



Connection Reflection

Welcome to the 2011-12 School Year!

*It is great to be back—shiny school buildings, new equipment, textbooks, educational tools/ manipulatives. Don't you just love the new binders, calendars, and all the things that go with the beginning of the school year? In this issue of the **Connection Reflection**, we are sharing some tools that may assist your students this school year. Give one or more of them a try. Let us know what you think! We'd love to hear from you! (Email: info@SETConnections.org).*



Inside this issue:

Use a Checklist!	1
Three Classroom Tips/Tools	2
What ARE your Goals?	2
Twitter Information	3
Save the Date	4

Overcome Failure, Use A Checklist!

By: **Dr. Henry Thiele**
President



Dr. Henry Thiele

Welcome to the start of a new school year! Those of us in education know that it is actually sometime around now that we set our real New Year's Resolutions. One that comes up frequently when I talk to teachers is that they would like to be more organized throughout the year. I would like to share a tool with you that really help me stay organized . . . Remember the Milk!

Remember the Milk may be found at <http://www.rememberthemilk.com>. I record all of my ongoing and upcoming tasks in Remember the Milk (RTM) with due dates and notes. Actually, most of

the items that come out of meetings with other people are tasks that I need to complete. I have started to jot these

down in RTM as they come up in meetings, which allows me to set it and forget it until later.

Remember the Milk also removes a lot of emails from my inbox that

are nothing more than things I have to do. I am able to move the task over to RTM. This keeps my inbox cleaner and doesn't allow items to get lost in the mass of email.



RTM offers mobile apps for all of your devices and integrates with Outlook, Google Calendar, and many other products and services. I have access to RTM in my calendar, email, on every device, and in every account I visit. Having those tasks everywhere I visit helps to keep me on track to complete them (usually just in time).

As Atul Gawande points out in The Checklist Manifesto: How

to Get Things Right, "We need a different strategy for overcoming failure . . . a

checklist." Give Remember the Milk a try . . . and have an organized and successful school year!

Hank

Special points of interest:

- Remember the Milk can help you organize.
- Your cell phone camera is a valuable resource.
- Think of SET Connections as part of your PLN.
- Winter Meeting date is November 30—mark your calendar!

A New Year . . . A Fresh Start!



Judy Okazaki

By: **Judy Okazaki**
Executive Director

Okay! Now it is September. The new school year is underway. You have worked hard to plan for a dynamic year.

Here are some quick tips on how to keep that momentum going.

These are not time hogs. These are three tips meant to be implemented in twenty minutes, even if they are completely new to you. And then you can spend five or ten minutes at a time learning new features.

Tip One: Use Your Cell Phone Camera



First, many of us have learned to make good use of our phone's cameras. You walk into another class room and see something that is a great idea . . . "click." You see a written page of information you need copied . . . "click". You're talking with a colleague about a book you have to have . . . "click".

Out shopping and you see something you could make yourself or you are sure you could find somewhere else for less . . . "click". But do you know how to share those pictures that you grabbed? If you have a phone and a plan that allows texting you can share it directly from your cell phone's picture software or by email. So tip one is **remember how valuable your cell phone camera can be** and that pictures do not have to stay on the camera.

Tip Two: Use Evernote



Tip Two is a repeat recommendation—**use Evernote**. Evernote provides a free way to save, organize and access all kinds of files. If you haven't tried it or you've tried it but haven't made it habit yet take a little bit of time to do so, and you will reap the benefits. Install it on your phone, desktop and laptop both at home and at school. Add a quick note anywhere, an idea, some "to do" items, errands, a "phone calls to make" list, a collection of books you want to read or whatever. Add a picture or sound file from your desktop, laptop or phone and open it anywhere. Any text found in pictures is searchable. Never lose that little scrap of paper again and never

have to rewrite your scribbled notes.

Tip Three: Use Digital Flashcards



The third quick tip is a recommendation to **use digital flashcards**. SET Connections recommends Quizlet. Quizlet contains over 200 million flashcards all created by users and supported by lots of learning activities and games in addition to traditional flashcards that have been digitized. You can use an existing set or create your own. And now thanks to the evolution of mobile devices these flash cards are easy to take anywhere. Remember, electronic flash cards can have more than two sides; one for a word, one for the pronunciation and one for the definition OR one for side for the question one for the answer in text and one for the answer in picture format. You can use these flash cards for your students or for yourself personally. To Access Quizlet flashcards on Android devices you can use the "app" KaKa; for iDevices try FlashCards.

Hope you find one or more of these suggestions helpful and best wishes for a great school year.



What ARE Your New Year's Resolutions This School Year?

Do you want to learn more about your chosen area of specialty? Are you hoping to make a difference in a particular student's school experience? Are you hoping to implement a new course outline? Through many of the popular "self help" programs that are available to us in our communities, we have learned that sharing our goals/resolutions along with their successes and failures will help us move forward. Even though you may write your goal(s)/resolutions on index cards, in a document on the computer, in a software program like Evernote, or just keep them in your head, why not share it/them with a colleague or friend. It makes them more realistic . . . and that person may be able to help you with some great ideas to reach your goal(s). In a way, this is part of your own Personal Learning Network (PLN). If you're a beginning, it may be a start; or, as a "veteran, an exchange!

