

**Title of Session:** SSForum - Beyond the Fire  
**Moderator:** Michael Hutchison  
**Guests:** Elizabeth Meyer, Cathy Fischer and Sesh Kannan  
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**MichaelH:** Welcome everyone, to tonight's Social Studies forum

**MichaelH:** Tonight's topic is a great one, with a lot of interesting resources and materials we can use in the classroom

**MichaelH:** I'll let Sesh, Elizabeth, and Cathy describe more about that in a second, but first, let's start with introductions...

**MichaelH:** would everyone like to tell us who you are, where you're from, and what you do?

**LessieI:** Hello, my name is Lessie and I'm a Computer teacher.

**PaulaSa:** I'm Paula from Maryland - technology integration specialist

**TracyCh:** Hi! I'm Tracy from Bossier City, LA and I am a Technology Facilitator for the Special Education Department (Bossier Parish Public Schools) Glad to be here!

**KarenHB:** Hi, I'm Karen Barrios, Instructional Technology Facilitator for Jefferson Parish Public Schools (the west bank of New Orleans, LA)

**MadelineRo:** I am Madeline, I teach Sp Ed in Bossier City

**ElizabethM3:** I'm Elizabeth Meyer - I work at ITVS (independent television service). We fund programs for public television (PBS), and also innovative projects for the web, like Sesh's project BEYOND THE FIRE.

**MichaelH** is Michael Hutchison, a technology curriculum facilitator from southwestern Indiana, and educational consultant for "Beyond the Fire"

**TomGst1:** I'm Tom, a high school psychology teacher from Charleston, SC and a student in Michael's CU online class.

**CathyGst9:** Hi. I'm Cathy, I also work at ITVS and I served as the senior editor on the Beyond the Fire website.

**SeshGst7:** I'm Sesh Kannan from Washington DC and the producer of Beyond the Fire

**MichaelH** looks to see if there's anyone else who needs to say "hi"

**MichaelH:** Matthew?

**MichaelH:** Ok, as many of you already know, our topic this evening deals with a new web site, called "Beyond the Fire".

**MichaelH:** It has been an honor for me to be involved with it for about six or seven months, and we're going to discuss the site, what's there, and how you can use it in your classroom

**MichaelH:** As Sesh mentioned, he's the producer...

**MichaelH:** Sesh, would you like to take a second and tell us about the site... what does it deal with?

**SeshGst7:** BTF is an online documentary on teen war refugees from seven conflict zones

**SeshGst7:** it is aimed at the American teen audience as a way of engaging them in a peer to peer dialogue about war, the world around them and youth refugees...

**MichaelH:** Sesh, it's only been up for a short time, right?

**SeshGst7:** ITVS and I felt the peer to peer approach was the best way to initiate the dialogue among teens whose impression of war and its effects is that it's smart bombs etc. there are 15 teens on the site from Iraq, Sudan, Somalia,

**SeshGst7:** Sierra Leone, Liberia, Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. the site launched last week

**ElizabetM3:** I will add that it tells their stories through audio and animated movies and is incredibly compelling to hear what these kids have lived through. they are all living here in the U.S. right now.

**MichaelH:** What are the web requirements for the site? Browser? Flash?

**SeshGst7:** there are 60 flash movies on the site that give a comprehensive and incredible picture of life as a teen in a war zone

**SeshGst7:** it works on all browser platforms and requires flash 6

**CathyGst9:** However, much of the key content is available in HTML as well.

**MichaelH:** right... the stories are also in text form, right?

**ElizabetM3:** Yes - there are transcripts of all the interviews, along with lesson plans, etc.

**TomGst1:** Will this be a long term project?

**SandraLP:** Oh good- Thank you

**SeshGst7:** yes. all the transcripts etc are also downloadable tpp use in the classroom

**MichaelH:** Let's give them the address for the site, and then we can discuss some things about it

**CathyGst9:** The site will be up for at least 4 years.

**MichaelH:** Here's what will happen, folks...

**CathyGst9:** [www.beyondthefire.net](http://www.beyondthefire.net)

**MichaelH:** I'll type the URL for the site. It'll come up in the chat window as a live link

**MichaelH:** . o O ( or Cathy will do it )

**CathyGst9:** -)

**MichaelH:** go click on it, and it will open in a new window. BUT....

**MichaelH:** don't stray away too long, because Sesh, Cathy, and Elizabeth are here to talk to you about the site, how you can use it, and if you have any questions, they can answer them

**MichaelH:** take a couple of minutes and look at Beyond the Fire

**MichaelH:** checks to see if everyone sees the site.,..

**MichaelH:** You all will want to note that the passport and travelogue are key elements for using the site in the classroom

