7 Ways to make the most of a professional development webinar

Webinars are a popular way for teachers to access professional development with a variety of talks and topics beamed directly to a computer or tablet screen. However, they can often be a very solitary experience, so here are some ways you can make the most of a webinar.

1. Be selective

With so many webinars on offer it is tempting to join in as many as possible. As is often said, put quality over quantity. You get more out of a webinar you are interested in. If a talk on the finer points of the cleft sentence is not one that appeals to you, then don’t sign up for it.

2. Shut off distractions

Many teachers will confess to watching a webinar with one ear. Since you’re sitting at your computer, it is easy to put the webinar in the background to check your email or update your social media status. Doing this is likely to mean you do not take in the key points of the webinar or miss out on vital comments and questions in the webinar’s chat box.

3. Take notes

If you go to a face-to-face teacher development session you are very likely to make notes while you’re listening. Do the same when listening to a webinar. Taking notes not only makes you pay fuller attention, but it helps you understand and process the content.

4. Ask questions

If you’re watching live, use the chat box! This is your chance to ask for clarification, ask a question and get involved in the discussion. In a face-to-face session it would be rude for the audience to have a conversation during the talk, but in a webinar conversation it can deepen the understanding of the topic.

5. Network

Though you can’t see them there are usually large audiences attending a webinar, so make contact with them. These days, like-minded teachers use online communities to discuss teaching, and a webinar is a good place to start building up your contacts and find people you can talk about the webinar with.

6. Remember it’s recorded

If you know you are going to be distracted or will be pushed for time when the webinar is broadcast live, wait and watch the recording instead.

7. Watch with other people

Incorporate webinar teaching into your school’s teacher development slots. Rather than watch alone, get a group of staff together to watch. Not only will this encourage everyone to pay full attention, but a post-watching discussion on the content will allow the topic to be developed further and applied to your context. If time is limited, you can all watch in your own time and then meet together to discuss.