

Dream Conference - Now What?

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – FALL 2015

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It has finally happened - that one dream conference that you follow on Twitter or have heard so much about from others has been okayed and/or funded and you actually are going!

For me that reality came last year at our final SSLA meeting. SSLA provides so many things to teacher librarians from “*The Medium*” publications and blogs to annual conferences to Learning Events with “the” latest presenters and trendsetters BUT what you might not know is that after serving for two terms (four years) on the Executive you are given some funding to attend a conference that will help you (and SSLA) with professional development! This year it was my turn and ISTE (International Society for Technology Educators) has always been the Dream Conference for me especially after two other executives attended the previous year. So for me it was a no brainer - ISTE in Philly and even better my good friend Tracy who went last year and also was on the Executive and has written numerous articles for the *The Medium* wanted to go again.

In this article I hope to provide you with some helpful tips about attending a larger conference with specific references to ISTE.

Before We Went

Lodging

It may seem obvious but with a large conference such as this one - it was important to book lodging ahead of time to ensure that we had a place to stay and could fit into our budget. We booked our lodging late November for the July conference. ISTE will also offer ideas but we knew our budget might not match with their ideas. It was also important to consider what we both wanted. So the questions we thought about were...

- how will we get to our lodging from the airport and then back?
- how close do we want to be - what was the max distance we were willing to walk or did we want the ease of being in our space within 5 - 10 minutes?
- what type of space did we want?
 - general room to crash
 - B&B
 - apartment from Airbnb
- how easy is it to get to and from the conference from our lodging?

- is it within walking distance - if not how will we get there and how much will it cost
- how long would it take to get to the conference? - for our conference sessions started at 8 a.m. and could end as late as 7:00 p.m.

In the end we had decided to stay at the [Conwell Inn on Temple University](#). We wanted a place to crash and knew we wouldn't have the energy to cook but could have something for breakfast. On the map it was too far to walk so we knew we would need to take some public transportation to and from. From blog posts and webinars prior to the ISTE conference we heard to take the train into City Center would be the cheapest and fastest way to get in. It cost us \$8 dollars to get to City Center by train - a taxi would have been a lot more. So be on the lookout for webinars and posts prior to your specific conference.

Conference Planning

After registering for the conference - ISTE recognizes there are different ways to learn and also different areas you wish to focus on. They have identified four core areas but underneath you can see these four areas are further broken down

Listen and Learn

Sit back and soak up the learning.

Listen and Learn sessions include:

- **Lecture.** One or more presenters deliver a traditional lecture.
- **Research paper.** Two or three research papers are presented consecutively. Monday research paper sessions are presented in the roundtable format including interactive discussion.
- **Panel.** Two or more experts discuss a specific topic.
- **Multi-presentation.** Several presenters deliver a round-robin series of fast-paced perspectives on a common topic or theme.
- **Snapshot.** Two half-hour presentations focused on a particular solution, tool or resource are combined into one hour-long lecture session.

Engage and Connect

Network and socialize with like-minded peers.

Engage and Connect sessions include:

- **Birds of a feather.** Join an informal discussion with colleagues on a topic of common interest.
- **Meeting.** Meet with fellow participants in a formal public or private gathering with a structured purpose or agenda.
- **Social event.** These include both hosted and no-host events sponsored by ISTE or one of its Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) or affiliates.
- **Sponsor activity.** Participate in a variety of demonstrations and activities hosted by our conference sponsors.

Explore and Create

Learn by doing.

Explore and Create sessions include:

- **BYOD.** Explore new resources and develop your skills with extensive hands-on activities using your own device. Participation is free but requires pre-registration.
- **Playground.** Explore experiential environments and “play” with interactive technologies that enhance creativity and learning.
- **Workshop.** Dive deep during a 90-minute, three-hour or six-hour workshop. Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration and additional fees are required.
- **Learning academy.** Full-day learning opportunities provide a hands-on, curriculum-integrated, project-based series of sessions on a unique topic. Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration and additional fees are required.

Participate and Share

Interact with presenters or peers as you learn.