**TravisS:** thank you, I just pulled the site up

**TracyCh:** The statistics are mind boggling. I had no idea...

**TravisS:** it's emotionally powerful

**KarenHB:** I love the driving opening questions.

**TracyCh:** me too!

**LessieI:** I feel for the children being soldiers.

**TravisS:** what would you take if you had to leave your home in 5 mins

**TomGst1:** I pulled up the site and really like the format. I'm listening to the young woman from Iraq.

**TravisS:** hard to imagine

**MadelineRo:** It makes you think how lucky we are to Live in the US

**MichaelH:** Sesh, I imagine these were many of the responses you anticipated getting from people who visited the site for the first time

**LessieI:** We can help those children to overcome their problems.

**MichaelH:** ok... is everyone back?

**SeshGst7:** I want to add that the kids in the site are amazing and very resilient. They are also very strong individuals and that to me is the key emotion

**PaulaSa:** yes - excellent site

**TracyCh:** yes, I'm back

**MichaelH:** from looking at the site in a preliminary form>

**TomGst1:** They can also help us overcome our ignorance of other cultures.

**LessieI:** A good site for middle school students.

**MichaelH:** I should remind everyone that the links are in the transcript

**TracyCh:** thanks for the reminder

**SandraLP:** Sometimes our children are so isolated/protected from these experiences that it is very hard for them to comprehend the reality

**LessieI:** we didn't have time to browse the site.

**MichaelH:** ok... first, does anyone have a question or comment for Sesh, Elizabeth, or Cathy about the site itself?

**SeshGst7:** as you listen to their stories, you will notice that their experience in the US is not terrific altogether

**TracyCh:** Many students think war is just a movie...

**MichaelH:** I know, Lessie, but it'll be there for a long time, and we didn't want to lose the time with Sesh...

**TravisS:** exactly, many children have trouble comprehending that there is a world outside their own community boundaries!

**SandraLP:** I think this site will help them better understand what war is really like on a daily basis

**KarenHB:** I love the passport that you can create for yourself. COOOLLL!

**MadelineRo:** Our kids need to see site and maybe they will realize how lucky they are.

**SeshGst7:** great. the passport is a very cool concept and you can collect stamps for every teen you visit

**TravisS:** let's not say its only kids that need to realize

**MichaelH:** In just a sec, I'm going to pose to everyone how you might use the site in your classroom....

**TravisS:** a lot of us take this stuff for granted

**SandraLP:** especially because it is done from the perspective of someone their age - not a news commentator that they look at as ancient and UNcool

**MadelineRo:** So true

**PaulaSa:** yes, totally agree

**ElizabetM3:** Michael do you want to talk about the lesson plans you developed?

**MichaelH:** sure, Elizabeth

**MichaelH:** I was honored to write two lessons for the site.

**MichaelH:** I don't know if anyone had a chance to see them...

**LessieI:** What activities will we have to perform in the plans?

**MichaelH:** I'll show you one, and then the other...

**TracyCh:** Yea!

**MichaelH:** here's the first one...

**MichaelH:** it's available as an html file, or as a pdf file

**MichaelH:** [http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/Lesson\\_plan1.html](http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/Lesson_plan1.html)

**MichaelH:** just click on the link and you'll go there

**MichaelH:** . o O ( you'll see the life comparison sheet on the pdf file, but not on the web page )

**MichaelH** reminds everyone that the lesson links will be in the transcript, too

**LessieI:** I'll have to modify the plans for k-6.

**MichaelH** understands that...

**MichaelH:** in a past life, Lessie, I was a high school social studies teacher

**MichaelH:** Lessie, do you think the lesson can be adapted for younger kids?

**TomGst1:** Wow, what a well organized lesson.

**LessieI:** Yes!!

**TracyCh:** I think we have to look at the maturity of the kids.

**LessieI:** They can identify the cities, and countries.

**MichaelH:** I think it could be... maybe a better explanation of what you are looking for as far as the comparisons?

**MadelineRo:** I will have to tell my friend who teaches High School SS about this lesson

**MichaelH:** maybe make the criteria more "kid friendly" for k-6?

**LessieI:** I will definitely inform someone of this web site.

**SandraLP:** I do teacher training and I can't wait to introduce this site to the teachers in my district

**TravisS:** I will too

**KarenHB:** I love this site and will include a link to it on my e-board for the teachers in our district. I would use it to introduce students to various cultures and conflicts. I would use jigsaw method to have each student become an expert on a particular refugee and country. They would then do more investigation of the country and culture online. They could then come together as a whole group and produce their own group project.

