

Title of Session: Special Education Forum

Moderator: Paul Bohac

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Room: Special Education Forum Group

BJB2: Welcome to this month's Special Education Forum, Maureen

PaulDB: Where are you from Maureen?

MaureenB: NY

MaureenB: Putnam County

PaulDB: Maybe I jumped the gun since we have not done introductions yet.

PaulDB: Do you teach ESE kids?

BJB2 smiles...looks like we're starting them, Paul

MaureenB: I teach 4th grade. I am the reg ed teacher in a collaborative program

BJB2: remind me what ESE is, please, Paul

PaulDB: I reviewed the last month's transcript and really got excited about assessment as a topic this month.

PaulDB: Exceptional Student Education.

BJB2: ahhh...thanks

PaulDB: How is the collaborative program structured Maureen?

MaureenB . o O (thinks I have enough with assessment just finished the NYS ELA)

PaulDB: I am sorry Maureen, you told us about the classroom structure last month and I simply forgot.

MaureenB: There are special education students in a core class with regular ed students

PaulDB: Okay, in that case let's talk about technology since you indicated such an interest last month.

MaureenB: there is a special ed teacher co teaching 1/2 day and a teacher aide the other half

MaureenB: No I am kidding about assessment

MaureenB: I could talk about either

PaulDB: Do you have specific questions, want to explore options, or are you seeking general information?

PaulDB: My interest in assessment relates to the use of technology.

PaulDB: For example, I would suspect that the NYS ELA was administered consistent with NCLB?

MaureenB: then I am in for that

MaureenB: I was just telling BJ that I want to do a podcast with the class

PaulDB: Please explain.

MaureenB: we are doing persuasive essays in writing workshop

BJB2: podcasts are a wonderful way to use audio with the kids, Paul

MaureenB: in order to get my reluctant writers to write

PaulDB: Use an introductory sentence?

MaureenB: they will have the hook of knowing that they are going to do "a radio show" that we be podcast

MaureenB: on the school website

MaureenB: and maybe beyond

BJB2 looks for the transcript on podcasting to share with Paul

PaulDB: That encourages writing as one would speak.

MaureenB: yes and they will work in cooperative groups to script it

PaulDB: Will they have access to a word processing program to develop the script?

MaureenB: my school is also working on a relationship with IBM for literacy

MaureenB: yes

MaureenB: I have 4 computers plus an Alpha Smart

PaulDB: Computer literacy leading to reading literacy or reading literacy to promote computer literacy?

MaureenB: It is reading online to help non readers from K to adult

PaulDB: The Alpha Smart is similar to a Smart Board?

LindaU joined the room.

PaulDB: If it is on-line then the kids must possess some level of computer literacy.

MaureenB: no a small keyboard that is very transportable

MaureenB: yes

PaulDB: Thanks.

MaureenB: that is true

PaulDB: Hi Linda

LindaU: Hi

BJB2: Paul, when you get a chance, read this transcript on podcasting
<http://ti2data.sri.com/transcripts/mst/2006/20060130sigtcpodcasting.pdf>

BJB2 waves hi to Linda

PaulDB: Did you or someone in the school teach the computer literacy skills?

MaureenB: They can take the Alpha Smart to the rug, to the hall even out to the playground

PaulDB: Thanks BJ

MaureenB: Technology is my new passion so I do most of it

PaulDB: So you have a level of knowledge as to the skills your kids have mastered.

PaulDB: You practice a form of "continuous assessment"?

MaureenB: This IBM program when we have it up and running will be like having another set of eyes into the reading of my students

PaulDB: Is it individualized with a built in record-keeping system?

MaureenB: yes

MaureenB: we show a running record

MaureenB: fluency level

MaureenB: checks speed of reading too

PaulDB: How do you transform the information obtained from the computer program into instructional activities in the classroom?

PaulDB: For example, in developing the podcast, with its emphasis on development of writing skills, will you create cooperative learning groups to work together?

MaureenB: now it helps sets reading levels to help all students choose books at their independent level

MaureenB: and guided reading groups

MaureenB: and a hook for reluctant readers

MaureenB: but am always looking for more since the classroom teacher is more and more in charge of differentiating for all students

PaulDB: So you are tying the reading program to the formation of groups to facilitate the writing of the podcast?

MaureenB: it is not running well enough to do that yet

PaulDB: Would you explain what you mean by the use of the term "differentiating"?

MaureenB: making a project or activity doable by all students

PaulDB: Okay, that I understand.

LindaU: Differentiating instruction is making the learning tasks accessible for all students..

