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**Is Your Counseling
Office Trending?**

Top Tech Tools Counselors Are Using Today and Will Be Using Tomorrow



By Angela Cleveland and Saqi Mehta

School counselors are facing an increasing number of responsibilities, and technology can help streamline your practice to fulfill your professional responsibilities more efficiently and effectively. If you are looking to connect with other counselors, get innovative and creative counseling ideas, or simply looking to make your job a little easier, look no further! Below are some tech tools many counselors are using today and a sneak peek into what's on the horizon for school counselors from tech and education insiders.

What's Trending Today?

1. Twitter is one of the most powerful professional networking sites. You can harness the power of the hashtag to connect with counselors across the country. Find, follow, and engage in professional dialogue on a local and global scale. If you are new to Twitter, simply search using key hashtags. Once you get more experience, you can participate in Twitter Chats. These are live Twitter events usually lasting about an hour focused on a specific topic at a set time and filtered into a single conversation using a set hashtag. Typically, there are about 5 questions posed by a moderator and participants respond to those questions. Key hashtags to follow include #SCCHAT (school counselor chat), #HSCCHAT (high school counselor chat), #MSCCHAT (middle school counselor chat), and #ESCCHAT (elementary school counselor chat).

2. Pinterest is known as a fun place to get recipes, craft ideas, fitness tips and more. Did you know

it's also a great place to get free school counseling resources and ideas? There are over 100 million monthly active users on Pinterest, and many of them are school counselors who love to post pictures of bulletin boards, share lesson plans, group activities, and organizational tips to meet your needs as a busy school counselor and also the needs of your students. Just getting started? Check out the following pinners. They have thousands of pins (ideas) organized by theme/topic. School Counselor Central, Savvy School Counselor, Creative Elementary School Counselor, and School Counselor Blog.

3. Doodle is a free website that simplifies scheduling a meeting at work or any other event in which several people have to find a date and time they are all available. It's free and easy to set up an account, select dates/times of meetings, and email the link Doodle gives you to participants. Their names are automatically listed in the Doodle survey. It's easy to fill out the form since all participants do is put a check next to dates/times that they are available. Doodle color codes the chart with yes/no/ifneeded and lists the number of responses of each at the bottom of the chart. Doodle eliminates lengthy back and forth emails with colleagues when trying to find a mutually agreeable time to meet, set up conferences, and more.

4. Nearpod is an interactive presentation and assessment tool. "Interactive" is the key word. Many presentations (and lessons) are largely one directional with information being given to participants. It's nearly impossible to engage all

participants simultaneously and easily to assess their knowledge. Nearpod allows for all that and more! You can incorporate participant quizzes and polls along with drawings that you can choose to project out or view for yourself to get a fast and thorough glimpse of your entire audience's response. No more passive learning! Sign up is free and easy. You can quickly import your existing PowerPoint or Google Slides presentations or search for free and low-cost lessons on Nearpod.

5. Facebook is more than your go-to place to catch up with family and friends! School Counselors are coming together to collaborate in members-only Facebook Groups. These groups are hidden gems with numerous resources and supports. A great feature of these groups is that you can ask for help or ideas on specific topics, and schools counselors respond and share. "Elementary School Counselor Exchange" "High School Counselors' Network" and "The School Counselor Store" are some of the larger groups with thousands of active members. You can post questions, follow conversations, or search the groups by key words. Something to be mindful of is that while the groups are "closed," they are not completely private. If you are seeking advice, keep the request very general and about the topic without giving out details of your situation so as not to breach confidentiality.



What's Trending Tomorrow?

1. Slack has greatly risen in popularity in the last 2 years and allows individuals to collaborate with other colleagues. The benefit is that it replaces the traditional email back and forth. You can create small groups for your immediate team, or Channels with hashtags for a topic or project (for ex: #AntiBullying). People can react to a post with an emoji. Think of it as a group text message with the ability to add pictures, giphys and links. Moreover, you can keep groups public or private

with full access control. The best part is that files are not only easily uploadable but searchable through word, PDF, and any other file type. Someone can direct message you or - within a large group convo - tag you with an "@" sign to get your attention. The Slack app is available on your iPhone or Android so that you can stay on top of messages on the go.

2. Wunderlist is a great app for those who like lists and staying organized and was acquired by Microsoft last year. It has a simple, clean design and is very easy to use. You can put in any type of task: school supply shopping lists, to-read books, or household items. Wunderlist allows you to share your (selected) lists with friends or colleagues for increased accountability. Anyone you share it with will be able to comment on tasks together. You can assign certain tasks to yourself and star other items. The best part of to-do lists is often completing it, and once you check it off it will disappear (along with a friendly chime for positive reinforcement).

3. Calm is helping many people increase mindfulness and focus on meditation. Upon visiting their website, you are greeted by a serene mountain lake. You can choose your 3 main goals (options are choosing happiness, building self-esteem, reduce stress + anxiety amongst others). There are plenty of options to choose from: 7 Days of Calm which teaches the basics; timed or open ended meditation with bells chiming to keep you in the present, and other guided meditations such as love, kindness, and forgiveness. The newest addition is Sleep Stories which narrate around national parks like Yosemite or Yellowstone. If you don't want any talking you can always choose a scene to play in the background, such as rain on leaves, oceans, streams, waves, and the beach amongst others.

4. Pocket We've all had the dilemma of coming across interesting articles online but not having time to read it then. With Pocket, a click of one button can save articles, videos, or images to your list. You can share or recommend them to others and follow others on Pocket to read what they are saving. An extension is available on your browser as well which allows you to save directly from your desktop computer. The best part is that you're able to read the articles without Wi-Fi, so it's perfect for long plane rides or nighttime reading when you want to shut off any phone notifications and have uninterrupted reading time.

5. **Voxer** is a walkie-talkie app that allows users to hear messages as people speak, or listen later at their own convenience. It supports instant communication with voice messages and users can also include text, photos, video, gifs, and share their location. Voxer works on any network on iPhone, Android, and the web. School districts and especially counselors are advocates for using voxer because it's simple to communicate loud notifications for emergency situations, users can send encrypted chats, and they can be monitored with admin control. Voxer cuts through email clutter and solves problems with communication (without giving out one's cell phone number) with families, staff, and students.

Angela Cleveland has 15 years of experience as a school counselor. She is an Executive Board Member and Webmaster for the New Jersey School Counselor Association. In her free time, Angela enjoys writing and is the author of several therapeutic children's books. Learn more: www.angelacleveland.com. Follow Angela on Twitter: @AngCleveland

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