

Tech Talk

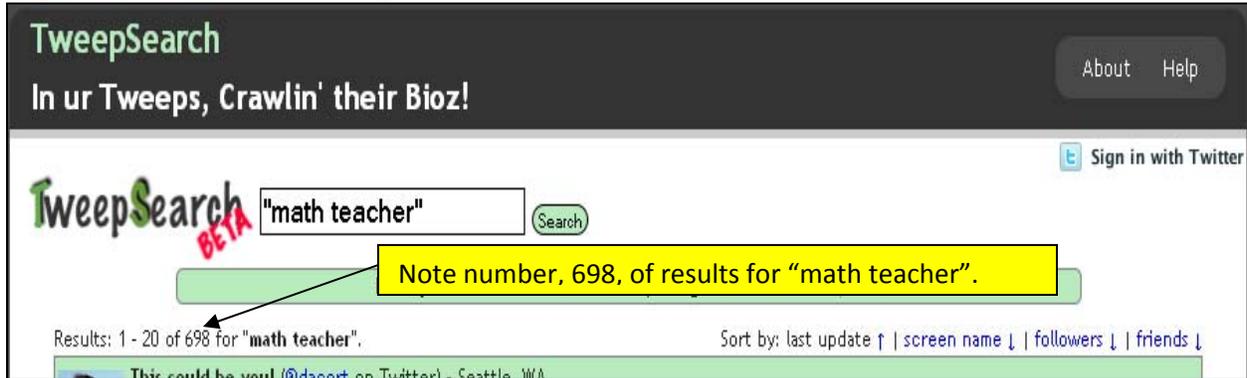
Twitter: Using Only 140 Characters Can Work for You

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In a day when we are lambasted with information from every different angle and type of media, is it possible to obtain informative, quality information using just 140 characters? Using Twitter, one can. Twitter, developed in 2006, can be described as a microblog, a short message service. Sending a message or a “tweet” is accomplished via a website, downloaded software, or cellphone. Twitter was designed to keep friends and colleagues informed about one’s daily activities. Using Twitter, a person can follow other people (or Tweepers as they are known as) and you can be followed by Tweepers.

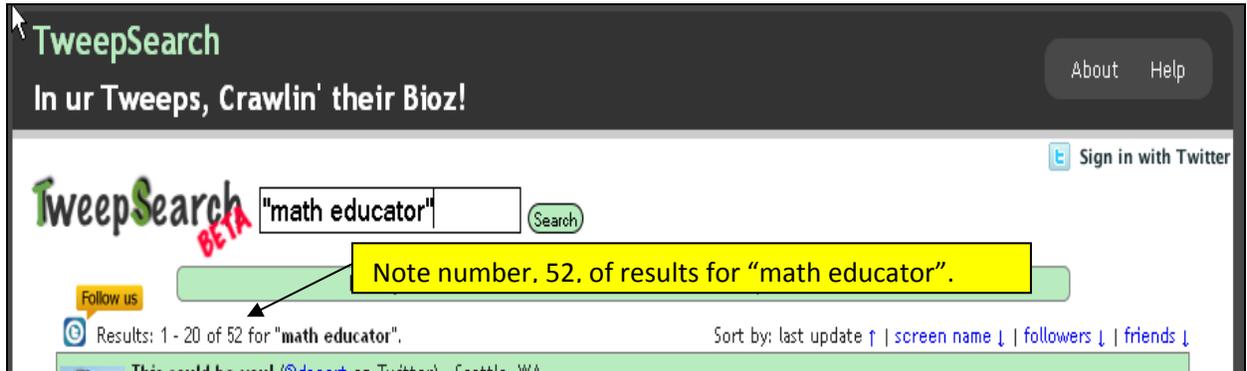
So now you might be thinking, how can Twitter help me, a math teacher, in my daily classroom experiences. When a person signs up for a Twitter account at www.twitter.com, part of the process includes writing a 160 character or less bio about yourself. It is here, in your bio, you state that you are a math teacher, math educator, or lover of math. The next step is to follow persons who have similar interest in math as you do. There are a couple of websites that can help you accomplish finding people to follow, <http://www.tweepsearch.com> or <http://wefollow.com>. Using www.tweepsearch.com, enter “math teacher” or “math educator” in the search field. Tweepsearch will search through the bio’s of all the Twitter accounts and find persons having those words in their account bio. Figure 1 displays the number of Twitter accounts containing “math teacher” as part of a person’s bio.

