Details

Leveraging ChatGPT for Customized Learning *with Sarah Wysocki - 248*
In this episode, educator Sarah Wysocki joins for an inspiring chat about leveraging generative AI like ChatGPT to customize learning for students from diverse backgrounds. You'll hear about innovative ways to use ChatGPT to generate ideas, help create accessible lessons, and tailor resources for a personalized learning experience.

Link to live show notes: https://classtechtips.com/2024/01/02/customized-learning-248/

* Customized Learning

Introduction

Hello there, my name is Monica Burns and welcome to today's episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast!

It's 2024 and whether you're joining for the 1st time, 100th, time or for the 200th time, I am so glad you're here! I have lots of exciting things in store for you this year.

Each episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast is designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year.

Get ready for stories from my time in the classroom, the work I do now with schools and districts, and my travels to different EdTech events. As well as practical ideas and inspiring stories from new guests each month.

If we mention something you'd like to check out, you'll find the link to it in the shownotes.

So don't forget to head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the show notes and resources from today's episode.

Promotion/Reminder

This episode is sponsored by my new free webinar "24 Tips for 2024: Simple Ways to Save Time Using ChatGPT." I'll share tips for educators who are new to using chatbots, and ideas you can spin and make your own if you're already diving into the world of chatbots. We'll look at ChatGPT of course, alongside alternatives like Claude and Bard, too. Join us for the free webinar live on January 4th -– or if you miss it catch the limited replay during the month of January. Either way head to ClassTechTips.com/2024 for more details!

Today's Intro

This week's episode is titled: "Leveraging ChatGPT for Customized Learning with Sarah Wysocki" and I first came across Sarah's work by reading an article she wrote for Edutopia. She mentioned a strategy using generative AI that we'll talk about today, and I reached out to her. I think I sent a DM on Twitter, and invited her to come on the podcast and share a bit more about her work. If you're new to ChatGPT or if you've played around with it for a bit, you're in for a treat!

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:

Welcome to the podcast. I am so excited to chat with you today about creating scripts with ChatGPT using chatbots, generative AI, and of all the things. But before we jump in, can you share a bit about your role and education? What does your day-to-day look like?

Sarah Wysocki:

Yes. So my name is Sarah Wysocki, and I work as an English language learner teacher, and I work with students that are brand new to the country. So most of my students have pretty limited English, and I teach them for at least one 90 minute block a day where I'm the lead teacher. And then I also work as a support teacher in different classes throughout the day. So depending depending on the day, things can look a little bit different, but generally I'm, I'm with, with students and really one of my main jobs is to get them speaking and comfortable taking academic risks and being a little silly and just being comfortable speaking even if it's not perfect.

Monica Burns:

Well, I read a little bit about your experience and some of the things that you are doing in Edutopia, which is why I reached out for our conversation today. And today we're talking about generative AI, specifically ChatGPT. And I'm hoping you can describe a bit about your initial experiences using ChatGPT.

Sarah Wysocki:

Yes. Well I should start off with, I'm not like a tech nerd or anything like that. Mm-Hmm. <Laugh>, when I first started hearing about ChatGPT about a year ago, I think like a lot of people, I was just kind of curious like, what is this and what's it capable of? And so a friend and I, we just started playing around with putting in complex text into ChatGPT, and we would

say, simplify this to a third grade reading level but keep the key points. And it was just like we were blown away with how quickly ChatGPT was able to make articles like specific to our children like our students' reading level. So that was like kind of our introduction. And then we just started playing around with putting in standards and create a lesson based around these standards. I, I teach in a school in Virginia, so we would use Virginia standards. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And we were, we were kind of just blown away with just how many ideas it created. And not that we would necessarily use everything as it was, but it would give us these little nuggets of like, oh my gosh, this is a great, this is a great tool, or a good perspective that we probably could have come up with on our own, but it just ChatGPT makes the process so much faster.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. I think that idea of being blown away right, is a really common feeling for people who are looking at this the first time. Whether they looked at it the first time about a year ago or yesterday or tomorrow, right. Is the first time they're opening up these spaces. So it was interesting to hear you say that you were right, speeding up right. Some of your workflow that you were seeing some results, but maybe not all of them are great <laugh>. Right. And, and you're looking at them through that lens of personalized learning. So how can educators integrate ChatGPT into their lesson planning? Can you tell us more about this idea of creating leveled content to share with students?

Sarah Wysocki:

Yes, and I think like the content can be leveled in lots of different ways. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So one of the things that we we're playing around with was making lessons more culturally relevant. Nice. And so for like a biology lesson, it could ChatGPT was able to come up with like plants and animals specific to regions that our students came from. Which is pretty cool because like, I don't know a lot about like Mongolia or Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> Ethiopia or some of these countries where we were just able to get something that was really relatable to our students without having to spend hours creating that. So that, that's one way is just asking for just a, a short story about a child from it could be a specific town and just how it comes up with something that the kids really relate to.

