

Tapping the Power of Social Networking for Education



CHAT

Social networking is providing teachers with valuable professional development and resources they never had access to

before. Instructional technology specialist Kyle Pace helps train teachers to use the power of social networking to build their own professional learning networks, to help avoid pitfalls that other teachers have already experienced, and to get new ideas and remain energized about their educational practice. Educators who were once limited to swapping ideas with colleagues in their building can now connect with experienced educators around the world, ask questions, and model programs that work. Though some educators are reluctant to venture into this world, Mr. Pace helps walk new educators through the process and helps more experienced users of social networking find new resources.

This chat took place on Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2013, at 1 p.m. ET.

Guests

Kyle Pace

instructional technology specialist,
Lee's Summit school district, Mo.

MODERATOR

Michelle R. Davis

senior writer, Education Week
Digital Directions

Bryan Toporak

Good morning and welcome to today's free live chat, Tapping the Power of Social Networking for Education, sponsored by **Knovation**. I've just opened today's chat for questions, so please start submitting yours below.

We'll be back at 1 p.m. ET with our featured guest, **Kyle Pace**. Hope you can join us!

Bryan Toporek

For some background on **Kyle Pace**, check out this article from our first annual Leaders To Learn From report <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/02/06/20ltf-pace.h32.html>

Bryan Toporek

Welcome to our free live chat, Tapping the Power of Social Networking for Education, sponsored by **Knovation**. We'll be getting underway in about 10 minutes.

In the meantime, please continue submitting your questions below. Thanks again for joining us!

Bryan Toporek

I'm turning control of today's chat over to Michelle Davis, our moderator for the day. Take it away, Michelle!

Michelle Davis

Thanks Bryan. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to this chat on the power of social networking in education. I'm Michelle Davis, senior writer for Education Week Digital Directions. I'd like to introduce **Kyle Pace**, an instructional technology specialist at the Lee's Summit school district in Missouri. Kyle spends a lot of time learning through social networking and teaching others how to use it as a powerful tool. Kyle, could you just quickly talk a little bit about your philosophy regarding social networking and education?

Kyle Pace

Hi Michelle! Thanks everyone for joining me today to discuss social networking in education. Social networking has had significant impact on the entire world over the last several years. It has changed how we connect with others we already knew, how we make new connections, and how we get information....

Kyle Pace

In education all too often we have looked at social networking as something that should be blocked, banned, and otherwise frowned upon. There are educators all over the world using it to grow professionally as well as using it with their students and other stakeholders. It's not going away, and it's our job to embrace its positive and productive capabilities to model this for our students.

Michelle Davis

That leads us to a good question from Sharon, which deals with an issue facing many educators interested in social networking.

Comment From Sharon

What is the first thing you would suggest a school administrator do to loosen the restrictions on technology use in a district? What precautions have you built in?

Michelle Davis

While we're waiting to hear from Kyle, I'm going to put a poll out there for everyone. I'll be interested in the responses.

DO YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?



Kyle Pace

Hi Sharon. Great question. The first think I would suggest an administrator to do is to involved leadership at the district level. Present concrete examples of how the technology can be used, and how you want to have students and teachers use it....

Kyle Pace

It's also important to include the information technology department in all of these conversations. That relationship is extremely important in terms of getting something unblocked, the impact it could have on a network, etc. These are all important things to take into consideration. It's always a good idea also to get some of those teachers that are eager to get onboard with new things and start it as a pilot program first.

Michelle Davis

So once these sites are (hopefully) accessible, we've got a next step question.

Comment From Guest

What do you feel is the most successful tool to get teachers started using social media?

Kyle Pace

That's a great question and one I get a lot. I can say what the most successful tool is for me, but I can't say what the most successful tool is for you. For me it would have to be Twitter. That's where I started and that is the online space I have spent the most time in over the last 4 1/2 years....

Kyle Pace

That's the beauty of all of these social networking tools that are out there for educators and students to use. We have lots of options and we get to pick the one that benefits us the most.

Michelle Davis

What about with students? Kimberly has a question that gets at this.

Comment From Kimberly

What are the ways you are most successfully using social media as a school?

Kyle Pace

Hi Kimberly thanks for your question! Schools are using social media and social networking as a great way to get out quick, immediate bursts of information. School Twitter accounts and Facebook pages are great for this...

Kyle Pace

Just like today here in Kansas City almost every school district is closed due to getting about a foot of snow overnight. Schools can now reach parents and students where they already are in these social networking spaces to get timely, up to the minute bits of information out.

