

Title of Session: The Closed-Door Syndrome: Overcoming Teacher Isolation

Moderator: Gail Hoskins and BJ Berquist

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GailH: Tracy -- how about a detailed who are you statement.

TracyC: I work at ENC with Gail...I work on all of ENC's publications and our web site. Also have created most pd products we do.

GailH: Tracy is modest -- she does great work!

TracyC: thanks, Gail!

GailH: Paul, besides Portland, tell us more.

SusanR: ENC..my first stop when looking for web resources

PaulNe: I'm a technology coordinator for my school district, two small schools in Portland. Oregon. I also run the K12Linux.org program.

GailH passes a treat to Susan.

SusanR: Thanks Gail

GailH: If you are relatively new to Tapped In, do you know how to detach your talking window. I think it will be helpful.

TracyC: are these schools K-12, Paul?

PaulNe: Yes, window is detached and yes, k12 schools.

GailH: BJ is co-presenting tonight. So will you intro yourself, please?

BJB2 waves hi to everyone

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in a male juvenile correctional facility in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

GailH: Welcome, we are doing intro's.

ChantaratP: Hi every one

SusanR: K to 8 Occasional teacher from Ontario, Canada

GailH: Outreach coordinator at ENC www.enc.org and one of your presenters tonight.

ChantaratP: Chantarat from Bangkok

GailH: Tonight we are going to look at an issue of ENC Focus (our weekly online magazine).

GailH: The particular issue is The Closed-Door Syndrome: Overcoming Teacher Isolation

GailH: I am going to give you the url of the online issue.

GailH: When you go to it, the navigation for the issue is on the RIGHT (not the left)!

GailH: I will give the url and you should click on the blue url and go to it, but come right back so we can begin.

GailH: Please look at <http://www.enc.org/focus/isolation/>

GailH: Can you position windows, etc., so that you can see the navigation on the right?

BJB2 wonders if anyone has already read the articles?

GailH hopes so.

GailH: If BJ will help Chantarat, I'd like the rest of you to look at that first article, The Curse of Teacher Isolation.... and scan for perhaps 2-3 minutes. There are some questions we will then undertake!

GailH: There is a piece in that article that I wish to paste here for us to think about.

GailH: It is a bit long, so be prepared to scroll in your window if necessary (and I hope you have detached that chat from the other window).

GailH: "Carolyn," a first-year teacher in the school where I was teaching, used to come into the teachers' room and share her classroom experiences with us. She would talk about what she was trying--things she had learned and was having success with in her classroom. When she left the room, all the teachers would roll their eyes and talk about her. Now, I had been teaching for several years and I had befriended Carolyn and I felt like a mentor to her and felt badly for Carolyn and wanted her to be liked, and to feel accepted. So one day I took her aside and warned her not to tell those stories any more because they were alienating her from the other teachers. Well, of course, she stopped coming to the teachers' room and telling her stories. About a year later I went to a teachers' workshop given by an education consultant and we were talking about school culture and how it affects our relationships with other teachers. I suddenly realized, when I recounted my experience with!

Carolyn, what a terrible thing I had done to her. What we all do to each other. I broke down into tears right there in the class.

GailH: --Rosalind, a third-grade teacher in Attleboro, Massachusetts

GailH: Do you identify more with Carolyn, the new teacher in the article, or with Rosalind, the veteran teacher who coached Carolyn not to share her experiences?

BJB2: I identify with Carolyn, but have been silenced by being ignored

GailH: David, we are looking at the first article in <http://www.enc.org/focus/isolation/> from which I pasted a long quote.

DavidWe nods

BJB2: I love to share new ideas and experiences...people look at me as though I'm nuts

SusanR: I identify with Carolyn

PaulNe: My school culture is very different so I can't say that I identify with either. I have seen faculty rooms like that though. I understand what Rosalind is talking about.

GailH: I have at times felt peer pressure (sort of) to be a Rosalind.

SusanR: I enjoy sharing...

DavidWe agrees with Susan

BJB2: I think you'll find that most TI members are like that, Sue

BJB2 . o O (nature of the community)

SusanR: That's what attracted me to TI; along with the support

GailH: Do you agree that teaching is not considered or treated as a true profession?

GailH: What have you experienced to support your view?

PaulNe: \$\$\$ lack of ...

PaulNe: ANYONE can teach...

PaulNe: Those who can't do, teach.

GailH: Please say more Paul.

PaulNe: I've taught for 24 years. It used to be better. There is more teacher bashing now days...

GailH: The authors assert that not much about teaching has changed in 150 years. (I suspect we'd all say that technology has changed some things, and that students and student behavior are "different" -- but let's assume that they are talking about TEACHING and not go on those non-teaching paths for a moment. With that caveat, do you agree with their statement (that not much about teaching has changed in 150 years)?