Participate and Share sessions include:

- **Interactive lecture.** Follow the lecture on your own device and participate in hands-on activities.
- **Forum.** Engage with content curated for your specific job or curriculum focus. Forums may require pre-registration or additional fees.
- **Poster.** Explore a variety of projects in a multi-booth environment where you can engage with presenters one on one or in small groups.

They also provided [an infographic](#) outlining steps but I always want more detail especially when you see how many topics can go underneath each learning area. They also reference sessions by areas of interest.

Leadership develops and articulates a vision for the role of technology in educational programs.

- Assessment/using data
- Community outreach
- Educational policy and leadership
- Funding and accountability
- Integrating standards
- Technology planning and evaluation

Professional Learning focuses on the training and development of leaders, teachers and other educators.

- Best practices and models for coaching
- Online professional development
- Professional development models
- Teacher education

Technology Infrastructure focuses on the technology, resources and policies necessary to build the infrastructure for effective teaching, learning and administration.

- 1:1 programs
- BYOD/BYOT implementation
- Cloud computing
- Data systems
- Emergent technologies
- Networking strategies/solutions
- Safety and security

Digital Age Teaching and Learning covers all aspects of technology use in the learning environment.

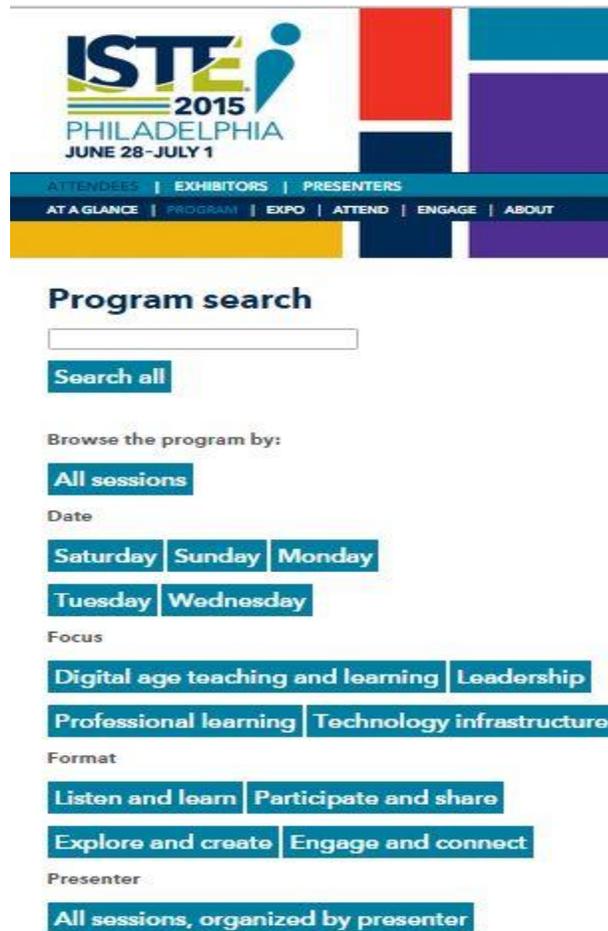
- Assessment/evaluations/standards
- BYOD/1:1 instructional programs
- Communication and collaboration
- Constructivist learning/maker movement
- Creativity and productivity tools
- Differentiated instruction
- Distance, online and blended learning
- Early childhood/elementary
- Flipped learning
- Games and simulations
- Innovative learning environments
- Instructional design and delivery
- Literacies for the digital age
- Mobile learning
- Online tools and resources
- Open educational resources
- Personalized learning
- Programming and robotics
- Project-, problem- and challenge-based learning
- Storytelling/multimedia
- Special populations/assistive and adaptive technologies/UDL
- Web 2.0 integration

So you can see why it is more than a bit overwhelming. ISTE provides you a way to search and plan using the program guide and by allowing you to star sessions you are interested in to see later. When logged in you can go back and view sessions that you have marked as favourites. This can help you narrow down topics and you can also search in a variety of ways (day, topic, grade learning style) individually or all at once. These filters are extremely useful to find sessions that you are interested in.

