

# Exploring Educational Conversations in Social Media Spaces

Successfully developing a 21<sup>st</sup> 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 conversations occurring below and determining how likely they are to be a good fit for you.

## Exploring Educational Conversations in Social Media Spaces

**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 21<sup>st</sup> Century PLN.

<p><b>How do you learn best?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By writing and reflecting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By watching videos demonstrating practice in action.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By joining ongoing conversations with colleagues.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By reading content—books, articles, online sources—connected to my work.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By sharing what I know with others.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By sitting in on formal presentations made by experts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>How much time do you have for learning?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 60 minutes per week.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 60-90 minutes per week.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 90-120 minutes per week.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Over 120 minutes per week.</li> </ul> <p><b>What devices are you likely to use to connect to your PLN?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My computer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My mobile phone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My iPad or iTouch</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Spend a few minutes writing about what would you 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/or more rewarding? Why do these things matter to you?</b></p>
---	---	--

## 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 they align with your own personal learning preferences and behaviors.

<p><b>Twitter</b> The following links connect to strands of conversations happening in Twitter.</p> <p><b>Ed Chat</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/twittertag1">http://bit.ly/twittertag1</a></p> <p>One of the most common tags attached to posts made by educators using Twitter is #edchat. This link connects to the constant stream of resources being shared with the #edchat tag.</p> <p><b>Connected Principals Chat</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/twittertag2">http://bit.ly/twittertag2</a></p> <p>Another popular Twitter tag is #cpchat. It is being used by principals interested in connecting with and supporting each other.</p>	<p><b>Which statements describe this social media space?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I found links to valuable resources here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was challenged by interesting questions and/or ideas here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here is likely to require.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I'll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?</b></p> <p><b>How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?</b></p>
---	--	--

<p><b>LinkedIn</b> 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 in Linked In.</p> <p><b>Education Innovators</b> <a href="http://linkd.in/eduinnovate">http://linkd.in/eduinnovate</a></p> <p>This strand of conversation brings together principals, teachers and professional development providers interested in innovation in education.</p> <p><b>Web 2.0 Group</b> <a href="http://linkd.in/web20group">http://linkd.in/web20group</a></p> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Which statements describe this social media space?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I found links to valuable resources here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was challenged by interesting questions and/or ideas here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here would require.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I'll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?</b></p> <p><b>How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?</b></p>
<p><b>Blogs</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Dangerously Irrelevant</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/blogsample1">http://bit.ly/blogsample1</a></p> <p>The blog of Scott McLeod, professor of educational leadership at Iowa State University, <i>Dangerously Irrelevant</i> is a constant source of provocative questions, valuable resources and good conversations.</p> <p><b>Weblogg-Ed</b> <a href="http://weblogg-ed.com/">http://weblogg-ed.com/</a></p> <p>The blog of Will Richardson, <i>Weblogg-Ed</i> is constantly exploring the changing nature of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.</p> <p>(To find additional educational blogs worth exploring, visit: <a href="http://education.alltop.com">http://education.alltop.com</a>)</p>	<p><b>Which statements describe this social media space?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I found links to valuable resources here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was challenged by interesting questions and/or ideas here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here would require.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I'll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?</b></p> <p><b>How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?</b></p>

<p><b>Ning</b> The following links connect to two of the most vibrant Ning networks for educators, which you can explore after creating a free user account.</p> <p><b>Classroom 2.0</b> <a href="http://www.classroom20.com/">http://www.classroom20.com/</a></p> <p>Perhaps the largest and best known Ning for educators, <i>Classroom 2.0</i> is a virtual home for anyone interested in learning more about the role that social media can play in education.</p> <p><b>English Companion Ning</b> <a href="http://englishcompanion.ning.com/">http://englishcompanion.ning.com/</a></p> <p>A great example of how content area teachers are creating customized social networking spaces to learn together, the <i>English Companion Ning</i> won the Edublogs Award for “Best Educational Use of a Social Networking Service” in 2009.</p>	<p><b>Which statements describe this social media space?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I found links to valuable resources here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was challenged by interesting questions and/or ideas here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here would require.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I’ll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?</b></p> <p><b>How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?</b></p>
<p><b>Diigo</b> Built around the collective sharing of Web-based resources, <i>Diigo</i> enables users to form groups and extend conversations on focused topics of interest.</p> <p><b>Diigo Education Groups List</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/diigoedugroups">http://bit.ly/diigoedugroups</a></p> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Which statements describe this social media space?</b> (check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I found links to valuable resources here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was challenged by interesting questions and/or ideas here.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was not intimidated by the time commitment that participating here would require.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I was surprised by how valuable this social media space seemed to be.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I’ll be able to access this social media space from my mobile phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This social media space seems to be a good fit for me.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>What are the strengths and weaknesses of this social media space?</b></p> <p><b>How well does this social media space align with your own personal learning preferences?</b></p>