ChantaratP: Now in our place, Thailand ,about the teaching profession, it is a lot of change and no more active just , the policy statement ,

BJB2: I think they give a rather convincing argument in the article, Gail.

GailH: In what way? what words/

BJB2: Are teachers respected in Thailand, Chantarat?

PaulNe: "the culture constrains conversations regarding instructional practices..."

ChantaratP: yes, very much, particularly in the remote area, people in the community more respect to the teacher

GailH: Are there times when you like being isolated professionally? Is isolation ever "good"?

BJB2:" Teaching was not considered an intellectually demanding vocation then, and it isn't today. As a matter of fact, not much else about teaching has changed in 150 years, either."

LouiseSm joined the room.

GailH welcomes Louise.

PaulNe: Do teachers work together or alone, Chantarat?

BJB2: Louise, this is a discussion on teacher isolation

TracyC: there are ways where it is very freeing to be isolated...you can do whatever you think works...realizing all the downfalls of that

ChantaratP: they most work at the school , and there are some assigned in special to ask the teacher takes responsible for

LouiseSm: I apologize. Not really wanting to enter discussion, just trying to find my way around the site and I clicked this link. Thanks

GailH: Stay and join us.

GailH: The author talks about reinventing the job of teaching with four principles. They are bulleted. What do you think of them?

ChantaratP: I also stay on the discussion

GailH: We are looking at this article:

<http://www.enc.org/features/focus/archive/isolation/document.shtm?input=FOC-003703-index>

TracyC: I am particularly curious about the multi-tiered career paths...different levels of teacher expertise explicit in your job title/description.

BJB2: I like the idea of the four items, but wonder if anything like that will ever happen

LouiseSm: I am a first year teacher and I am completely overwhelmed. It is easy to see why so many leave the profession.

GailH: Do you feel alone and isolated, Louise?

TracyC: I was wondering if Louise, or others, had decent mentors?

PaulNe: Louise, give yourself 7 years. Then you'll be in your prime. It's ok to be learning...

LouiseSm: It depends on the day and the task at hand. I have a good support group, but they are all first year teachers. I spend lots of time sharing ideas with my mentor, but I actually end up giving more than getting.

PaulNe: I learned by teaching with a team. It worked well. That's one of the the 4 suggestions.

GailH: If you aren't learning, then what are you, really? Slowly dying?

DavidWe agrees with Gail

TracyC: Do others get to teach in teams?

LouiseSm: Because of my technology savvy, I am used as a resource more than having others there to support me. Kinda backwards I know. Most don't look on me as a first year teacher because I'm 38. I was a social worker for 12 years.

ChantaratP: yes, is it the same with team teaching

SusanR: I recall my team teaching years as most successful and enjoyable

GailH: Are you familiar with the term deprivatization?

GailH: maybe spelled wrong

LouiseSm: deprivation ???

TracyC raises her hand!

BJB2 listens to Tracy

TracyC: Deprivatization is what we're talking about...opening the door to let others in, and yourself out.

TracyC: Discussing practices, sharing ideas.

GailH: And we're talking about face to face (F2F) and online too.

TracyC: Seems like a common goal for people on something like Tapped In!

GailH: Maybe we aren't reacting as non-online folks would? Is that possible?

DavidWe looks at Gail with one raised eyebrow

BJB2: it's possible because we've found our outlet for collaboration in TI

GailH raises one back and asks David to explain.

TracyC: And, how much would Tapped In be needed if collaboration were the norm?

DavidWe: I think when we (Gail and I) see each other in real life, we react as "non-online" people. At least I HOPE we do.

DavidWe smiles

GailH: True. But in terms of feeling the isolation of being isolated (if that makes sense).

PaulNe: Power of the Internet is connecting people. Mailing lists, TI, blogs... all work to do the same thing, making connections.

BJB2: Tracy, even when a district or school provides the opportunities to collaborate...

BJB2: there may only be one math teacher or one art teacher, etc

TracyC: True, true.

GailH: The third article in that issue of Focus is by someone near and dear to many of our hearts. You may want to take a look at <http://www.enc.org/features/focus/archive/isolation/document.shtm?input=FOC-003705-index>

TracyC: (I am not suggesting TI is not needed)

DavidWe: Or, that one math/art teacher may feel a lot of isolation if his/her colleagues don't look at the teaching profession in the same way

BJB2 didn't take Tracy's comment that way

TracyC winks.

BJB2 blushes

DavidWe knows a story about a young teacher at his alma mater (high school)

TracyC: what happened with the young teacher?

DavidWe: I met her in the Fall of 2001, right before 9/11

DavidWe: She was kicking and screaming at the xerox machine in the library

DavidWe: I mentioned that she should say please/thank you to the machine and we started a chat. She'd been teaching for 5 years

DavidWe: She seemed very dedicated, helping the non-academic students get through bio class by having them tend to plants in the school, etc.

