

PROFILE: Anchorage School District



CITY: Anchorage, Alaska
POPULATION SERVED: Approx. 50,000
CONNECTIVITY SPEED: 100 Mbps to 1 Gbps
REPRESENTATIVE: Heather Sawyer
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In 2009, Mount Redoubt, an active volcano southwest of Anchorage, Alaska, began to show signs of eruption. Heather Sawyer, the executive director of communications with the Anchorage School District (ASD), tweeted students, "All ASD schools will be OPEN on Friday, March 27. There is a LIGHT ashfall advisory for Anchorage. We will keep monitoring the situation." And with that, Heather saw the ASD Closure Notices Twitter account swell from 100 followers to 1,000 followers. This is just one example of how Twitter has changed the way the district communicates with the community.

"Twitter allows us to get information out right away," Sawyer said. "People are able to spread the information via retweets." Especially in times of uncertainty, "people are grateful to us for getting information out quickly."

While the ASD Closure Notices account and the ASD INFO account have proven to work well for the Anchorage School District, Sawyer encourages other businesses and schools to use Twitter and other social media in addition to traditional forms of communication. Twitter tends to resonate with a younger population.

Sawyer also expresses concern about end-user connectivity – many target audience members don't have the Internet or have slow bandwidth. The school district still uses traditional media methods to communicate with students, parents, and faculty.

But Sawyer's investment in Twitter is foolproof. "Aside from the cost of Internet access, Twitter is free, and can serve as a viable tool for increasing business." She advises

business owners to create a Twitter account and promote the account in their newsletters or other traditional media avenues.

"We are happy with where we are now," said Sawyer when asked what new technologies the school district communication team will adopt in the near future. Today, the ASD Closure Notices Twitter account has 1,293 followers and the ASD INFO Twitter account has 739 followers.

What is a Community Anchor Institution?

A community anchor institution (CAI) is a term for local organizations that serve the needs of citizens including K-12 schools, universities, libraries, hospitals/emergency medical facilities, and public safety facilities such as state and local police stations.

Please pass along this newsletter to other community anchor institutions in your community so they can share their technology status.

How Fast is Your Internet Connection?

Let us know about your connectivity speeds. Take a moment to complete the online survey. The Alaska Survey Password is CAI_AK_5852.

To take the survey click here