Figure 1. Search results using “math teacher”



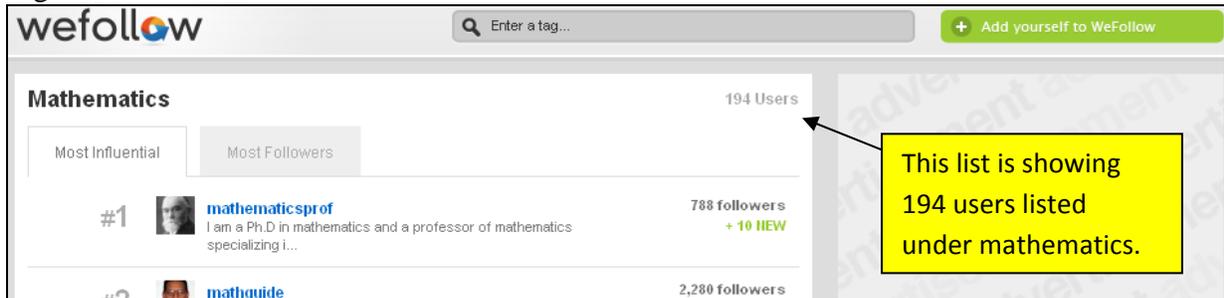
Not as many results are displayed in Figure 2 when “math educator” was used in the search field.

Figure 2. Search results using “math educator”



Wefollow.com works a little different than tweepsearch.com. In wefollow.com, a person signs up for particular area of interest. Searching the “mathematics” area of interest in wefollow, Figure 3 displays the results of the search.

Figure 3. Search results in wefollow



Once you start following other math teachers and they begin following you, conversations emerge. You can exchange ideas and get teaching tips from math teachers around your state, country, and even around the world. In addition, you can converse with K-12 teachers, college professors, and even professionals in the business world.

Another feature of Twitter is the ability to follow a word or phrase. Through the use of hashtags, tweets are tagged with a word or phrased pre-fixed with a #. #arithmetic, #numbersystem, #calculus, and #math are examples of hashtags. Partial results for the searches using the hashtags #calculus and #math are display in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Partial search results for #calculus

