

Title of Session: Social Studies Forum - SEEDebate
Moderator: Michael Hutchison
Guest Speakers: Meghan Connelly and Ann Thomas
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Room: Social Studies Forum

MichaelH: Welcome to tonight's Social Studies Forum

MichaelH: Tonight's topic is a great one, especially since we are in the middle of an election campaign that seems to be drawing a lot of people in, and a lot of people are becoming more active, not only about the election, but about policy and current events in general

MichaelH: so... tonight's topic is an interesting one for teachers who want to get their kids more involved in discussions about policy, politics, etc.

MichaelH: Meghan and Ann will be showing us some stuff in a second, but before hand...

MichaelH: let's take a couple of minutes to introduce ourselves.. would everyone let us know who you are, where and what you teach?

MichaelH is a social studies teacher in southwestern Indiana

ShayneTr: I teach art and computer literacy in Toronto, Canada

ElizabethC: I'm Elizabeth from CT. I actually teach chemistry, but I'm also in charge of helping teachers integrate technology. I'm always on the lookout for good sites to share.

MeghanCon: My name is Meghan Connelly and I am President and Curriculum Director at www.SEEDebate.org. I also teach 9th grade civics and history as well as Civics, US history and Contemporary Issues online.

MichaelH: WOW! That's a teaching load, Meghan!

MeghanCon: I am from CT too Elizabeth!

ElizabethC: Wow! Where in CT?

MeghanCon: Yes - the online means I can do it really early or late at night at least!

MeghanCon: I am right by UConn in Mansfield

ElizabethC: I'm in Hamden. Other end of the state - not that it's a big state. Are you affiliated with UCONN.

MeghanCon: Not at present - but I have connections there

MeghanCon: True - it is pretty close given CTs size!

MichaelH: Ann, BJ, want to introduce yourself?

AnnTho: I'm Ann Thomas, and I just work at SEEdedebate.org, no teaching right now.

AnnTho: Meg does plenty for the both of us :-)

MeghanCon: "just" she says :)

MichaelH: before we get any farther...

MichaelH: just a couple of quick reminders...

MichaelH: first, does everyone know how to detach the chat window to make it larger?

JeffC joined the room.

ElizabethC: Already did it.

ElizabethC smiles

MeghanCon: All set

MichaelH: cool, Elizabeth!

AnnTho: got it!

MichaelH: Shayne, are you "detached"? :)

ShayneTr: Yes!

MichaelH: The other thing you might want to do is disable your pop-up blocker... if Ann and Meghan show us web pages, a pop-up blocker may stop the pages from displaying

DavidW joined the room.

MichaelH waves to Jeff and David

DavidW waves

MichaelH: Guys, we're just doing introductions, if you want to say "hi"

JeffC waves

JeffC: hi

MichaelH: maybe even tell them who you are, Jeff...

DavidW: Hi, I'm David Weksler. I'm in New Jersey and work with teachers and technology

MichaelH: Jeff must be shy this evening...

JeffC is an educator with

MeghanCon: the suspense is killing me!

DavidW . o O (lots of qualities and is in Oregon)

JeffC 18 years experience who just had one heckuva day fighting admins who took away computer lab time for students working on a curriculum project so that the math department could do a third repeat of the same high stakes test.

MichaelH: glad you got to vent that, Jeff!

MeghanCon: Wow - not a great day

JeffC: hehe... already did most of my venting with others today... don't want to stop the flow here.

DavidW apologizes for the math department

MichaelH: just remember, we are on YOUR side, Jeff

JeffC kicks the math department in the shins.

MeghanCon: lol

MeghanCon: Shall we begin?

MichaelH: As I mentioned, Meghan and Ann are here to discuss a really cool resource, so let's let them get to it

MichaelH: Meghan, Ann, want to tell us a bit about SEEDebate?

JeffC is considering the words he will write to The Oregonian etc. (after already being

threatened with losing his substitute teaching position if he does).

MeghanCon: Sure I do - As I said my name is Meghan Connelly and I am curriculum director and president at SEEdebate

MeghanCon: Ann and I co-founded SEEdebate just after the 2004 election in response to low interest levels on the part of young people and overall lack of knowledge when it came to current events – especially international current events.