**TravisS:** I am ashamed I never heard of this site before!

**TomGst1:** It would certainly be applicable for a psychology class.

**MichaelH:** it's new, Travis... it's only been around for about a week

**TracyCh:** I can think of many, many teachers in my parish who would love to make use of this wonderful site

**TravisS:** ah ok I came late to the chat, did not know that!

**TracyCh:** I especially like all of the additional resources that are provided.

**MichaelH:** as Cathy said, it'll be around for a while to come...

**MadelineRo:** Yes,

**MichaelH:** would you like to see the other lesson?

**LessieI:** We are always looking for something new and exciting.

**SherylC:** It's such a great site - very unique!

**LessieI:** Yes

**TracyCh:** Yes!

**SeshGst7:** that's super!

**SandraLP:** Yes, lots of resources - a very complete lesson plan

**PaulaSa:** please

**MichaelH:** there's a talk back feature...

**MichaelH:** Lessie, I can do that, but I can't guarantee Sesh can stay late if you have questions

**SandraLP:** how does that work?

**SeshGst7:** besides the talkback

**MichaelH:** let me show you the other lesson, Sandra, then we'll go over that

**MichaelH:** here's the link

**MichaelH:** [http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/Lesson\\_plan2.html](http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/Lesson_plan2.html)

**ElizabetM3:** yes -there's a special teacher talkback so you can tell us how you're using the site.

**LessieI:** Elementary kids can send donations during the holidays to these children.

**CathyGst9:** There are two Talkback features. One for teachers and one for general comments and or discussion.

**MadelineRo:** Great

**MichaelH:** I'll show them the talkback page when they've seen the second lesson

**KarenHB:** I really like the print materials, especially the Border Control questions.

**LessieI:** A great layout of the web site!

**TravisS:** absolutely, the site is very user friendly

**TomGst1:** The lesson layout will really get the students attention.

**SeshGst7:** you get the border qs when you try to leave a country. there's the passport and travelog which were designed for teens to travel through the site. the travelog has a qs prompt for each teen. these travelog responses can be printed out for the class.

**MadelineRo:** I see the teacher talkback

**SandraLP:** WOW - I love lesson plan 2

**KarenHB:** I can't wait to e-mail this website to my daughter who is a diplomat in Geneva, assigned to the United Nations.

**TravisS:** the timelines are very helpful to put things in perspective

**LessieI:** I like how the Language Arts standards are involved in the lesson plans.

**MichaelH:** Remember, the lessons are also available as PDF files, so you can download and print them easier

**TravisS:** that's very helpful

**TracyCh:** I like the opening question under Strategy for the Lesson

**SandraLP:** I do to, Tracy

**SeshGst7:** re: timelines-the timelines were designed with enough info to prompt a discussion in the class. They are a leaping off point for the discussion

**SandraLP:** I remember my dad telling about my uncle coming home the day of Pearl Harbor and wanting to enlist even though he was underage

**TravisS:** what about including examples of children from other war torn countries?

**LessieI:** The students can show creativity in a power point presentation.

**ElizabetM3:** Besides the lesson plans, the site itself can also be an assignment - you can ask your students and answer all the travelog questions for each teen. There's a print-out function so they can turn it in.

**MichaelH** defers to Sesh on that one...

**TravisS:** there are examples in central and South America I am sure

**PaulaSa:** I like the print out feature - to keep the students engaged and accountable

**SeshGst7:** the travelog is really designed so you can use it in the classroom and you can assign this and have the students report back to you

**SeshGst7:** Travis the teens are from Asia, Europe and Africa  
**SeshGst7:** one hidden feature is the border control which is cool  
**SeshGst7:** this ties the big issues like child soldiers, landmines, education (lack of)  
**SeshGst7:** that are facing the 25 million refugees under the age of 18  
**LessieI:** What!!  
**TravisS:** astonishing numbers  
**TracyCh:** wow!  
**MadelineRo:** That is mindboggling  
**SandraLP:** It really is  
**SherylC:** unbelievable  
**SeshGst7:** yes. staggering numbers and the BC qs take the stats another level by bringing up how many child soldiers are there in how many countries, land mine victims,  
**MichaelH:** Sesh, it looks like everyone is learning a bit tonight  
**SeshGst7:** and kids without shelter, education etc  
**MadelineRo:** How young are the soldiers?  
**SeshGst7:** none of the teens on the site have served as soldiers but have encountered them and you will hear these instances.  
**TravisS:** Sesh, did you find these children all to have similar stories in terms of their experiences? Did they all want to come to the US or did they consider other western European countries  
**TomGst1:** I am going to post the site in the workroom tomorrow and encourage my colleagues to visit.  
**SeshGst7:** child soldiers are as young as they can carry weapons  
**MichaelH:** I think that's one of the border control questions  
**SandraLP:** I think this site will be an excellent way for teens to realize that the young soldiers they see on tv may be soldiers because they have no where else to go  
**SandraLP:** not because they are full of hate  
**SandraLP:** or just want to fight  
**SherylC:** I'm sorry - i came in late and I don't know if you answered this already, but how did you come up with this site?  
**SeshGst7:** their experiences are varied and to throw another stat at you... most refugees do not live in the US or Europe but are hosted in Asian and African countries with far fewer resources  
**SandraLP:** good question  
**SandraLP:** interesting - is it because even though they have less to give  
**SandraLP:** they are more willing to share  
**SeshGst7:** many thank here to itvs for the Electric shadows project  
**SeshGst7:** the idea I pitched resulted from stats we saw in a PEW study on how American teens view war  
**MichaelH:** Sesh, I noted that one student had posted to the talkback feature for them... would you like me to show everyone how they can comment on the site if they are teachers?  
**SherylC:** it's definitely a powerful way for students to learn  
**MadelineRo:** Yes