Sarah Wysocki:

And in my article I talked about using readers theater, and one of the things I would do is just create a short script about a child from whatever country. And one of the things I noticed right away when I was, when I introduced these stories to the class is that they loved the stories,

but they would always say, how did you know to pick that name? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, that's such a common name from my country. And I, and I personally did not know that that was the, you know, a top name in the country, but ChatGPT did. And I think just being able to make lessons where children really see themselves in what they're interacting with, especially as our world is more diverse, we're teaching children from a lot of different backgrounds. So I think the more we can weave in things that are personalized to them and ChatGPT can do it pretty quickly and you still have to do, make do your due diligence to make sure that it's accurate. But it's a great starting point

Monica Burns:

And that idea of, you know, using a name that's really common in a part of the world like that gives me chills. Right. That a student would see themselves Right. Or see their community or see a relative Right. In those stories. And like you said, like you might not, especially if you're working with students with a wide variety of backgrounds, you might not have specific experience Right. With every space in the world your students are coming from. So what it feels like a little thing, but it's such a massive thing for a student to spend some time right. In that piece of writing that you or re writing that you've generated. And then on the other hand, I can't help but think of like, you know, I taught fifth grade for several years where I was hunting for readers, theaters, <laugh>, during different parts of the year.

Monica Burns:

And it was such a struggle not only to find level text, but to find something that kids were even going to be excited about. So I just love those examples. And I'm sure for listeners it's getting, you know, their wheels spinning about even something just little Right. That could have a huge impact. So, you know, what has your experience been like? You mentioned it a little bit with the Virginia State standards, but what has your experience been like adding standards to your prompts? Do you have any tips for educators who wanna try like adding that extra piece to a prompt that they're crafting?

Sarah Wysocki:

Yes. I would just, most of us have curriculum guides and you can cut and paste the whatever standard you're working on and say, create a lesson based around this standard, and then get specific about what you're looking for. Maybe it's a closed reading text based on this standard, and it can do that. Or it might be create a unit around the this these standards and you have more than one standard placed in there. And and it will also do that. One of the things I think is most powerful about ChatGPT is just the ideas that it generates. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

And you might have a lesson where you're not gonna take that verbatim and use it. Right. But it'll give you this outline where, where it takes away so much of the grunt work and Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and, and then you make it your own. But any lesson, no matter where you're getting it from, like that's part of the, that's like where the teaching comes in Yes. Is by putting yourself behind it. But I think it just, and, and with ChatGPT the more specific you could be. So if you're using those exact standards, put the state that you're in, like, you know, Virginia State Standard, and then cut and paste that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and ChatGPT does a pretty great job of, if nothing else, giving you a starting point and helping you generate some new ideas.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And that, you know, ideation. Right. Getting a list of things that maybe you wouldn't have thought of, or if you haven't taught something in a long time, or it's the first time of something. And even just, you know, I feel like the, when you ask for like a lesson plan or a lesson outline, there's sometimes even things that you might have always done a certain way, and now you're thinking, okay, I could do this in a different order. Right. Something even like that, just to push your thinking, I think is, is really interesting about using this space. And, you know, are there challenges that you've faced when using ChatGPT? Are there things that have, or any roadblocks or obstacles, you know, that have gotten in the way as you've been exploring this space?

Sarah Wysocki:

There really hasn't been too many negatives about it. Like I said, sometimes you, you still have to read through things and do your due diligence that it's accurate. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. But I've found that most, most of what it produces is pretty accurate. And it's just such a powerful quick tool. So the challenges have not been that great. There has been times where I will put in a complex text and say, simplify this to a WIDA for a WIDA one, which is a newcomer to the country at that reading level. And sometimes it might still be too complex for my specific students, so then I, but the, you could say simplify further. Yeah. So sometimes you do have to follow up to make sure that you're getting the end result you want. And it might not be on the first try, but there's, you know and as you play with ChatGPT Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, you'll also realize the types of prompts that get you the results and how to type in per prompts. So you're getting what you want. But sometimes when your first result isn't exactly what you want, it's as simple as saying, okay, use this framework, but maybe put more of an emphasis on a certain part of the lesson which it will regenerate. So sometimes you have to go through more than one thing to, to get it to, to get the end result that you want.

Monica Burns:

I love that recommendation. And it's such a good reminder that even if you, you know, have a lot of experience in the space, or you're starting off for the first time, right. It may be that you need to add something extra. I know, you know, I'll often say, give me five more ideas. Right. Even if I asked for 10 to begin with, I just want something else, or give me something unexpected, or I didn't even think that this would be useful. And so then I add it in for that second time. So such a good reminder to someone, like, if it's not working just right, and I'm using air quotes as we're talking. Right. Like, if it's not working just right, then there may be that little follow up that can have a big difference. So if you're chatting with educators, maybe in your own school community, maybe someone like me who reached out to you virtually right after seeing your article. Right. What advice do you have for educators who wanna start using chatbots in their classroom? Is there, you know, perhaps maybe for someone who just needs that first prompt or that first strategy they can try out this week.