Michelle Davis

Great example! Here's a follow up from Michael.

Comment From Michael

When you're discussing social media are you limiting the conversation to fb and twitter, or are there other resources that come into this equation?

Michelle Davis

And here's another poll for everyone.

DOES YOUR SCHOOL BLOCK SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES OR DISCOURAGE THE USE OF THIS TECHNIQUE?



Kyle Pace

Hi Michael. Great question. I would have to say that Facebook and Twitter are the ones that seem to come up the most since there are SO many users in both of these spaces. When I'm sharing with administrators and teachers I make sure to also share about blogging (whether that be authoring your own blog or subscribing to blogs to read)....

Kyle Pace

And also tools like Edmodo, Nings, and Google+ are also great ways to use social networking in education. I always make sure to offer up lots of choices and I suggest giving at least a couple a try to find the one that works best for you.

Michelle Davis

Thanks Kyle. Interesting poll results. It looks like the majority of people's schools are still discouraging social networking as a tool for education.

Michelle Davis

We've got a great question from Brian about just how to use social networking for PD.

Comment From Brian

We are currently establishing system-wide policy on acceptable use of social media but we have primarily focused on using it in the classroom for teaching and learning and as a one-way communication tool. We haven't really focused on utilizing it as a tool for professional development. I'm very interested in learning about some of these strategies, how they are implemented, and how effective a tool it is for teachers and even administrators.

Kyle Pace

Hi Brian. It can definitely be an effective tool for teachers and administrators alike in their professional development. Even if you don't have a Twitter account for example, I always suggest that educators go to <http://search.twitter.com> and search on popular educational hashtags that are used a lot....

Kyle Pace

This can be done without even logging in which is a great way to start. Checking out hashtags like #edchat, #edtech, #education and many more will put a wealth of ideas and resources at your fingertips....

Kyle Pace

Or if there's a conference happening that you can't attend in person? Check out the hashtag for the conference too! A great way to get information and learn without having to physically be there!

Michelle Davis

I want to take a minute to remind everyone that they can follow Kyle on Twitter @kylepace. I've also recently taken the plunge into Twitter, so please follow me @EWmdavis. I've learned a lot and connected with many new educators.

Kyle Pace

Sites like Edutopia and Education Week have great regular bloggers also that I would suggest checking out!

Michelle Davis

Here's a question from Deb for those of us who might not consider ourselves "digital natives."

Comment From Deb

Do you think it is important for the teachers and administrators to be confident users of social networking? If yes, what is the best way to get them involved? Some adults seem reluctant to become skillful with social networking.

Kyle Pace

Hey Deb. Thanks so much for this question. I always want to help teachers increase their comfort level with any type of educational technology they're looking to begin using. I think that it's essential to have a strong knowledge of how different social networking tools work....

Kyle Pace

But that doesn't mean you have to be using all of them all the time or know the ins and outs of everything that's out there. That's impossible. It's hard even for me to keep up with everything that's out there. I would say start with one thing and get really comfortable with that....

Kyle Pace

And what's great about that is you have so many awesome educators right at your disposal to learn from that will help you get more comfortable and expand your knowledge of ways to use it for your own PD and in your classroom.

Michelle Davis

So how about some examples? Susan wants to know about specific lessons or PD that effectively use social networking.

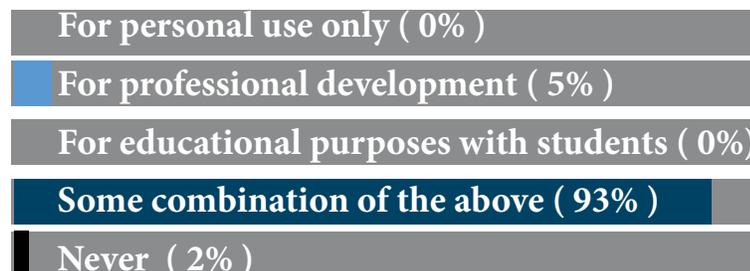
Comment From Susan Fine

I would love for Kyle to provide (and I anticipate he will) a robust and comprehensive definition of "social networking." I would also be grateful for links to specific examples of excellent uses of social networking -- specific projects, lesson plans, etc -- and especially those that document and articulate well the learning the such efforts have inspired. Thank you!

Michelle Davis

In the meantime, here's another poll.

WHEN DO YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKING?