MeghanCon: www.SEEdebate.org

MeghanCon: SEEdebate is an online current events discussion site. Students ranging from grades 5 - 12 participate in engaging online debate/discussion with all the other student users at SEEdebate –

MeghanCon: We have separate areas for Middle Schoolers

MeghanCon: The discussion centers around current events articles that we pull from actual newspaper sites internationally – and with attention to finding diverse perspectives.

MeghanCon: We categorize the articles into “forums” by subject area – currently we have all the most common social studies subjects, as well as science, health, technology and media literacy. This makes it easier for teachers to find articles that fit into their curriculum goals for their students.

MeghanCon: Any questions so far?

ElizabethC: Are the discussions moderated?

MeghanCon: yes - moderators read all the posts

MeghanCon: A word more on safety

MeghanCon: As a teacher myself who has taught at both Middle and High School levels, we have taken great care to make sure the site is secure. First of all, we check up on all educators who create accounts at the site to be sure they are affiliated with a real school. Second, students cannot sign up without a code from their teacher. Additionally, the only person who can see your students' names and locations is you. All other students and educators can only see screen names and bios – no personal info (name or location).

MichaelH: That's a good idea, Meghan, and probably something that a lot of teachers appreciate (as well as parents)

MeghanCon: yes - the safety is a huge concern

JeffC: I tried signing up as an education technology support consultant... will that work?

MeghanCon: especially with middle schoolers

ElizabethC: So the teacher can tell who is logging in and participating, and assign grades accordingly.

MeghanCon: Yes - we check on our users, but we have other non-teachers as long as they are educators

MeghanCon: Yes - easily

JeffC . o O (cool)

MeghanCon: your students will have to provide a “class code” unique to your account when they sign up. They are then listed in your class. You can simply click on the students’ name to see their comments listed starting from the most recent. It also tells you which article they commented to.

MeghanCon: It’s nice because the teacher has full control of their students on the site.

JeffC: can classes collaborate with each other (with teachers' permissions)?

MeghanCon: Yes - you can subscribe to another class and then post your own articles or other materials

MeghanCon: only the other class can see it

JeffC . o O (wonderful!)

MeghanCon: It is really fun

ElizabethC: Does each student have their own password, so no student can log on as another (theoretically).

MeghanCon: my students love it

MeghanCon: Yes - they all have individual accounts

MeghanCon: It makes it easy to track them

JeffC: is it for K-12 only, or may community college classes and/or university classes also take part?

MeghanCon: I think that it would be wonderful for post-secondary

MeghanCon: but know that some of their "peers" will be younger

JeffC has all the positive answers he needs and will now shut up and lurk (and start navigating through that site).

MeghanCon: I think it would work perfectly though

MeghanCon: thanks Jeff

ElizabethC: Can you limit the articles your students can see and comment on?

MeghanCon: Yes -

MeghanCon: If you create the article yourself, you can choose to have it "show" only for your students

MeghanCon: Additionally,

MeghanCon: your students will see their "assignments" that you write

MeghanCon: whenever they log in

MeghanCon: You can tell them which articles you want them to read

MeghanCon: or explain the parameters of what you expect from their post

MeghanCon: There are sample rubrics in the teacher tools

MeghanCon: Does that answer your question?

ElizabethC: Yes, thank you. It sounds great! I will definitely be sharing the site with my faculty!

MeghanCon: Excellent!

AnnTho: yeah!

MeghanCon: Let me talk a little about what we have in store for the election,,,

MichaelH perks up

MeghanCon: SEEdebate will be a wonderful tool for teachers for the upcoming election.

MeghanCon: Teachers are already using our articles on the election, but in the fall, we will be posting daily articles categorized by election issue (such as health care, Iraq war, immigration etc.)

MeghanCon: We will also post each of the debates. Students can hash out their stance on the issues and eventually arrive at a very well informed final decision.

MeghanCon: And of course, we will hold a SEEd debate-wide election for students as well as provide post election articles to keep students informed.

MeghanCon: I personally like this approach to covering the election because it makes the students more participants

MeghanCon: They can bounce ideas off each other too so they will get a wider perspective

MeghanCon: We have students in rich schools, poor schools, city, rural

MeghanCon: So it is nice to see what a kid in Queens has to say

MeghanCon: to a kid in Maine

MeghanCon: or San Diego

AnnTho: or Toronto

MeghanCon: Yes - or hopefully Europe, Africa and on and on

MeghanCon: we are hoping to go international next year ;)

MeghanCon: We do pull our articles from diverse news sources

MeghanCon: so for the election, we will be pulling articles from outside of the US so that students can analyze what is being said about the candidates in other countries

MeghanCon: it is fun to ask them to look at 2 articles on identical subjects and compare

MeghanCon: identify bias etc

MeghanCon: Other questions?

