

Details

Must-Try Chrome Extensions for Educators with Dr. Katie Nieves - 246

In this episode, I chat with Teacher Coordinator of EdTech Integration, Dr. Katie Nieves, all about must-try Chrome extensions for educators. These teacher-friendly Chrome extensions can streamline your workflows and support accessibility needs of your students. You'll also hear Katie's top Chrome extension picks, tips for getting started, and how she sees extensions evolving to further personalize learning in the future.

Link to live show notes:

<https://classtechtips.com/2023/12/19/chrome-extensions-for-educators-246/>

**Chrome Extensions for Educators*

Introduction

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

I'm a former NYC public school teacher and started the Easy EdTech Podcast in 2019 to share my favorite tips, tricks and strategies for technology integration. You'll hear stories from my time in the classroom, the work I do now with schools and districts, and my travels to different EdTech events.

Each episode is designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year — so don't forget to head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the show notes and resources from today's episode.

If you're listening to this episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, or another podcast player you'll see the show notes link in the description, too.

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 LIVE 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: *Must-Try Chrome Extensions for Educators with Dr. Katie Nieves* and I'm excited for you to hear our conversation. We talk all about Chrome extensions and

this is a great primer for anyone who is new to utilizing extensions on their Chrome browser, anyone who is curious about how extensions might impact their workflow, or anyone who loves and already uses Chrome extensions but is looking for new ideas. Let's dive into the conversation.

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:

Welcome to the podcast, Katie. I am so excited to chat with you today about Chrome extensions, ways that educators can make the most of the digital spaces that they seem to be in. Right. That we're all in all the time. But before we jump into that exactly, can you share a bit about your role in education? What does your day-to-day look like?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Sure. So currently I am long title the Teacher Coordinator of Educational Technology Integration for a K 12 district in New Jersey. I used to be a special education teacher at the middle school level before transitioning into this role. Day to day, I am doing technology training and professional development for teachers across our 15 schools within the district, managing, you know, Chromebooks, our district subscriptions and things like that. So every day is a little bit different, but generally running professional development with teachers.

Monica Burns:

Well, I'm so excited for you to share today some of the things that you're working on, especially as someone who's in a role that's probably hearing from lots of different people over the day about things that are going well for them or maybe things that feel more like pain points <laugh>, or that are getting in the way. And today we're talking about chrome extensions. I know I have favorites that I use even on the Chrome browser of my MacBook, which is my primary device. Can you explain to listeners what exactly is a Chrome extension? What are we referring to here and what do you need to know before searching for or using them?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So a Chrome extension is a tool that you can add on to the Chrome browser. So it functions within the browser itself and it helps to kind of increase productivity or there's a bunch of different things really that Chrome extensions can kind of take on. We're gonna talk obviously

about the education side, but there's, you know, a lot more opportunities just outside of education as well. If you are looking to download Chrome extensions, you can get them from the Chrome Web store. I know they're working on an updated version of the Chrome Web store, but I think the current version is available until, I wanna say January before the new one rolls out. But what I like to look for before searching for an extension, because there are so many, and really I think anybody can almost add their own extension, develop it, and add it to the Chrome Web store.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I always like to check the badges on the individual pages for each Chrome extension. They have like featured badges is what they're called. The featured badge really shows the Chrome web store team has actually looked at the extension Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, which is, you know, important I think for a lot of schools to make sure that it's, you know, a verified extension, not just something that somebody downloaded or been created randomly. I also look for the established publisher badge, which means that they've actually gone through and been compliant with the Chrome Web store and Chrome policies. I always try like to check for those mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> before I actually go and download an extension to make sure that they're verified and okay to use.

Monica Burns:

Those are such great tips even for someone who's working, say, on their primary personal device. Right. In addition to the things that we wanna think about in education, especially with so many educators having access to a Chromebook or their students having access to a Chromebook. And then of course like many people who may not even use a Chromebook, right. Chrome is their browser of choice right. On their device. So how have Chrome extensions improved your efficiency or effectiveness?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I always think that Chrome extensions really help to streamline my day-to-day processes. Like for example, I have my to-do list that I keep in my Chrome browser. What's nice is that once you've downloaded extension, it syncs across your Chrome profile. So whether I'm on my desktop like I am right now, or my work laptop or my work Chromebook or my phone, it syncs across, which is really nice. So in terms of keeping track of projects, things I'm working on, keeping track of things I need to do for the day, it helps with that. Generally accessibility too. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, there's so many different accessibility tools that are out there just for everybody to be able to use. I'm very big on turning all of my webpages dark. I hate the