We at SET Connections would like you to think of us as part of your Personal Learning Network. Feel free to share questions/problems with us that might move you toward reaching your goal(s)/resolutions. Why not email us and maybe we, as part of your PLN, can assist with a technology tip that could help!

Email us at info@SETConnections.org

Give All Students a Voice in Your Classroom



Alice Schmitz

By:
Alice Schmitz,
Director of Education
and Professional
Development

Have a wonderful 2011-12 school year! Allow me to add my wishes to those already extended by the other writers of this newsletter. Like many teachers I've visited with, I'm not sure where my summer went but had a great time! No, I didn't get that home office desk cleaned off, but I enjoyed walking with my neighbors each morning. I didn't tame the weeds in my backyard, but I had fun on outings with family and friends. And, I didn't get that bathroom redone, but my husband, son and I did spend a lot of evenings together. I had a great summer and am looking

forward to an excellent school year.

It was also a summer of learning for me. I took a course about teaching online courses and another about Google Docs, and I prepared for the upcoming school year. The high school in which I work part-time is allowing students to bring in personal electronic devices (we call them PEDs) which can be used in classrooms, the hallways, cafeteria, etc. Teachers may set the standards for their classrooms. Students are bringing phones, some netbooks and iPads, and I've seen a few with laptops. The positive is that we are leveraging their personal devices. The negative . . . well, I've seen a couple of hallway collisions because of texting!

So, with this new policy, the school community is putting on its "learner" hat and figuring out how to improve

education by integrating these devices. I've been impressed with two tools that allow ALL students a voice in the classroom. The students love them, and the teachers are accomplishing some quick checks of knowledge as well as allowing all students a voice.



Tool One

Poll Everywhere (<http://www.polleverywhere.com>)

Poll Everywhere allows teachers to ask students questions and have the students text their answer. (They can also answer via computer). Once they have submitted their "answer," the

(Continued on page 4)

Come Tweet with Us!

Please welcome a new member of the "newsletter team!" James Gubbins, SET Connections Board member, Twitter expert, and District Technology Coordinator at Maine Township District 207, has agreed to share his wisdom with us in a series of articles about using Twitter to help us build a Personal Learning Network (PLN). In this, his first article, he not only discusses setting up Twitter but also shares the Twitter names of a few "Tweeters" we could all follow and learn from! Welcome, Jim . . . and thank you for helping us become more "Twitter Proficient!"

By: **James Gubbins**,
Board of Directors

Building a Personal Learning Network (PLN) is the easiest and most effective ways to acquire free professional development. The social networking tool Twitter allows you to connect with educators globally and should become an essential component of your PLN. The power of Twitter is the 140 character limitation which forces updates to be quick and to the point. Within a typical Twitter



James Gubbins

post educators from around the world are sharing insight, having inspiring conversations and providing links to vital tools and information. Twitter is also an excellent resource for connecting with professionals outside the educational spectrum in a way that was not previously possible.

Signing up for a Twitter account is simple and can be done in a matter of minutes at Twitter.com. If you need some assistance, you can find a screencast explaining the process at <http://tinyurl.com/signupfortwitter>.

Once you have an account, you need to start searching for people you wish to follow. Some of my personal favorite resources include: @ShellTerrell, @shannonmiller and @Teach42. These are just a few of the people in my PLN that provide me with information and motivation to do great things every day. What will your PLN inspire you to do today?"

Follow
SETConnections
on Twitter

SET Connections

PO Box 3872
Barrington, IL 60010
Phone: 847-732-3823
E-mail: info@SETConnections.org

Connecting
Special Education and
Technology

Join Us

Log on to our website at
www.SETConnections.org
OR
Email us at
info@SETConnections.org
for information

Save These Dates

SET Connections Winter Meeting

Wednesday, November 30, 2011
5 to 7 p.m.

Maine South High School
More information via email
and on the
SET Connections website
(www.SETConnections.org)

SET Connections Spring Conference

Saturday, April 14, 2012

Maine South High School
More information to follow in
newsletters, emails, and
on the website (www.SETConnections.org)

Two Classroom Tools Which Gather Information

(Continued from page 3)

teacher can show a graph of the responses. This is a good way to get a quick pulse on opinions, how well something has been learned, what book to read next, and the list goes on. I used this tool to poll the faculty on Institute Day as to what web tools they would like to learn. My technology professional development now revolves around the answers to that poll.

wiffiti

Tool Two

Wiffiti (<http://wiffiti.com>)

I know this tool kind of has its roots in the sports bar scene; but, it works great in the classroom, too. The teacher sets up a space. Students then text an opinion or comment to

the space. All comments are shown in slide-show fashion for all members of the class to see. It is a great tool for discussion starters or exit checks.

Take a few minutes to check out these tools. Like those outlined by Judy Okazaki, they take 20 minutes to master so that you can use them in your classroom. And, you will be giving ALL students a voice!