Kyle Pace

Hi Susan thanks for your question. Here's a lesson example I came across recently via Alan November's blog; it's called Connecting Students to Geometry through Twitter
<http://novemberlearning.com/connecting-students-to-geometry-through-twitter/>

Kyle Pace

Some teachers even introduce social networking tools to younger students by having them do "paper tweets" first
<http://blog.web20classroom.org/2012/10/twitter-for-little-folks.html>

Michelle Davis

So the majority of respondents to the poll use social networking in a variety of ways. I'm surprised. I thought there would be a fair amount who use it only for personal use.

Michelle Davis

Keri has a good question about managing social networking.

Comment From Keri Straub

Hi Bryan & Kyle. As a Communications Coordinator of a school district in central PA, I've been very determined to use social-media(Twitter/ Facebook) to distribute important school messages, events, sports updates...etc. When you're going through an on-going "crisis" like deep budget cuts, how does that play a role in social-media when there are tremendous amounts of emotion involved. We have been weighing the pros and cons of online forum type events. (It's obvious more people will speak their minds online rather than a public meeting.) But, when you have negativity showing up on your publications, how do you maintain control over the conversation or at least keep it under control. Thank you for your advice.

Kyle Pace

Hi Keri! Great question. And you're right; more are willing to speak their minds in online spaces that in a public face to face setting. It's important that the PR person, which is you, have a strong understanding of how to best moderate the conversation that's happening....

Kyle Pace

Particularly if it's a topic that you know might get some heated discussion. Negatives are going to happen, it's a fact of these social networking spaces. You, however, have ultimate control of what's posted and what isn't if that needs to happen.

Michelle Davis

Thanks Kyle. I think some of these concerns are the reasons why districts might shy away from using social networking.

Michelle Davis

Here's a good question from Sheri about preparing future teachers to use social networking.

Comment From Sheri

Do you think teacher education programs should train future teachers in this skill set? How do you think teacher education candidates could be introduced or trained at the college level to get them prepared for the real world?

Kyle Pace

Great question Sheri! My short answer to this is a resounding yes! I have seen many college professors create hashtags for their classes on Twitter for students to follow, or use Google+ hangouts to bring in guest speakers, or have students do reflective blogging about education issues. All are great ways to introduce these tools and give students an understanding of how they can be used professional. I just joined a class of pre-service

teachers the other night via Google+ as a guest speaker. It was great!

Kyle Pace

It's fantastic the information teachers and students can get in real-time to make teaching and learning better!

Michelle Davis

Here's a good Twitter question from a guest.

Comment From Guest

Facebook seems to be the platform with the most widespread usage, and therefore the platform that people seem to have the most experience in using. What are some "best practices" for teachers using this platform for professional development?

Michelle Davis

Oops! Wrong one. But Kyle can answer this one first and I'll get to my Twitter question next.

Kyle Pace

So many educational organizations now have Facebook pages that you can "like". This puts you in their direct line of communication to share blog posts, new features for a particular edtech tool, and also gives you access to ask questions, make suggestions, and get resources.

Michelle Davis

O.k. Here's the Twitter question. I

Comment From Guest

I've tried twitter, but I seem to see more links to articles or sites than comments, questions, etc. Where can I find more people to tweet with?

Kyle Pace

That's a great Twitter question. I have a couple resources in mind that will help you find new people to connect with...

Kyle Pace

Searching on specific hashtags like #edchat for example is a great way to find new people. There are hashtags for almost every subject area like #sschat or #engchat or #cpchat (great for admins). I would also check out the site Twitter4Teachers....<http://twitter4teachers.pbworks.com> - this has loads of people to connect with all organized by content area....

Kyle Pace

Also look at who other people follow. When you go to their Twitter page, click on their "following" link to see who they follow. That was beneficial to me when I got started on Twitter.

Michelle Davis

Thanks Kyle. I want to post a couple of suggestions from guests and then a related question.

Comment From Guest

Google Communities and Hangouts are also great!

Comment From GregLimperis

Engage also allows your teachers to have their own Blog in a safe and secure setting.

Comment From Guest

I just wanted to share a free resource that was designed as social media for teachers and students, Edmodo.

There are others that are similar, but this is the only one I have used.

Michelle Davis

Now here's the question from Emily.

Comment From Emily

I've heard a lot about education-specific social networks, like Edmodo and Schoology. Could you explain the concept behind those a little more and suggest any other similar type programs you've heard of?

Kyle Pace

Yes the new communities feature in Google+ has really taken off too!

Michelle Davis

While we're waiting for Kyle, I have another poll for everyone.

DO YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKING WITH YOUR STUDENTS?