white background. So those are perfect. And I love that I have extension just to do that nice and easily for me. And then, like I said, just the consistency. I have a work profile on Chrome that I have built out. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> with my work extensions that I use. Then I log into my personal one. I have my personal Chrome extensions that I use. So it really just streamlines the things that I'm doing on a day-to-day basis and really allows me to customize the work that I'm doing, which is very helpful.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And you know, it's funny, I have a couple different screens up usually like at all times or your different browsers, like I'm sure you do too. And I've got my green one, which is my personal Gmail. I have my gray one. Right. Which is my work, you know, my at class tech tips hosted by Google. Right. I've got a another one that's my old Gmail account for work that I still log into some things with. Right. So, you know, I know there's so many different ways to tackle Right. Our workflows and those Chrome extensions. I know I've got a few that are part of my basically every day, you know, workflow. But do you have maybe a top three, you know, favorite Chrome extensions for teaching and and why would those ones be at the top of your list?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

There are so many. I had a hard time really figuring out what my top ones were. Yeah. I thought about teacher versus like student use. 'cause Coming from the classroom, my students use those chrome extensions all the time. They were so helpful for the accessibility purposes. But for teachers, I just recently came across, it's called Beep. And I was always looking for how to embed audio files into Google Classroom easily. Because again, from an accessible I perspective, I really wanna make sure that, you know, they have the audio plus the text and that's extension I found that automatically integrates within Google Classroom. Students can just click play and go. So from a teacher perspective, that's great. Yeah. I use iorad a lot in my day-to-Day practice. I used it as a teacher, but I use it now even more within my technology role.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

The ability to, on the fly, create a step-by-step tutorial for how to do something on the computer from the teacher perspective. That was great for parents. Like, oh, you need help accessing Google Classroom, do this, this, this. I don't have to screenshot or take pictures, it's just I click through it and it's done and it's made. And I also just came across, I actually interviewed them for my podcast on accessibility. There's a new one called Signup, which

overlays A-S-L-B-S-L and ISL I believe, on top of media content. So you can play movies with your class, but also be accessible to your potentially deaf or hard of hearing students as well. That's, I like to plug that one. That's, that's a helpful one. And from a student perspective, I always like auto highlight. Just wanna throw that out there too. That's a great one for reading. Just helping students be able to figure out what the important details are in any text on the web immediately. It's very helpful. My students really love that one.

Monica Burns:

Those are great recommendations. Not only from the workflow, right. Giving someone that step-by-step guide of how to do something. I know I have a SCREENCASTING one that I often use. Right. I think I've used it three times today. I should have counted before we jumped on our call. This app we're recording and it's like 2:00 PM Eastern Time. So I think we both probably used a whole bunch of things <laugh> in our workflow by this point of the day. You know, and I have one that helps me with like custom keyboard shortcuts, Text Blaze, which I talk about all the time I love. And so there's just so many things that also relate to accessibility, which you mentioned. And sometimes that's, you know, one thing that someone who might not need that particular Chrome extension and I, and I can even say like need with air quotes, right? It just might be convenient or help them save time. But it's really a must have for a lot of students, for a lot of adults that we work, you know, through different work processes over the course of the day. So, so glad that you mentioned those and, and we'll link out to, to your favorites there for people to find them. So have you Katie faced any challenges while using Chrome extensions in a classroom setting?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I think initially, I always jump to, and I think this is the biggest question I get about them, is when students have free reign, how to reign in what they're using in the classroom. I know I've been in two districts now. Both districts have set up district Chrome web stores Yeah. Where teachers and or administrators can vet and pick and choose the specific extensions they want students to download. In my current districts teachers and students can request to have new ones added as new ones pop up. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And from that perspective too, it allows us to go through then and overcome another issue, which is always, is it, you know, FERPA COPA compliant? What are the privacy rules? Is it age restricted? You know, it helps with that barrier that always pops up. I'm always trying to think about, you know, how are we making sure that our students' data is safe, you know, when they're using extensions.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I think that from the teacher perspective, the overwhelming aspect of adding extension and having to teach students to use it is always something that I struggled with in the classroom. We used to have to budget time thinking of the year to explore some of the more common ones and let students play around and work through them so that they became comfortable with it before actually being able to use it within their own workflow. And then the biggest one obviously, I think is the potential loss of an extension. Yeah. There are so many extensions that, like, even looking back when I was preparing for this or when I was preparing to write the Edutopia article, I was like, okay, let me review what are the common ones that I used to use with students. And like half of them were no longer updated and I was like, <laugh>. But that's always a big one. You know, students get used to something, they use it and if it's not, you know, developed by an established publisher that's going to keep updating it, they could potentially lose it at some point in time.

