

## TECHNOLOGY

# Tweeting principals

## *Administrators use new ways to communicate*

BY BRENDEN WEST

Assistant Editor

CLINTON — The Clinton Community School District has found another way to get the message out — this time in 140-character increments.

Superintendent Deb Olson — otherwise known as @SuperCCSDDeb — said she began dabbling on Twitter this past fall as a new way to reach parents and students. Her following has steadily grown over time, and the social media's usefulness was proved at the start of the year.

That's why, when CCSD administrators returned from their breaks, they were each told to start tweeting as well. Each principal must tweet at least twice per week and one of the tweets must contain a photo of students collaborating.

"This came from an understanding that I have that we live in a technologyrich world," Olson said. "We have to interact with it. It must be part of the process."

**Clinton Schools Superintendent Deb Olson activated her Twitter account as a news medium last fall. Several of her recent weather announcements have had a wide reach throughout her district.**

With numerous weather delays kicking off the January return to school, many in the district received their information ahead of time thanks to administrator tweets. One of Olson's tweets notifying people of a two-hour delay was re-tweeted more than 60 times 10 minutes before automatic call alerts were issued Friday morning.

SEE TWEET PAGE 2A



Screenshot

**Article Continued Below**

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See TWEET on Page A02

## TWEET

### Principals use Twitter to communicate

FROM PAGE 1A

Even this week - when a history lesson turned awry on Facebook - Clinton High School Principal JR Kuch quickly diffused the situation from his smartphone.

Although this is Kuch's first year as principal, he's well-versed on the Twitter-sphere, having joined in 2009. From the start of school, he has used the tool as a way to cultivate pride.

"It's all about the kids," said Kuch, (a.k.a. @JRKuch). "It's sort of like when fans follow their favorite athletes. People want to know what's going on. Naturally they want to have that connection with their principal and their school." Wednesday, to Kuch, was a "perfect" example for how the tool can benefit Clinton Schools. A social media message reached parents and students with immediacy.

"Just as quickly as it gets picked up by others, we can just as quickly get our statement out there saying what we need to say," Kuch said.

Five other principals joined him on Twitter following Christmas break. Each said they have their own familiarity with the site.

For the newcomers, Kuch said there will be surprises for how much of a difference Twitter can make on the district.

"I think they're going to find out, as I have, that your reach is pretty far," he said.

Jefferson Elementary principal Teresa Zahs (@TZahsZahs) said that before, she used Twitter strictly as a way to keep up with personal interests and educational trends. This year also marks her first as principal, having worked last year at the Des Moines School District.

As she left her previous job, Zahs said that her old district also was beginning to tap into Twitter's functions. Now that it's built into her new occupation, Zahs said she's seen many benefits just 10 days into 2015.

"I think that any form of communication, any way that we can reach out and connect to our community or parents, is going to help our schools," Zahs said. "We want the community to know all of the good things we're doing, and this is a way that we can communicate those things and kind of brag about our students." Some administrators have some catching up to do if they're going to reach Olson's or Kuch's numbers, which stand at 384 and 809 followers respectively. But even as principals feel out this social media venture, Zahs and others have already begun to plan for other practical uses on Twitter.

Eventually, she said, it wouldn't surprise her if Clinton teachers joined their principals on the web.

"We have fun every day and Twitter's just another way to do it," Zahs said. "This spring we're going to continue to push for more (CCSD) people to get on." *Assistant Editor Brenden West can be contacted at [brendenwest@clintonherald.com](mailto:brendenwest@clintonherald.com).*



**Principal Teresa Zahs says she uses Twitter namely to communicate weather updates and to post pictures of student achievement at Jefferson Elementary.**

Brenden West/Clinton Herald

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