

EdCamp meets needs of local and area teachers

The EdCamp format for providing teachers with professional development is destined to be repeated. This was the second year Chanute Public Schools hosted the event for K-12 teachers in Chanute as well as others from Labette, Erie, St. Patrick's, Galesburg and Chanute schools. Across the board, the overwhelming reaction from 375 teachers was that they liked being able to choose the sessions that they felt would benefit them the most.

Rather than have a couple guest speakers talking to the entire group, the EdCamp featured four hours of sessions with 20 class choices for each hour.

Among the choices were teaching strategies for English Language Learners, using google websites to share information and students projects with parents, genius hour where students explore their own passions, using twitter to exchange ideas with other teachers, seven factors that affect student's motivation to learn, online creation tools to use in the classroom, engaging centers for little learners, autism, and chrome extensions galore.

Most of the presenters were educators from the districts at the camp.

Teachers not only learned what strategies or practices their peers were trying in other districts, they were able to choose "the learning that would benefit them most in their particular discipline and setting," said Assistant Superintendent Kent Wire, who organized the professional development day.

"The EdCamp format is excellent because it allows teachers to get new ideas and strategies that are being utilized and effective by local educators who serve similar students in similar environments," said Adam Wilcox, gifted facilitator at Royster Middle School. "Teachers can act as individuals and go where they have a need or interest."

Kathi Emling, a veteran teacher who is new to Chanute, said she "absolutely loved" the experience.

"It was so nice to be able to talk to other teachers about what they were doing in their classrooms. I came away with many ideas to use in my room," she said.

Her favorite session, and that of Sandy Erikson, was Galactic Gynzy, interactive Smartboard activities to use with students in the classroom.

"The session on Gynzy, taught by Jeff Schoenberger (Royster), was very informative and is something that I could easily implement without too much extra work," Erikson said.

Other technology classes like App Smackdown, Chrome Extensions Galore, Twitter in your PJ's and Online Creation Tools were taught by four different educators.

"I took advantage of some of the technology sessions and came away with websites and apps to use in the classroom," said Lisa Ruark, Chanute Elementary teacher.

The EdCamp format allows teachers to share ideas with other teachers, not only at the sessions, but at a "job-alike" setting for lunch where all the counselors or music teachers or special education teachers could share what they do in their different districts.

"We sometimes dismiss the fact that we have experts on topics within our own schools or in districts close by," said Superintendent Richard Proffitt. "It is great to be able to share ideas with those who are facing some of the same issues that we are, and brainstorm ideas on how to do things better."

"What a great opportunity that our staff had to network with fellow teachers and learn from classroom experts on a diverse array of topics," said CHS teacher Brian Campbell. "I enjoyed (Danny) Brown's session on motivational ideas for today's children. It was very informative and introduced a few new ideas that all of us could use in our classrooms right away."