AnnTho: I think they're all at www.seedebate.org...

ShayneTr: Will there be an assignment bank, where teachers can share?

MeghanCon: I think so too

MeghanCon: that is such a great idea. You want a job?

AnnTho: She's not kidding

ElizabethC: I just saw the parent permission form. I think that's a great idea.

MeghanCon: Ann - We can do this, right?

AnnTho: oh yes.

MeghanCon: An assignment bank would be helpful

AnnTho: It's a great, specific, clear idea.

MeghanCon: We are very flexible - we want to help teachers

AnnTho: Thanks, "computermorah"

ShayneTr smiles

ShayneTr: I love sites where teachers can collaborate.

MeghanCon: Some of our teachers are very creative in their use of SEEd Debate

ShayneTr: I try to bring current events into my own subjects (art, computers)

MeghanCon: We have a section on technology - so there are computer related articles there

MeghanCon: also, we take suggestions if you want us to post something specific

AnnTho: Do some searching by key word or topic at our site, too, we've been posting articles for over a year

ElizabethC: Do you have articles on global warming? That's something my science classes focus on.

MeghanCon: and - we encourage teachers to post their own articles

AnnTho: Oh yes and the kids love to talk about the environment

MeghanCon: Do we have global warming? Oh yes - I think there are quite a few

MeghanCon: One of our most lively discussions is on global warming

MeghanCon: Most educators use it as a regular (weekly or so) activity for students in their schools' computer lab.

MeghanCon: That said, we also have educators who are designing their entire class

around SEEdedebate to use it more regularly

MeghanCon: as well as teachers who use it occasionally

MeghanCon: however it works for you

MeghanCon: Depending on your students' access to computers at home, SEEdedebate is also easily assigned as homework.

ElizabethC: We have a 1:1 laptop program at my school. It would be so easy to incorporate this site.

MeghanCon: You are soooooo lucky!

MeghanCon: I hope that is true of more schools soon!

ElizabethC: Yes, but I need sites like this which encourage the teachers to use them.

MeghanCon: I have easy access to the lab at least

MeghanCon: true - this is a great way to draw out kids who don't like to talk in class

ElizabethC: Right.

MeghanCon: I have some students who just need to process a little longer than their classmates

AnnTho: For "DrC" - <http://www.seededebate.org/node/357> is one of our most popularly-discussed articles on popular opinion of global warming

MeghanCon: On the site, they have a lot to say

MeghanCon: Nice Ann

ElizabethC: Thanks, Ann.

AnnTho: No sweat!

MeghanCon: The site is designed for teachers to use however it best suits their curriculum. We actually have teachers who use the site to post their own articles, have their students create blogs, wikis etc.

MeghanCon: oh yes and - we are also careful to present both sides to an argument - and then link the articles together so the students can see both

ElizabethC: Thank you. I think that's so valuable.

MeghanCon: I once posted an article on the British hostages in Iran and pulled articles from the BBC as well as the Iranian paper

ShayneTr: I'm trying to figure this out... I'm in "Create Content" ... submit Assignment. Are Discussions the same as Forums?

MeghanCon: as an example

AnnTho: I can answer Shayne..

MeghanCon: ok

MeghanCon: one other thing I haven't said yet -

AnnTho: Discussions, within Assignments, lists the "forum topics" which we call articles

MeghanCon: Students can complete a little bio section to tell the other kids a little about themselves. They can also post a picture (at the teacher/parent discretion of course). Students say it is really fun and addictive.

AnnTho: What we call "Exchanges" are really forum topics, and also what we call "Headlines"

MeghanCon: If you want to post an article, you would choose "create an exchange"

MeghanCon: If you already created classes for your students

AnnTho: Generally, teachers create a class, and then create assignments for their students to see

MeghanCon: You can create "assignments"

MeghanCon: and then the students will see them when they log in

MeghanCon: Is there anything specific at the site that we want to show them Ann?

