We already have the tools; the method to make them work is social network learning. When you whittle past the hyperbole, social network learning reveals itself as a personal professional development network for teachers. The SNL course at Boise State EdTech, therefore, is not an exploration of teaching methods, but of learning methods for practicing educators and their students.

In her SNL course, EDTECH 543, progressive teachers explore the concept of participatory culture by immersing themselves in collaborative media and the requisite willingness to share what they know.

They develop personal learning networks, which are a support nexus of trusted colleagues and experts with whom educators can share ideas, ask questions, and improve their own service to students. It’s a whole new paradigm. Instead of waiting for instructional support from the school or district office, today’s progressive educators leverage support from experts worldwide. These experts range from other teachers who’ve been there, done that, to recognized authorities.

This concept is beyond theoretical connectivism. Social Network Learning is the practice of it, the pulsing of knowledge from one member in the network to another until all are current with best practices and strategies. This amplification of learning is how Boise State EdTech students become human hubs in the nation’s educational network, not just another nameless node.

Not surprising, the social networking tools that enable teachers to improve their practice are also potent tools for high school students because today’s digi-centric students value information discovery in dynamic rather than static resources. And they thrive on multiple forms of communication tools previously used for entertainment to access information, synthesize it, and present it to others.

Gerstein’s Social Network Learning course is offered summer and fall.