Edchats Connect Educators Around the Globe

Education chats are making a profound difference in how educators are improving their professional practice, providing ideas, resources and inspiration in ways never thought possible. According to Education Week, Twitter has helped many educators reach an audience they would not have normally been able to reach so easily.

Teachers, leaders, and instructional coaches use Twitter to tweet out resources, create Professional/Personal Learning Networks (PLN), and take part in Twitter chats like #ALedchat. The latter is a popular, fast moving chat held on Mondays from 9 to 10 p.m. Central Time that attracts participants from all over the state to discuss a variety of topics related to education. You’ll also find interesting discussions and resources shared by searching for this hashtag during the week.

Twitter chats such as #ALedchat can range from small discussions with only a few participants to huge conversations with dozens of educators taking part. They provide a unique opportunity for educators to connect with colleagues across the state and beyond.

Tip: Cut the Fat from Your Speech or Presentation

One of the best ways to surprise and delight a speech audience is to leave them wanting more, according to Rob Biesenbach, veteran speechwriter and author of “11 Deadly Presentation Sins: A Path to Redemption for Public Speakers.” After all, Biesenbach says, nobody ever left a room saying, “I wish that speech had been longer!”

Whether you’re putting together your own presentation or writing a speech for someone else to deliver, your first priority is to fight bloat and keep it focused. So what can you do to pare down your content to the essentials? Here are a few tips Biesenbach shared with the Public Relations Society of America:

1. Understand that a speech isn’t an island.
   One of the biggest mistakes that speechwriters and speakers make is that they feel they have to pack every idea into their speech. But if you think of the presentation as just one piece of a larger conversation, then you’ll take a lot of pressure off yourself. Keep in mind that you can supplement your content before, during and after the event with handouts, workbooks, visuals, white papers, emails, links to websites and videos, and many other things.

2. Ask yourself: Why here? Why now?
   Think about what makes a speech special:
   - People can watch you live, in person and in 3-D.
   - You can more easily convey warmth, emotion and passion.
   - Audience interaction is more fluid and natural.
   - You can harness and feed off the energy in the room.
   - You can gauge your audience’s response, making adjustments as you go.
   So the question is, how can you put all those advantages to work for you? You can start by focusing less on information and more on inspiration — less on lecture and more on conversation.

3. Don’t settle for sharing information.
   A classic approach is to ask what you want your audience to know, feel and do. Unfortunately, most presentations emphasize just the “know” part of the formula. That’s the easy stuff — the information and the data. Merely passing along information is the least you can accomplish with a speech. If that’s all you’re doing, then you might as well just send a memo to the audience. You’ve got these people in a room together — don’t squander that opportunity. Make your presentation about something more.

For more of Biesenbach’s tips, click here.
NSPRA Seeks Applicants for “Superintendents to Watch”

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) is accepting applications for “Superintendents to Watch,” a program designed to recognize superintendents using communication technology in innovative and effective ways.

A partnership with School Messenger, the new program seeks to recognize up to 25 superintendents using dynamic, fast-paced leadership with strong communication at its core. NSPRA is looking for leaders who engage and inform their school communities with new communication technology tools combined with tried-and-true techniques. Selected superintendents will receive a recognition award and an individual profile highlight in one of NSPRA’s e-newsletters. They will also be invited to attend the 2016 NSPRA Seminar in Chicago for half-price of the registration fee, at the time of registration.

The deadline to apply is December 11, 2015. You can access a list of the nomination questions here. You will be asked to electronically provide two letters of reference and samples of your communication efforts. Nominate your superintendent today!

For more information, contact Beth Pernerewski, CMP, manager of Seminar, partnerships and programs, at or call 301-519-1230.

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Reserve Your Spot for ASF’s Ain’t Misbehavin’ Schoolfest Performances

The Montgomery-based Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) aims to bring lessons to life on stage through its Schoolfest Program. Each year thousands of students from across Alabama and the Southeast attend Schoolfest weekday K-12 student matinees, which provide an opportunity for students to see curriculum-linked productions at greatly reduced prices. In addition, study guides are available on ASF’s website for Schoolfest plays to help students familiarize themselves with the plot, characters and other critical details before they see the show.

To learn more or to make reservations, contact Stan Thomas at sthomas@asf.net.

Happy Holidays!

At this time of year, many of us pause and reflect on the things we have to be thankful for. ALSDE staff are thankful for you!

Thank you for your dedication to excellence in communication. Thank you for your ability to turn your school system into a school community.

We wish you and your families a happy holiday season and hope that you can enjoy the short rest it provides for you to recharge with family and friends.