



# Twitter Chats Made Simple

New to Twitter chats? Learn the basics with this guide.

By Brad Gustafson

**T**witter—particularly Twitter chats—can be a powerful tool for educators. Connecting with other school leaders during a Twitter chat—an online discussion threaded together with a hashtag—can foster incredible professional dialogue and support, learning, and even friendship. In my own research on leadership, I've found that leaders who invest time connecting digitally bring unprecedented levels of collaboration and innovation to their campuses. The transformational power of Twitter is its ability to bring people with different opinions, resources, voices, and ideas together to connect, learn, and grow.

Ready to give Twitter chats a try? Here's a step-by-step guide to direct your journey.

## 1. Review the Basics

**What:** Twitter chats create a cohesive group conversation around a topic, organized by a hashtag. Think of the hashtag (#) as a symbol that organizes tweets similar to how a file folder organizes papers within a desk drawer.

**Who:** Anyone from around the globe can participate.

**Where:** Online. Log in to Twitter and simply search for a specific chat hashtag. (Some of my favorite chats are #NAESPChat, #satchat, #edchat, #ptchat, etc.) You can participate in real time or review the tweets later.

**When:** Chats are scheduled by different organizations or individual chat moderators. There are education-related

chats every day of the week. Pay attention to time zones when planning to join a chat.

## 2. Prep for the Trip

Pick a Twitter chat you'd like to join and follow the hashtag to determine the next topic. Brainstorm the key ideas you'd like to add to the discussion. Prepare shortened links (using a tool like Bitly) to any articles, resources, or graphics you'd like to share.

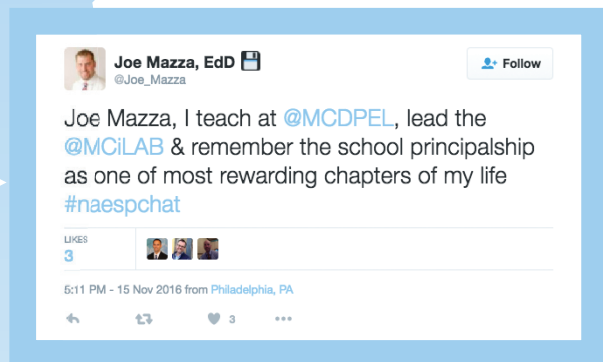
## 3. Dive In

As a chat happens, share your ideas using the chat hashtag, absorb ideas from fellow participants, or ask follow-up questions. Remember that Twitter can be a dynamic space to connect, learn, and grow, but how you use it and what role you play in a chat is completely up to you.

There are limitless professionals waiting to connect and collaborate around a myriad of important topics. Regardless of the role you choose to play in any given Twitter chat, it's important to understand that the conversation is enhanced.

## Meet the Characters

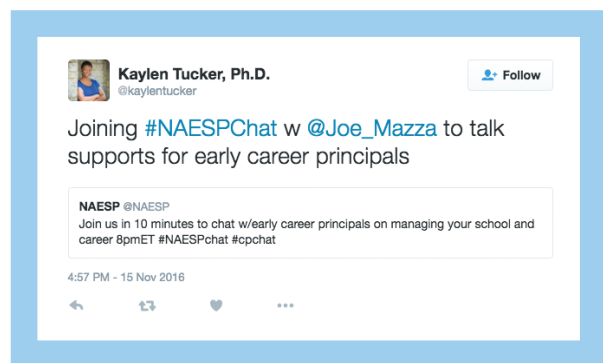
We'll use the #NAESPChat for early career principals as an example. These profiles of actual participants represent who you may see in a chat.



### MODERATOR

**JOE MAZZA** / @Joe\_Mazza

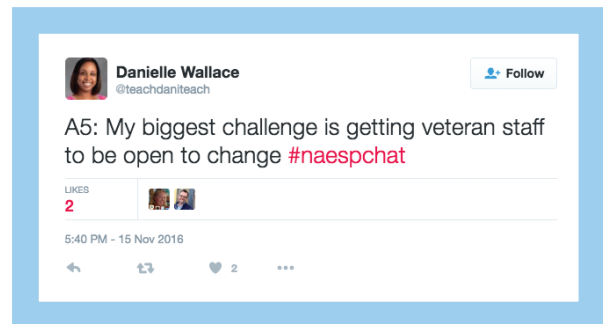
The moderator is the person who poses questions by posting tweets with Q1, Q2, Q3, and so forth. Most Twitter chats begin with brief introductions so participants learn more about fellow chatters.



### ORGANIZER

**KAYLEN TUCKER** / @KaylenTucker & @NAESP

Kaylen is the editor-in-chief of *Principal* magazine. She helped facilitate the chat and promote it ahead of time.



### SHARER

**DANIELLE WALLACE** / @TeachDaniTeach

Danielle is a second-year principal. She shared her biggest challenges as well as her best leadership strategies.



### CONNECTION BUILDER

**BRAD GUSTAFSON** / @GustafsonBrad

My approach to #NAESPChat was to personally connect with participants. I asked them for follow-up information and added encouraging words along the way.



### "JUMP IN" CONTRIBUTOR

**PATRICK HARRIS** / @PresidentPat

Patrick is a first-grade teacher. He joined the #NAESPChat conversation midway through. Twitter chats are extremely open spaces, so anyone can join from virtually anywhere on the planet.



### LURKER

**KRISTA KOTECKI** / @Krista4137

Krista is a new principal, and this was her first chat. Many first-time chat participants choose to sit back, read, and reflect—sometimes called "lurking." Lurking can be an easy way to dip your toe into the Twitter waters.

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