

Exploring Educational Conversations in Social Media Spaces

Successfully developing a 21st century PLN depends on choosing a social media space that aligns with your personal learning preferences, provides access to information that can improve your work, and connects you to colleagues that you can learn from. Before committing to any social media space, consider checking out a few of the following conversations and determining how likely they are to be a good fit for you.

Self-Assessment

Before exploring any social media space, it is important to take a few moments to reflect on your own personal learning preferences and to think through what you're most hoping to learn from a 21st century PLN.

How do you learn best? *(Check all that apply.)*

- By writing and reflecting
- By watching videos demonstrating practice in action
- By joining ongoing conversations with colleagues
- By reading content—like books, articles, and online sources—connected to my work
- By sharing what I know with others
- By sitting in on experts' formal presentations
- Other: _____

How much time do you have for learning?

- Less than 60 minutes per week
- 60–90 minutes per week
- 90–120 minutes per week
- Over 120 minutes per week

What devices are you likely to use to connect to your PLN? *(Check all that apply.)*

- My computer
- My mobile phone
- My iPad
- My iPod touch
- Other: _____

Spend a few minutes writing about what you would like to see happening in the social media spaces that you embrace. What kinds of resources would you like to find there? What would make your work instantly easier and more rewarding? Why do these things matter to you?

Social Media Starting Points for Educators

The following sites are home to some of the most popular and engaging conversations taking place between educators in social media spaces. Choose a few to explore, and then decide how well each tool aligns with your own personal learning preferences and behaviors.

Twitter

The following links connect to strands of conversations happening in Twitter.

Ed Chat

<http://bit.ly/twittertag1>

One of the most common tags attached to educators' Twitter posts is #edchat. This link connects to the constant stream of resources being shared with the #edchat tag.

Connected Principals Chat

<http://bit.ly/twittertag2>

Another popular Twitter tag is #cpchat. Principals interested in connecting with and supporting each other use it.

Which statements describe this social media space?

(Check all that apply.)

- I found links to valuable resources here.
- I was challenged by interesting questions and ideas here.
- I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here is likely to require.
- I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.
- I'll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.
- This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.
- Other: _____

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?

How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?

LinkedIn

While you'll have to sign up for a free LinkedIn account to access them, the following links connect to strands of conversations happening between educators on LinkedIn.

Education Innovators

<http://linkd.in/edinnovate>

This strand of conversation brings together principals, teachers, and professional development providers interested in innovation in education.

Web 2.0 Group

<http://linkd.in/web20group>

This strand of conversation brings together a group of educational professionals interested in studying the role that collaborative technologies can play in teaching and learning.

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Blogs

While there are thousands of blogs that you might consider exploring, these might serve as a good starting point for learning how blogs become social spaces.

Dangerously Irrelevant

<http://bit.ly/blogsample1>

The blog of Scott McLeod, professor of educational leadership at Iowa State University, *Dangerously Irrelevant* is a constant source of provocative questions, valuable resources, and good conversations.

Weblogg-Ed

<http://weblogg-ed.com>

The blog of Will Richardson, *Weblogg-Ed* is constantly exploring the changing nature of teaching and learning in the 21st century.

(Visit <http://education.alltop.com> to find additional educational blogs worth exploring.)

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Ning

The following links connect to two of the most vibrant Ning networks for educators, which you can explore after creating a free user account.

Classroom 2.0

www.classroom20.com

Perhaps the largest and best known Ning for educators, Classroom 2.0 is a virtual home for anyone interested in learning more about the role that social media can play in education.

English Companion Ning

<http://englishcompanion.ning.com>

A great example of how content-area teachers are creating customized social-networking spaces to learn together, the English Companion Ning won the Edublogs award for Best Educational Use of a Social Networking Service in 2009.

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Diigo

Built around the collective sharing of web-based resources, Diigo enables users to form groups and extend conversations on focused topics of interest.

Diigo Education Groups List

<http://bit.ly/diigoedugroups>

This link connects to the master list of education groups that have already been formed in Diigo. Here, you'll find groups collectively studying and sharing resources around everything from the use of instructional technology in literacy classrooms to teachers studying Japanese manga together.

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