So I started initially by exploring and checking out different filters to see what types of sessions there were available. I looked for past presenters such as Naomi Harm and Shannon McClintock Miller and people I followed on Twitter such as Adam Bellow and Diana Rendina. I

looked at grade levels and topics and formats and various combinations - searching alone using the different filters was a fun way to explore and learn all that ISTE has to offer

While searching, I learned that each session had a brief overview and also had to include a program summary of what would happen during their time as well as research that supported their sessions.



So even though I may not be able to attend everything at once I could mine resources and find new contacts on Twitter which to me would also provide PD before during and after the conference. Powerful ah ha moments!

A major planning tip is you need to register for social events and BYOD sessions EARLY as they fill up quickly and you are only allowed to register for one BYOD session a day so you need to choose carefully. Below is an example of the details that show up for sessions. This was one of the BYOD sessions I attended.



10 Little Fingers: Integrating SAMR in the Primary Grades B225

Registration required. Confirm availability onsite at Ticket Availability.

[Explore and Create : BYOD]

Monday, June 29, 12:45-1:45 pm

PCC 118B

★Nicole Baseline★Melissa Filotas

We'll guide you through early childhood applications of the SAMR model. We'll feature authentic lesson examples designed to meet the highest levels of SAMR and share tools, including Google Apps, blogging and video. Come learn how to enhance student achievement and higher-order thinking with technology.

Evaluate this session

Skill level:	Intermediate
Device requirements:	Participant devices required
Applicable device(s):	Laptop, Chromebook, Tablet
Applicable platform(s):	Mac, Android, Chrome OS, iOS, Windows
Focus:	Digital Age Teaching & Learning
Topic:	Early Childhood/Elementary
Grade level:	PK-5
Subject area:	STEM/STEAM
ISTE Standards:	Teachers : Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity Teachers : Design and Develop Digital-Age Learning Experiences and Assessments Teachers : Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility
Common Core State Standards:	English : Reading (K-5) English : Writing (K-5) Math : 3-5

Proposal summary

Less...

Purpose & objective

During this hands-on session, participants will be given an overview of the SAMR (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) Model to help them understand how to effectively integrate technology tools into lessons to enhance student understanding and achievement. Since the ultimate goal is for educators to reach the higher levels of the SAMR Model, participants will be exposed to numerous examples of how to transform technological lessons to meet the modification and redefinition stages. This session will include access to products and supplemental materials and will help teachers gain ideas of lessons through authentic examples from teachers at Lake Mary Preparatory School. Come join us to learn about how blogging, Google Apps, video, and other technological tools can meet the modification and redefinition stages of the SAMR Model and help students develop higher-order thinking skills.

Outline

Overview of SAMR - 5 minutes

Kindergarten Example of SAMR Application - 10 minutes

Second Grade Example of SAMR Application - 10 minutes

Fifth Grade Example of SAMR Application - 10 minutes

Interactive Activity - 15 minutes

Q & A Session - 10 minutes

* Resources will be provided to foster collaboration beyond this session and conference.

Supporting research

This session is inspired by the work of Dr. Ruben Puentedura.

<http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog>

So you can see the detail that also has to be done when submitting a proposal to present at ISTE! Finally the last part of the session summary was some biographical information about the presenters. Again useful for adding to your PLN.

Presenters



✦ **Nicole Baselice**, Lake Mary Preparatory School

Since entering the field of education in 2001, Nicole has taught high school English, middle school Language Arts, preschool, and kindergarten before settling into the 2nd grade classroom in Lake Mary, Florida. Nicole holds a B.A. in English/ Education from Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. She currently holds a M.S. in Education Media Design & Technology from Full Sail University. She is a certified Google Education Trainer and implements Google apps into her 2nd grade classroom. In March 2014, Nicole founded Ultimate Tech Time, LLC, a company that provides training and technical education for people of all ages.



✦ **Melissa Filotas**, Lake Mary Preparatory School

Melissa Filotas is an educational technology specialist at Lake Mary Preparatory School in Lake Mary, Florida. In her role, she is responsible for helping teachers integrate technological tools into sound, pedagogical lessons in order to help students master the 21st century skills and become proficient in the ISTE NETS. Melissa spends much of her time providing teachers with one-on-one training and support, along with school-wide professional development sessions that focus on the enhancement of lessons through the use of technology. She enjoys working with teachers transforming traditional lessons into technology-rich ones that promote higher-order thinking.