Kyle Pace

Hi Emily. Tools like Edmodo and Schoology are great for introducing your students of all ages to social networking. They provide more of that "walled garden" type of environment. They get the look and feel of the big mainstream social networking sites, but they give the teacher more control over who has access.

Michelle Davis

This guest sounds frustrated! Help him/her Kyle.

Comment From Guest

My district is a technology rich district. We have iPods, ipads, laptop carts, labs, every room is a 21st century classroom. However, we are not using everything that is available to us. We don't have a twitter or facebook account. We are subscribed to Edmodo, but it is not being utilized to the fullest extent. I really am at a loss with how to help leaders move this district in the right direction. Any other suggests?

Kyle Pace

Wow you definitely have a lot of resources at your disposal and I think that's ok if you don't have a Twitter or Facebook account. You have to focus on how these technologies are going to make teaching and learning better. This starts with continual PD and support for your teachers...

Kyle Pace

Which has to be made a priority at the district level. Definitely I would suggest focusing on one thing at a time and build teachers' skillset from there. And many of these social networking spaces and people can offer up so many ideas of best use and resources.

Michelle Davis

Here's an issue which I think worries a lot of educators. Could you address this Kyle?

Comment From Guest

I hear a lot of educators talk about privacy concerns, especially with Facebook and Twitter that are out there in the "public domain." How have you addressed this?

Kyle Pace

I think the biggest concern seems to be with teachers and students privately messaging each other in these online spaces. I always suggest to teachers that they do not do this. For example if you create a class Twitter account for students to follow, don't follow your students back....

Kyle Pace

But being transparent with our teaching and learning using these tools is what helps the positive uses shine through and make them more widely accepted.

Michelle Davis

Here's a good follow-up from Brittany.

Comment From Brittany

Part of the success of using social media in general is the dialogue that it creates between people. How can teachers use social media in a way that is safe for them professionally but still encourages student communication? Using it as a one way tool doesn't seem very effective, especially if you are wanting students to interact with content.

Kyle Pace

Involving parents from the start is also essential!

Kyle Pace

Hi Brittany. You are absolutely right. The teachers that get the most benefit from using social networking for PD always say it's the conversations that make it the most engaging and enriching for them...

Kyle Pace

I have seen teachers do this by creating separate accounts. One that's used for engaging with others in professional dialogue, and another that's specific for that one way communication.

Kyle Pace

That way the two are mixing especially when you're wanting students and parents to get information on a regular basis.

Michelle Davis

Here's another good question about the realities of social networking for PD.

Comment From Guest

If we consider using social networking for PD, how would that change teachers' work load vs wages? I mean to say, attending live events for PD is usually included in teachers' work time and is paid for. How does that relate to spending your personal unpaid time for PD via social networking? Hope that makes sense.

Kyle Pace

Great comment. It's time for school district to start recognizing these online PD opportunities as viable, meaningful forms for teachers to learn.

Michelle Davis

Great response. Kyle, we're going to wrap up shortly, but I wonder if you have any closing thoughts to add.

Kyle Pace

And give teachers credit especially if it's spent outside of the regular school day.

Kyle Pace

First I want to thank everyone for all of the fantastic questions. I wish I could meet all of you face to face and talk more about all of these different situations! :) Social networking is here to stay. We have to model professional, productive use for our fellow administrators, teachers, and students. We have to share all the great things we're learning because of social media.

Kyle Pace

Don't feel like you have to do everything! Invest the time in one thing and get really comfortable with it. Make a clear plan of how you intend to use it and stick to it. It definitely takes time.

Michelle Davis

Great way to finish this chat off. I want to thank Kyle for sharing his time and expertise with us and thank everyone for the insightful questions. Don't forget to follow Kyle on Twitter [@kylepace](#) and me too [@EWmdavis](#).

Bryan Toporek

That's a great place to end. Thanks again, folks, for joining us for today's free live chat, Tapping the Power of Social Networking for Education, sponsored by Knovation. A special thanks goes out to our excellent guest, **Kyle Pace**, and our moderator Michelle.

We'll have a transcript of today's chat up on this same page within the hour. Hope you enjoyed it!

Kyle Pace

Please send me tweets if you have any other questions. I'd love to talk to you and help you in any way I can!

Bryan Toporek

Also, be sure to join our exclusive group of district-level administrators and educational technology leaders on the Digital Directions LinkedIn group. There, you can keep the conversation going, share best practices, and get career tips in discussions geared toward your professional needs. You can sign up for that here.

Bryan Toporek

Have a great rest of the day, folks!