Monica Burns:

Totally. I think back to early iPad days in my classroom where it was like, ooh, you know, like some of these are up and coming companies, you don't really appreciate that. It's just like one person who made this and there's not like a team to field requests 'cause we're so used to these bigger companies. Right. So I think that's an important thing to take into consideration. And you know, it's not always the best response, but I know I try and respond with, you know, there's transferable skills. There might be more than one thing that does this right. Like it, it doesn't totally take the edge off the pain <laugh> of it. Right. But it is a good reminder for someone who might be thinking of something that they love, right. That there's often more than one tool that does that thing. Or there might be a few other options to go out and consider. You know, so I get a lot of people reaching out to me that are sharing new ed tech tools or new features. Like I sign up for a lot of newsletters from companies that tell me like, what's new with Seesaw or what's New with Flipgrid or Flip. Right. Which I keep calling Flipgrid still. So how do you stay updated about new and useful Chrome extensions for educators?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I, and it's gonna be a very simplistic answer. I like to visit the Chrome Web store pretty frequently. Yeah. And I'm always checking out the, you know, the productivity tab, the accessibility tabs. I feel like those are the big two that I always bounce between. And I think whenever I encounter an issue where a teacher comes to me with an issue they're experiencing in the classroom, my first thought is always like, well there has to be some kind of extension for that. Like, you're not the only one who has this issue. Somebody had to have had a solution. So I always just kind of browse through and see what's new, see what the team

at the Chrome Web store has been recommending, but once they're promoting that maybe I didn't hear about and try those out. And then honestly, sometimes I just do like blanket searches through social media just to see if anybody's promoting anything new that they've created or that a company has created just to see what's, what's new and see how things are working.

Monica Burns:

I think those are great strategies for someone who's diving in maybe not sure where to start. It's not quite like just doing any old web search, right? You can search right from within the store. There's categories, you can filter things by ratings and what's new. And you know, I think one thing that sometimes is underrated, I was at a event in Miami earlier this fall, and I did a session on like shortcuts and keyboard shortcuts, which sounds silly, but like you hear a shortcut from someone and it can change your whole entire workflow. Right. It can save you so much and you just don't know what that thing is for somebody else until you know, they hear it and they tell you. Right. Or maybe they don't tell you, but they're thinking about you even if they can't remember where it came from. So I also think that, you know, sometimes our colleagues are a great resource and maybe they don't realize that they have something special to share 'cause it feels like just any old thing or Right.

Monica Burns:

But it really could, you know, like having that open dialogue of what are you all using or what's something random that you're loving right now? And, and just those kind of ice I love like a funny icebreaker. Right. But so we could also take more of a productive spin on some of those too. I think. So, you know, what are, is there something, you know, is there a Chrome extension that you'd recommend for teachers that are just starting out with digital tools? Is there something that's a good choice for someone who's just starting to think about Chrome extensions and maybe isn't gonna download a whole bunch, but it's just gonna download one or two things to get a feel for?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I like to say I like to promote the, they're, they have the by Google ones first. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. They're the ones that are specifically developed by Google. Updated by Google. So you know, they're not going away anytime soon or they're being updated and checked frequently. So those are like, you know, Google Dictionary where you click on a word and find it right within the browser or Google Translate or you can translate by clicking on a word. Yeah. I like those because I feel like teachers are already using those tools anyway. Yeah.

They're using the browser, they're using Cool Translate sometimes so they're kind of familiar with it. So it's not as overwhelming. Yeah. It's just an addition to something you're already doing or even, you know, saved drive. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> it's something that's quick and easy and you're already using drive, you're already using the browser so you're comfortable enough with it, but it's a good transition into it. Like, oh, this is how it could improve my workflow. Now I might go and try something else, but it's a good place to start because it's, it's a safe tool. It's being updated. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> it's by Google, but it's still getting you, you know, your foot in the door with trying them out.