**SeshGst7:** the perception was that only the bad guys get hit and it's very clean but the reality as you see is very different. this project is more about teens thinking about better solutions to conflicts

**TracyCh:** The best part of this is that kids are learning from kids...they seem to be more interested that way.

**SeshGst7:** sure

**MichaelH:** if you would like to leave messages on the teacher talkback part of the site, you should go to [http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/teacher\\_talkback/talkback.htm](http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/teacher_talkback/talkback.htm)

**MadelineRo:** Yes, kids listen to kids

**ElizabethM3:** Just for background, on the ITVS end, we had some special funding for web projects and wanted to fund a project expressly for teens. Sesh's project was the top pick in a competitive round. The funding initiative is called Electric Shadows and you should check out the other two projects we've done: [www.itvs.org/electricshadows](http://www.itvs.org/electricshadows)

**KarenHB:** What are the reasons for requiring an e-mail address for a passport? I usually don't recommend that students enter the e-mail addresses into web sites.

**SandraLP:** good question

**CathyGst9:** You can just have a school email address. It doesn't have to be the individuals address.

**SandraLP:** great solution

**SeshGst7:** the email address is only used to log back in to your passport and is for retrieving your password in case you forget it

**MichaelH:** everything stays secure on the site, too

**SeshGst7:** absolutely

**TracyCh:** Great!

**KarenHB:** Great! I don't like getting solicitations because I posted my e-mail to a web site.

**ElizabethM3:** yes - we are not collecting private info on the users - the email address is just so that every user has an easy to remember, individual way to identify.

**KarenHB:** The Electric Shadows project is also a very good web site. I have not seen this one before either.

**MadelineRo:** Great!!

**MichaelH:** for that matter, if privacy WAS a concern, you could just have the kids sign up for a Yahoo mail or Hotmail account

**MichaelH:** and use that for this sort of project

**MichaelH:** we have about five minutes or so left...

**MichaelH:** does anyone have any questions for Sesh, Cathy, or Elizabeth?

**MichaelH:** or, Sesh, do you have anything else you'd like to add about the site, or how to use it?

**TravisS:** I just want to applaud them for this fantastic website

**MadelineRo:** This has been very informative thanks for all the info!

**TracyCh:** This has been wonderful...thanks so much!

**PaulaSa:** Thank you for a powerful tool to bridge understanding

**SherylC:** yes, I've learned a lot!

**MichaelH:** Sesh, do you have any contact information if anyone wants to ask something later, or do you want them just to go through me?

**CathyGst9:** Thank you! We hope you use it in the classroom and tell your friends and colleagues about Beyond the Fire.

**ElizabetM3:** It's great for us to chat with all you educators. Please spread the word about the site and write us in teacher talkback about your experiences using it.

**KarenHB:** Thanks, I really enjoyed this session. The website is totally awesome.

**MadelineRo:** I will be sure to pass all the information along.

**SeshGst7:** thank you. it's very heartening to hear your responses and I hope your students will like the site and find it an eye opener

**TracyCh:** It will be a pleasure to spread the word!

**SeshGst7:** thanks

**ElizabetM3:** It is a great site - thanks to Sesh who produced it and also to Michael who did a great job with the lesson plans : )

**SandraLP:** It has tremendous potential for making an impact on our students

**SandraLP:** Thanks!

**SeshGst7:** oh! certainly could not have done it without ITVS

**MadelineRo:** Got to go, thanks again for all the info and helping me get into this session.

**MichaelH** waves

**ElizabetM3:** Michael, thanks so much for having us on! It was fun!

**MichaelH:** glad you could come, Elizabeth. Hope we can do it again!

**SeshGst7:** I apologize but I have to run. Thank you Michael for giving us this opportunity. It was a lot of fun

**CathyGst9:** This has been great. I'm thrilled that there's been such great feedback!

**MichaelH:** glad you could come Sesh

**MichaelH** waves good night...