DavidWe: As we chatted she mentioned that she felt as if she had NO colleagues

DavidWe: I was surprised as there are certainly other science teachers - she said no one wanted to talk about things in science education that interested her.

DavidWe: I asked her about anyone else in the school and she said that, yes, there was one other teacher (another discipline) with whom she had conversations, but it sure sounded as though she felt VERY isolated

DavidWe: I learned this year that she is now teaching in the middle school (same school district) which seems to be a much more supportive environment. I know other teachers (including some of my former teachers) at the middle school and they confirm this.

DavidWe: I was happy that she found a better environment (end of story).

DavidWe thanks the audience

TracyC applauds.

DavidWe grins

DavidWe: Thanks, Tracy

GailH applauds too.

TracyC: That fits the stereotype, right--high schools are the absolute worst for teacher collaboration?

BJB2: I think Middle schools use more of the team method

DavidWe bows humbly and respectfully

PaulNe: So it begs the question, how to create an environment that invites collegial relationships...

GailH: So if a teacher is isolated, who needs to "do" something?

GailH: I am more interested in Paul's.

GailH: There are some resources that may be helpful in the fourth article of that issue of Focus.

TracyC: Paul, do you think individual teachers can do it?

DavidWe: I believe it IS ALL ABOUT creating the ENVIRONMENT

GailH: Specifically here:

<http://www.enc.org/features/focus/archive/isolation/document.shtm?input=FOC-003706-index>

TracyC: ...change the environment, I mean...?

PaulNe: Principals can do a lot but they should work themselves out of a job.

BJB2 wonders if the primary responsibility is at the administrative level

PaulNe: The faculty has to own the school.

GailH: With all due respect, I don't think teachers can afford to leave it to the admin. to do it.

DavidWe is proud that BJ's article is in the issue of FOCUS - way to go BJ

DavidWe agrees most strongly with Gail's comment

BJB2: Teachers have to be involved, but I still think admin is important in setting a tone ...providing the opportunity for collaboration

SusanR: There is a need to build a collaborative teacher culture.

BJB2: encouraging teams

BJB2 nods to Sue

SusanR: The key is the administration

GailH: I want to share a comment that is in the sidebar (that I wrote) to BJ's article. It is about Tapped In. In part, it says: Another thing I value about Tapped In is its "level playing field:" because members usually don't know each other, interactions easily take place between educators at all levels, from novices to veterans to teacher educators. Participants often leave invigorated by their interactions with others about a topic and/or the availability of resources--particularly people resources.

PaulNe: Can I paste in a link to a good amazon book?

TracyC: Sure, Paul.

GailH: Please do!

PaulNe: http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0893343714/ref=pd_sim_b_2/002-6414606-8752067?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance

GailH: Title is Becoming an Invitational Leader: A New Approach to Professional and Personal Success

PaulNe: Invitational theory goes along with creating the kind of environment discussed here.

PaulNe: Bj "invited" me to the chat today...

TracyC: Looks good--thanks for the reference!

GailH: I would also suggest this:

GailH: Opening Classroom Doors: Heroes for the Good of the Profession

GailH: www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2004/doors.html

GailH: Who is Crystal Lancour and why should teachers care? Because, these authors say, she is a true hero of the teaching profession: she opened her classroom doors to let others peer inside to see what and how she teaches. Read to see how her example can--and should--be one of inspiration to teachers across the country.

GailH: (It is in that fourth article of the issue of ENC Focus we have been looking at, which, again is <http://www.enc.org/focus/isolation/>

TracyC: We definitely need to see more models of this...the idea of teachers teaching alone is so ingrained for most of us.

GailH: This has been a different kind of session than ENC has usually been involved in.

GailH: I think we have had some thoughtful thoughts.

GailH: I hope you can join me here at Tapped in on Tuesday March 1 from 7 - 9 PM EASTERN time for an ENC Math and Science Fair. (Think about how there are so many participants at a fair -- either a county fair or a school content-based fair.) Get in touch with me before the event at <mailto:ghoskins@enc.org> or just join us at Tapped In for a participatory experience in K-12 math and science!

TracyC: Wish we had more time for thoughtful thoughts...so much more to explore!

GailH: I would welcome hearing from you about this issue of Teacher isolation as you think more about it.

BJB2 applauds and thanks Gail and Tracy for providing this opportunity

PaulNe: Thanks folks...

GailH applauds our author BJ!

DavidWe stands and applauds

TracyC: Thanks for coming!

GailH: Thanks, Aren't we all glad for Tapped In?

DavidWe is

TracyC jumps up and down.

ChantaratP: I sit in you all discussions, it is good to hear from you all ,

GailH hopes that we all have someone to talk to about this evening's discussion.

PaulNe: Good night all...

GailH: Chantarat, I am glad you joined us.

GailH: Good night all.