Monica Burns:

I love that recommendation because it really does, you know, do a few things and there's lots of people who listen in here who might not be in the classroom every day, but they're making recommendations. Right. Or they're coaching right. In their school or district. So you know, what you just shared checks a bunch of boxes. Right? It's something that is reputable, it's not gonna go away tomorrow. And then just make someone feel like none of this technology is for them. Right. It connects back to something they're already doing. So it has that familiar feeling to it and it can really become that gateway for them to also start saying themselves. Right. I bet there is something for this or this is a lot easier. I wonder what else is out there. So Katie, looking forward, how do you see the role of Chrome extensions and, you know, similar technologies that ease Right. Our, our workflow and in the way we navigate spaces evolving in education.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I like to think that eventually these extensions could really further personalize learning experiences for students. That's really where my mind goes when I think about it. Before I left the classroom, I kind of gave my students a blanket like list of these are extensions I've tried that you have access to, what do you need? Download it, play around and figure it out. And so by the end of the year, students had, some students had five, some students had one, some students had three. And it really helped them understand how they work best and what they need. And I like to think that that's kind of how things will shift within education too. It's, it's not going to be, you know, everybody in the class download this one thing. It'll be, let's figure out what you need individually. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, you use it to improve your own workflow, your independent working skills, your executive functioning skills. So I also would like to see eventually the rise in students find them on their own and recommending them. We do get some requests for students within district, but not often. And it's great that students are taking that initiative, but I kind of hope that, you know, we start to empower students to find their own tools that work for them as well.

Monica Burns:

You bet. And you know, as we're we're talking today about all of the things, right, that are related to education technology, right. Including your work on accessibility. I know you have a podcast that focuses on that piece. We'll make sure to link out to that. So anyone who's listening and probably already loves podcasts and might wanna add assembling inclusion to their queue we're taping this today on the day that the Spotify wrapped went live. I don't know if you saw like Yes. Any of those social shares. I think I was one of many, many people who had Taylor Swift right at the top and li and saw that they listened to almost 40,000 minutes of podcasts this year, which is exciting or embarrassing. I'm not sure which one. But I'll link out to anyone who's listening now so they can check out your podcast. But where else can people connect with you? Where can they learn more about your work?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So I'm also on Instagram and well Twitter now XI guess Instagram. I have to get better at. I'm on it. I'm there. I'm not as active on it as I am on Twitter and LinkedIn as well. I'm on there. And then I always, you know, they can always access me through my website as well.

Monica Burns:

Perfect. So we'll link out so everyone can find you. Stay connected. Thank you so much for your time today.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Thank you so much for having me.

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

Add Chrome extensions to your workflow to save time.

Extensions can enhance accessibility and personalize learning for students.

Choose extensions that are trusted, up-to-date, and have positive reviews.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode

including all of the ways to connect with Dr. Katie Nieves Licwinko on classtechtips.com/podcast and finding today's episode #246!

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!

Outro

Thank you for tuning into another Tuesday episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast. If you are listening on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or another favorite app, don’t forget to hit the “Follow” button – this way next week’s episode will be waiting for you first thing next Tuesday morning.

And if you want to share an idea from the episode with a friend or colleague, text, tweet or post the link on your favorite social media platform – and of course you can tag me @ClassTechTips with any questions!

Episode Resources

- Check out Dr. Katie Nieves Licwinko’s [website](#), [podcast](#), & [Edutopia profile](#)
- Read Dr. Katie Nieves Licwinko’s [Edutopia article about Chrome extensions](#)
- Connect with Dr. Katie Nieves Licwinko on [Twitter \(X\)](#) & [LinkedIn](#)
- [Beep](#) (For embedding audio files into Google Classroom)
- [iorad](#) (Create step-by-step tutorials)
- [SignUp](#) (Overlays ASL/BSL/ISL on Netflix & Disney+ video content)
- [Text Blaze](#) (Smart shortcut templates)
- [Save Time with Custom Templates from Text Blaze](#) (Blog Post)
- [ChatGPT Plugins Teachers Should Know About with Mary Howard](#) (Podcast Episode)
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- [5 ChatGPT Chrome Extensions for Teachers](#) (Blog Post)
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