

# EduCon

Chris Lehmann 10 February 2014

At the National Educational Computing Conference (now known as ISTE) in June 2007, a group of education bloggers came together for an “unconference” to talk about how the new tools such as blogs and social media could change education. At the end of the day, we asked the question, Would educators come together to talk to each other about how these tools could work in service of a specific pedagogy? A few of us suggested that we could host it at Science Leadership Academy. And with that, EduCon was born.

EduCon is, as the website says, “both a conversation and a conference.” Education writer and EduCon panelist Sam Chaltain has called the folks who come together every winter, “The EduCon tribe.” It is built around five core principles:

- Our schools must be inquiry-driven, thoughtful and empowering for all members.
- Our schools must be about co-creating—together with our students—the 21st Century Citizen.
- Technology must serve pedagogy, not the other way around.
- Technology must enable students to research, create, communicate and collaborate.

- Learning can—and must—be networked.

Those five principles are mirrored not only in the content of the sessions but in their format as well. EduCon sessions are not the traditional “sit and get” sessions that you see at many conferences; instead, session facilitators work to create learning experiences that challenge participants to solve problems, build artifacts of their learning and push their own thinking.

What also makes EduCon unique is that the entire conference is run by the Science Leadership Academy community. Faculty, students and parents start planning the conference in August, meeting weekly to define the theme of the conference, plan panels, recruit facilitators, plan the meals and do all of the work to ensure that nearly 600 educators from all over the continent have an amazing learning experience. Over the past few years, SLA students have even created EduConcierge, helping EduCon attendees with their travel arrangements, suggesting sites to visit in Philly or recommending good restaurants for post-conference eating.

After seven years, EduCon attendees (and planners) remain more convinced than ever that when we come together and talk to one another about what is possible when we explore the intersection of progressive, inquiry-driven pedagogy and the powerful technological tools we have at our disposal, we can innovate so that our schools

are better, more powerful places for students and teachers alike. By modeling that kind of learning, embedded at a school that works toward that vision as well, educators are able to engage in deep learning that can be directly relatable to the educational systems EduCon attendees return to once the conference is over.

As one attendee wrote this year, "EduCon isn't just a conference, it's a state of mind."

**Chris Lehmann is the principal of Science Leadership Academy**