AnnTho: I'd say at this point that it's useful to explore and feel free to send us a note via the contact link at seedebate or here at Tapped In

AnnTho: ...since so many folks here already created an account!

SusanR creates an account

AnnTho: See what I mean??

ElizabethC shrugged

ElizabethC: When you see a good thing, why wait?

MeghanCon: If you want to sign up and are having a tough time - or if you have educators that you work with who are not comfortable with technology

MeghanCon: Go to SEEdebate.org to sign up – if you click on Teach SEEdebate in the upper right of the screen, It will give you a link to instructions to walk you through

MeghanCon: You can print those out

MeghanCon: there are also step by step instructions for students you can print

MeghanCon: You just need to create your classes first so that you can give them the code they need

MeghanCon: Also - if any of you want to get brownie points with your administrators - feel free to "present" SEEdebate to a group.

MeghanCon: We have lots of teachers who have done that

MeghanCon: and I have shared the powerpoint that we used at NCSS and NERC with them

ElizabethC: Can I use your PowerPoint to introduce my faculty to the site?

MeghanCon: Absolutely!

MeghanCon: I can send it to your email - can I get it from your Tapped In "office"?

ElizabethC: Yes. Thanks so much!

MeghanCon: Great - I'll do that. It might be a couple of days if that's okay - I want to add a little

MeghanCon: thanks - and any of you are welcome to contact me at curriculum@seedebate.org

ElizabethC: Sure Meghan, whenever you're ready.

MeghanCon: Also - you are so close, we might be willing to venture down if you need us to

AnnTho: And I'm newsbyte@seedebate.org

MeghanCon: Ann is in Massachusetts

ElizabethC: That's a good thought. I'll check with my administration.

MeghanCon: Are there any other questions?

MichaelH: Meghan, you may have mentioned this...

MichaelH: when will the Campaign 2008 resources be up?

MeghanCon: Good question! Thanks

MeghanCon: We will actually be running SEEd Debate all summer for our diehard students

MeghanCon: We created a SUMMER 2008 class for them to join, so we will be posting all summer

MeghanCon: I think right now, we are waiting for the Dem primary to end -

MichaelH: that may be awhile, Meghan

ShayneTr: Still trying to create an assignment... under Discussions to Participate In, there are only a small number of topics. There are lots more within the various forums. How can you change this? I don't see it in the instructions or FAQ... maybe I'm reading too quickly.

MeghanCon: Shayne - did you create a class already?

ShayneTr: Yes, but haven't added students.

AnnTho: It should have a scroll bar, if not, I'll need more time to look into this...

MichaelH: Meghan... a suggestion...

MeghanCon: yes?

MichaelH: based on some of the questions tonight...

MichaelH: have you considered a "teachers' only" section of the site, where folks like Shayne and Elizabeth can interact, share ideas, lessons, etc. and can ask questions of you about the site, discussions, etc ?

MeghanCon: Thanks Michael - we have actually.

AnnTho: "Teacher's Lounge"

ShayneTr: I'll come lounge :)

MeghanCon: We don't have one as of yet - but would just need to create a TEACHER'S LOUNGE class for educators to subscribe to

MeghanCon: Or I can create a group here at Tapped In, right? ;)

MichaelH: absolutely.

AnnTho: Shayne - let me know about the list you see under "Discussions to Participate in"

DavidW: yes, certainly

MichaelH: I'd like to see you do that, Meghan

MichaelH: you could hold sessions with teachers who are using the site, or who want to plan...

MeghanCon: Exactly - I like that!

MichaelH: Let BJ or I know if you want to set up a SEEdedebate room

MeghanCon: I will do that over the summer so teachers can use it by the fall

MichaelH: cool!

MeghanCon: Perfect!

ShayneTr: I see approx. 15 discussions or None. There is a scroll bar. I'm not interested in any of the listed topics and wanted something from Technology.

MichaelH: it's about time to call it a night... any last questions for Meghan or Ann?

SusanR: Thanks Meghan and Ann

ElizabethC: Thanks!

AnnTho: Shayne - Got it- I'll send you a note later tonight via the email you left at the site

AnnTho: Thanks to all!

DavidW: Congratulations on what you both have built

MeghanCon: Thanks to you too - I will be in touch Elizabeth

MichaelH: Meghan, I'll send you an e-mail about the Cable in the Classroom story as well in the next day or so