MaureenB: book on tape, or writing activity that may be simpler for the less able student

PaulDB: I had not heard or used that term previously.

PaulDB: Maybe that shows my "age".

MaureenB: thanks Linda was having a spelling moment with accessible

LindaU: Modifying the instruction to meet the learning needs and styles and levels of each student

PaulDB: That would suggest a need for a "task analysis" to be able to differentiate instruction.

MaureenB: learning style is where Podcasting can make a difference for some

PaulDB: True.

LindaU: Ah the instructional design models.. yes.. I believe good teachers do that (a rose by any other name) assessing prior learning, etc...

PaulDB: Yes, and in Maureen's case, since she has been involved in developing the computer literacy of her kids, she know quite a bit about their individual learning styles, needs and current performance levels.

PaulDB: The ease with which computer skills were acquired, the manner in which those skills were acquired, and the level of performance demonstrated are all elements of a meaningful assessment.

PaulDB: Watching what kids do (as a former administrator we called it MBWA) can be instrumental.

MaureenB: I find the learning curve for computer skills is not as steep as the curve in learning to read. So putting the two together helps tremendously.

PaulDB: I guess my concern is that we want to use the technology as a tool for learning/instructing but we don't want the technology to necessarily become the target of the learning.

PaulDB: Hence my comment about a "tool".

PaulDB: Have you used podcasting Linda?

MaureenB: I guess the lines are blurring there. Our middle school has a one on one laptop incentive. The computer is more than a tool there.

PaulDB: I would think so.

PaulDB: It would seem to me that as computer literacy improves, there is a corresponding increase in literacy in general. The difference is that computer literacy creates options beyond the control of the classroom teacher.

PaulDB: It would also seem to me that if kids pick up computer literacy skills quicker than reading skills, maybe the way in which we define, teach, or evaluate reading skills needs to be re-examined.

MaureenB: they still knew read the printed word whether it is in a book or on a screen

PaulDB: Yes.

MaureenB: true the computer could read it to them

PaulDB: But to get that word on the screen, the student had to do something.

MaureenB: well I am going to play devil's advocate

LindaU: I'm not really in a classroom of my own.. but I've been teaching teachers to use podcasting with their students.

MaureenB: it will be a long time before state assessments will go there

PaulDB: True, but the assessment of Special Education youth does have some flexibility.

PaulDB: Remember, the type of assessment used also establishes the instructional program.

MaureenB: not in NY

MaureenB: unless there is a severe disability

LindaU: However, high stakes testing has changed the assessment a bit.

PaulDB: There is no provision for alternative assessment of ESE kids in NY?

MaureenB: only severely disabled

MaureenB: not the kids I have

MaureenB: they are thrown in the deep end of the pool

PaulDB: What about the IEP written for the kids you have?

LindaU: NY has had Regents exams forever. Now other states are following with standardized multiple choice testing for almost all kids including special ed. and English Language Learners who use to be exempt.

MaureenB: on a reading assessment they have to do the reading the only accommodations are more time, simplified directions

PaulDB: I understand that, Florida has its own FCAT program.

LindaU: It's the one test fits all and schools/teachers, etc are judged on how well the kids do.

MaureenB: different for Math Science or Social Studies they can have the test read on those

MaureenB: We do have an autistic program and some of those students have an alternative assessment

LindaU: CA still does the IEP individual testing for Special Ed kids, but they still must take the standardized test the other kids take, whether or not they have IEPs.

BJB2 . o O (probably one of the reasons states are in an uproar about NCLB)

LindaU: Prior TO NCLB these students didn't have to do this.

MaureenB nods to BJ

PaulDB: That is where I was heading.

BJB2: on that upbeat topic, we have reached the end of our hour already!

PaulDB: Already?!?

BJB2 nods solemnly

PaulDB: Before I go, I would like to suggest that we take this up again next month for further discussion.

BJB2: assessment? NCLB?

PaulDB: Assessment and its relationship to NCLB

LindaU: A good topic... one worth investigating for sure.

MaureenB: sounds good

PaulDB: I use assessment as it relates to instruction.

LindaU: as it should.. but legislation has changed this focus..

MaureenB: and given me gray hair

PaulDB: High stakes testing is not assessment.

MaureenB: thanks Paul

LindaU agrees wholeheartedly with Paul.. but it is a political reality that we must change.

MaureenB waves good night to all

PaulDB: Well, we can each be "a majority of one" as Thoreau said.

BJB2: thanks, Paul

PaulDB: I look forward to next month's discussion!