**Stepping out of the Ivory Tower to Advocate for Education: How Academics Can Utilize Social Media and Blogging to Make an Impact**

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**Abstract**

Participants of this session will learn about how they can become education advocates through technology/multimedia. We will examine the Tales from the Classroom project, which is an example of how scholars are advocating for education. This project utilizes blogging and multimedia to share stories of how educational policies impact the lives of those in our schools. It is the explicit intention of this project to make an impact on education through use of multimedia. Participants who are interested in making an impact on schools will learn how they might do so through this medium or one of their own. They will learn: how to build a blog, how to grow a social media following, how to broker their own research to a broader audience, and much more.

**Academic Research and Policy at Present**

1. There is a disconnect between academic research and policy with an increasing market for organizations who exist for the purpose of conducting research policymakers can utilize (Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2014; Orland, 2009).
2. Academics are of little or no consequence in influencing or shaping educational policy (Swanson and Barladge, 2006). Of those entities influencing policymakers, none of the ten most influential organizations were higher education institutions, none of the top ten most influential publications were scholarly journals, and one of the thirteen most influential people were connected to academia, though that person also had connections to government entities (Swanson & Barladge, 2006).

**The “New Way”**

1. Technology and multimedia make it possible to share information with broader audiences, bypassing policymaking gatekeepers (e.g. special interest groups, lobbyists), and can lead to the widespread dissemination of research (Goldhaber and Brewer, 2008). This can lead to a grassroots-like groundswell of public support for a policy issue and can ultimately lead to social change.
2. To influence policy via media, we must think more broadly and write to policy elites as a target audience, as teachers and education students do not have the policymaking influence they once had. (Greene 2011). The policy elites we must consider as our target audience “tend to be young and technology savvy, getting more of their information from the Internet than from books. They can still be reached by books, but the volume would have to be written with them in mind rather than the traditional educator audience” (Greene, 2011, p. 80).

**Using Multimedia for Change – The Process**

1. Need a vision for what needs changed
2. Develop a brand
3. Build multimedia platform
4. Blog, blog, blog
5. Social media marketing

\* To learn more or get involved with the Tales from the Classroom Project, email **info@talesfromtheclassroom.com**