, you can help harness the excitement and momentum building at the physical event, and amplify it over the internet to reach people and organizations that aren't there. Twitter can be used for pushing information out, but it is best used to engage people in conversations that go back and forth. Think of your work as helping to foster and amplify conversations that otherwise might only happen in person – or not happen at all!

Make tweeting easy and intuitive

The first step to encouraging participants and attendees to extend the conversation to Twitter is to lower the barrier to participation. This means making sure tweeting is as easy as possible.

- Assign a short event hashtag or use #LinkedLearning
 - Put the hashtag on all pre-event materials
 - Put the hashtag and Wi-Fi login information, if available, on all day-of materials
- Put participants' Twitter handles on name badges (ask for them during event registration)
- Use a consistent PowerPoint template for all speakers with #LinkedLearning on all slides
 - Put the Twitter handles of presenters on the corner of PowerPoint slides, or keep them on the screen continuously for sessions that don't use slides

Seed Discussion

Make sure that you are beginning, engaging with, and, when necessary, guiding the Twitter conversation so that attendees feel like there is value to their participation online.

- Put the #LinkedLearning or event-specific hashtag on event announcements and RSVP cards so attendees can use it leading up to the event to ask questions, express excitement, and connect with other attendees
 - Start tweeting before the event to help build excitement
- Pose questions for the Twitter discussion on-screen and on Twitter at the start and end of sessions, and encourage attendees to answer on Twitter, using the hashtag to capture responses
- Ask attendees to pose their own questions on Twitter with the hashtag
- Collect quotes, photos, and short videos to post from the event so you provide extra content
 - Tag attendees using their Twitter handles whenever possible
- Retweet and respond to tweets before, during, and after event

Build Relationships

Building engagement on Twitter during the event can help create and nurse a community of people who are engaged, and stay engaged after the event ends, which is the ultimate goal!

- Let participants know that they can use the hashtag to reach out to you or others over Twitter, even after the event has concluded
- Thank presenters with public tweets immediately following the event
 - If possible, also tweet at participants, especially those who were active on Twitter during the event