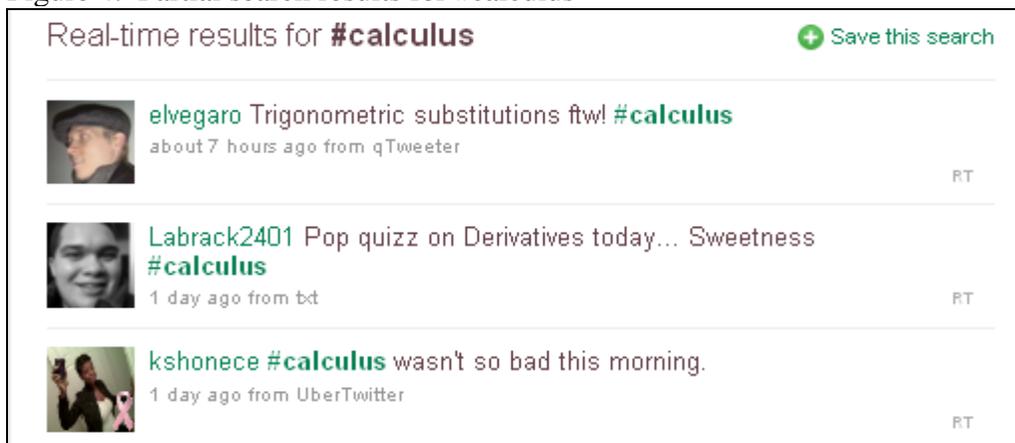
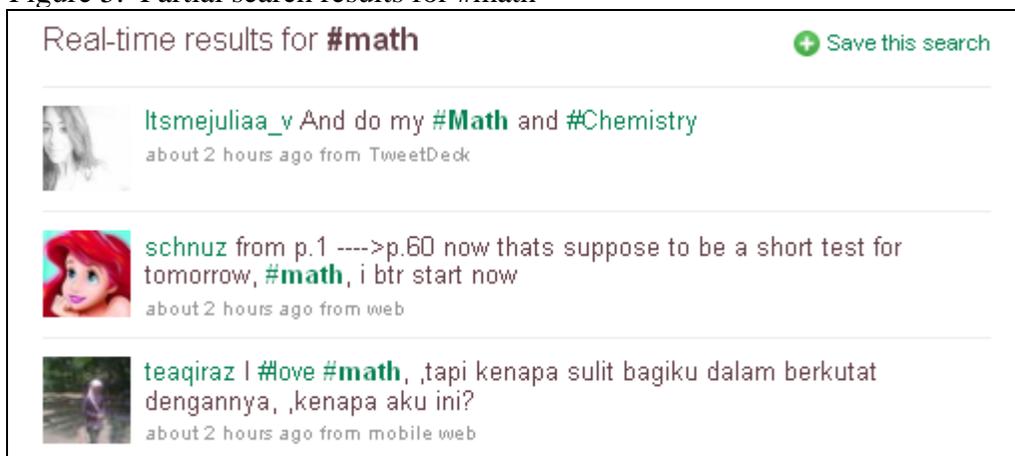


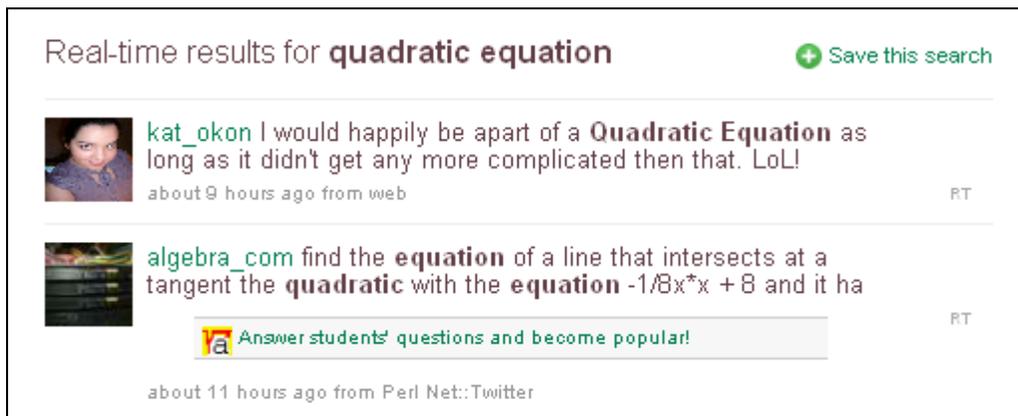
Figure 5. Partial search results for #math



By using hashtags, tweets on a specific subject can be found by simply searching for their common hashtag. A common use of hashtags is when many people are tweeting about the same topic or from the same event.

The Twitter search can be used on words and phrases that are not tagged. Figure 6 displays the partial results of the phrase “quadratic equation”.

Figure 6. Partial results using “quadratic equation”



When the hashtag #quadricequation was used in the search, no results are found. So when searching for a certain word or phrase, try both ways because your results may differ.

Now that you know a little something about Twitter, it's time to get started. Go to <http://www.twitter.com> and create an account. Include a bio about yourself, post a picture, and let the tweeting begin!

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