Packing for ISTE

Many of you read blog posts and so again may be familiar with some of suggestions made in regards to pack for the conference. I had read Gwyneth Jones aka [The Daring Librarian's post](#), and also most recently [Diana Rendina's post on tips for surviving and thriving at ISTE](#). Reading these gave me some helpful tips and future purchases that I will make. Most helpful tips in no particular order are:

1. Wear comfortable shoes! With all the walking within the convention to and from sessions, visiting the Expo and perhaps getting to and from the conference this was a must. I had a pair of walking sandals that I could use in the evening and a pair of runners. So choose wisely in terms of your luggage space and for your feet.
2. Bring a water bottle and snacks. This year there were 23 000 people in attendance which means lineups for food and water. I packed my water bottle or kept a pop bottle I could easily refill so I did not have to stand in line. There are lots of water stations that do not have the line ups. Snacks will be important if you cannot eat at regular times as nearby food will be full of lineups. I found that by eating later (around two) I didn't have to wait long or at all.

3. Plan to eat! Make sure you provide some time to get something substantial to eat. On Monday and Tuesday of ISTE sessions ran from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. if you wanted to go hard core.
4. Bring along power and/or plug ins. I did need to recharge and having a strong portable charger came in handy on more than one occasion either for myself or for a friend. Mine also had 2 USB ports so I could charge my iPad and iPhone at the same time or share with someone else. Also having a place to easily access your cords is helpful too. I had to bring two different cords because of the different versions of Apple products. Diana Rendina talks about [Grid it](#) and it is something that I am looking in to purchase. Right now I am considering buying one that will allow me to fit [my iPad](#) into it as well as having all the necessary accessories easily accessible.
5. Although I did not read this anywhere one of the tips I found very useful was arranging the apps I would use the most to be on the front page of my phone. Think about the apps you are going to want to easily access so you are not having to open folders or scroll through pages. I placed all the apps I thought I would need easily accessible with one hand. These apps included
 - ISTE app
 - Periscope - new twitter app so you could watch live streaming
 - Hootsuite - can follow different twitter threads and be able to post
 - A QR scanner so you can quickly scan different codes at poster sessions
 - Access to app you using for curation (Evernote, Storify etc.)
 - Apps for sessions you are attending (I added Minecraft)

Curating and Learning at ISTE

This is another important factor to consider when attending a large conference. There will be the Twitter feed and QR codes everywhere and impromptu conversations with people who are attending. How will you keep track of all that information that is coming at you so quickly? Again I read some blog posts to see how others curated information and was willing to risk learning and trying new ways to curate information.

So here is how I managed at ISTE...

1. Have a way to follow the Twitter feed.
 - I use Hootsuite but there are other applications that you can use.
 - This year seemed strange to previous years as the official twitter feed was #ISTE2015 - when in the past it was just the last two digits of the year #ISTE15 so I had a stream for both as many want those extra 2 characters I also followed

#notatiste15 as I followed that the previous year and found I learned a great deal without being there

- follow PRIOR to the conference - you will find lots of information about the upcoming conference such as webinars and apps that may be used
 - I also used If This Then That (IFTTT) app to curate tweets with an ISTE hashtag so I could go back and add to my PLN and for curating links. Still not perfect this app but would try again
2. Periscope - this was new Twitter app that allowed you to see live feeds - you follow people like you do on Twitter and anytime they are broadcasting you can get notifications or watch later - so you could potentially see two sessions that were going on at the same time. T
 3. QR codes - you have the ability to scan so many from various poster sessions but what how will you curate them. I started by emailing them but then tried to use If This Then That (IFTTT) so they could be collected in one place. Didn't work exactly the way I wanted but will try again.
 4. When taking notes I was going to try using EVERNOTE but ended up using Google docs as I was more at ease at using this format - use what you are comfortable with
 5. Allow down time during and after the conference to digest everything that you to organize items given (contact cards, handout etc.) and to think about your learning and takeaways

I learned a great deal prior to ISTE and hope to go again in the future. I hope that when you are attending ISTE or another large conference these tips will help you.