Sarah Wysocki:

Well, I think the, the one thing is not to be afraid of it. 'cause Some people are like, oh, this is creepy. But I think just play around with it, have it, write a short story and see, see what you think. One thing that's been really helpful for me is I have a friend in the building that's also very interested. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> in IA and ChatGPT. So we just have brainstorming sessions together and we also have fun with it. We're like, oh, let's put, you know, write a story about middle school teachers or something, you know, whatever. Yeah. Uhhuh, <affirmative>, it just ha like using that as like kind of a fun space. And then, but working with someone who also is maybe, you know, like, 'cause that's how I started. I didn't really know anything about this, but then a friend of mine said something and we started planning and just playing around with it.

Sarah Wysocki:

And a lot of what we, our first session was really just, what can this do? And so we were like, can it write a lesson plan? Oh, it can, can it write a unit plan? Yeah. Is it any good? And so just yeah, just playing around with that. And for me, I've been teaching for a long time, so it might be using a plan that you've, you know, kind of an old standby, but how can you tweak it? So maybe you're using something that you've already had and just, can you freshen this up for 2023 for the kids that we're teaching now, or specific to your students? So I think and also looking at ChatGPT not as something additional, but something that really can make your life simpler and help make learning meaningful to your students. So but yeah, so my big thing

would be just, just have fun with it. Play around put in a standard, say write a lesson plan if someone else is interested, like have a, you know, we always call 'em the geek out sessions where we're like, Hey, you wanna meet up? And we'll see what's yeah. New things in AI and it's just fun. So I think if you keep it fun, that's that's good. And it's good starting point.

Monica Burns:

And just this idea that you mentioned, right, that this doesn't have to feel like it's an additional thing. I keep saying, you know, that it's adjacent not additional. Right. It's right alongside all the stuff we're already doing. And it will probably help us, you know, work smarter, not harder through whatever that goal might be. Right. If the goal is to have more personalized learning materials, if the goal is to differentiate instruction, right. Whatever it might be, right. It's right alongside us, you know, this whole time. So Sarah, where do you see the role of generative AI, like ChatGPT? Where do you see this evolving in education in the future? Any predictions or things that you're watching as we enter into 2024?

Sarah Wysocki:

That's a great question and something that I have thought a lot about. I kind of think of it almost as like as Google, like, everyone is going to use this. And so it's, it is we needed teachers, students, how to use it. And I think that I listened to Adam Grant's podcast Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> with wife. And he had someone, a college professor, who was saying that I will not accept any poorly written work anymore because they have this tool that is there that can help with grammar and editing and things like that. So I think that it could, it could raise the bar for what is expected. Mm-Hmm. I also think that it's going to really open up the door to personalized learning and hopefully maybe move us away from standardized testing because those skills are gonna become less and less important as the world evolves.

Sarah Wysocki:

And information is just so easy to come by. So it's really like, how, how, how can you teach kids to think about positive ways to use ChatGPT how can you make them be critical of what they're reading and try and evaluate those sources to make sure it's a good one. So there's, I think that it's gonna open up some doors and it, and like anything we're gonna have to teach people how to use it. We're gonna have to educate ourselves because there's also the dark side to it too. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But I think that it has the potential to really change the face of education.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. I agree with you. I think there's so many things that are evolving right now that I know I'm watching closely too. And Sarah, thank you so much for sharing your stories of what's happening in your classroom, what you're trying out, what you're interested and excited about. Where can people connect with you? Where can they learn more about your work?

Sarah Wysocki:

Well, I have a whole like couple dozen followers on Twitter. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and @SarahWysocki10 And on Twitter I'm also on LinkedIn and I'm a writer for Edutopia, so if you, but if you do a Google search of me Edutopia will show up and yeah. That's good way to find me.

Monica Burns:

Perfect. And we'll link out to all those resources, including your article, so people can find it. Thank you so much for your time today.

Sarah Wysocki:

All right. Thank you. <Silence>.

So let's make this EdTech easy with some key points from the episode…

Brainstorm ways to personalize learning for students.

Refine your prompt with follow-up instructions.

Add in information, like the standard you are teaching.

Use ChatGPT to find connections that are relevant to students.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode including all of the ways to connect with Sarah Wysocki on classtechtips.com/podcast and finding today's episode #248!

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Outro

This March we'll celebrate 5 years of the Easy EdTech Podcast. To help celebrate, I'm hoping you can do us a favor. Leave a rating or review for the podcast wherever you're listening today – Spotify will let you tap on the stars, and Apple Podcasts will let you tap on the stars and leave a one or two sentence review. A big thank you in advance for helping us get ready to celebrate this March!

Episode Resources

- Connect with Sarah Wysocki on LinkedIn & Twitter (X)
- Sarah Wysocki's Edutopia profile & article about engaging middle school students
- ChatGPT (Chatbot)
- 60+ Must-Try ChatGPT Prompts for Teachers (Free ebook)
- 7 ChatGPT Prompts for Educators I'm Loving Right Now (Podcast Episode)
- 10 Things Teachers Can Do with ChatGPT to Save Time (Blog Post)
- AI in the Classroom Tips from a Teacher Using ChatGPT with Richard Perry (Podcast Episode)
- 10 Unexpected Prompts to Try in ChatGPT (Podcast Episode)