

**Title of Session: The Big6**  
**Moderator: Ferdi Serim**  
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FerdiS: how many of us taught in a classroom today?

PaulU: I did

RachelF: me...

BJ raises her hand

NancyMc: Twilight in St. Louis and also a beautiful day!

RachelF: what grade levels?

JulieAM: I did tonight

KellyLG: me too

MelissaMD: I did

NancyMc: Yes, me too.

MelissaMD: 9th this year

FerdiS: golly! and we're all still awake!

SusanR: It is dark here. 9:00 in Ottawa, Ontario.

RachelF: first

JulieAM: Grad students

KellyLG: middle school kids

FerdiS: k-6 for me

PaulU: elementary school kids

PaulU: 3-6

SusanR: K to 8. I am an Occasional Teacher.

FerdiS . o O ( looks like we cover quite a spectrum )

NancyMc: Taught first, sixth, third as a sub for early release today.

RachelF: wow:)

SusanR: My heart is in K to 3.

MelissaMD: a good number of elementary people

MelissaMD: Am I the only High school?

FerdiS: that helps me to structure the intro....

BJ: I'm high school, Melissa

FerdiS: Susan, I like the sound of occasional teacher

PaulU: Yeah I like the sound of that too!

FerdiS . o O ( occasional teacher ; perpetual learner )

PaulU: Especially when there is a day like today

SusanR: We are substitute teachers!!

FerdiS: Since you're all so early, I'm tempted to get started...whadaya think BJ?

BJ nods to Ferdi. Close enough

FerdiS . o O ( no one in New Mexico, land of manana, is every early )

FerdiS: OK....too bad for the literal folks, let's count this as the downbeat

FerdiS: I'd like to give you some context for how the Big6 works in school, work and life

BJ: Ferdi, a couple things before you get rolling...

FerdiS: OK...

BJ: you can click on the ACTIONS drop down menu and scroll down to detach your text window...

BJ: that will make the text window larger and easier to read

FerdiS: great tip!

RachelF: thanks

KellyLG: that helps, thanks

BJ: when Ferdi shares a url, the url will be hyperlinked...click on it to open a separate browser window.

BJ hands the virtual floor over to Ferdi

FerdiS: During our session tonight, I will share a few urls...so thanks for that tip too

FerdiS: The Big6 is a process...not a set of steps, but rather a way of approaching any problem that is information based....and I have trouble thinking of any problem that is not

FerdiS: The Big6 was developed in 1987 by Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz...coming from information science

FerdiS: I first encountered it in 1996, working with my friend Janet Murray....Janet is a library media specialist, and I'm a classroom teacher

RachelF: why did they create it?

FerdiS: They created it because the demands of living in an increasingly information based world requires tools for thinking....it is no longer a problem of accessing information, but rather knowing what to do with it to build meaning

FerdiS: I've found this is as true for us as it is for our kids

RachelF: agreed

FerdiS: In past sessions, I've focused on No Child Left Behind...but tonight I'd like to bring you into my classroom while I introduce this process...is that OK?

RachelF: yes

MelissaMD: ok

PaulU: Fine with me

FerdiS: Last year, I was a computer teacher at EJ Martinez....

FerdiS: I wanted to help the kids develop what I call "contemporary literacy skills"

FerdiS: I used Inspiration and the Big6 as foundations for this work, but I was frustrated

FerdiS: the network often didn't work, the teachers were scared to bring the kids to the lab, lots of stuff like that

NancyMc: Sounds familiar

FerdiS: This year, our music teacher retired mid year, and I took her place

MelissaMD: that's a stretch

FerdiS: I've found that I could teach more technology through music than through computers

FerdiS: First, I get to see every kid every week

RachelF: huh???

PaulU: Interesting

FerdiS: Second, I use technology to record, assess, improve our work

FerdiS: Third, I use technology to make our work visible (and audible) to our community

FerdiS: When I started out, I figured it was a 6 month gig, so I was determined to have fun

FerdiS: two days into it, I'd already decided to come back next year

RachelF: why?

SusanR is anxious to hear about Ferdi's experience

FerdiS: So here's what the Big6 provides me with: a method for getting kids to improve their thinking

FerdiS: There are six stages everyone goes through any time they solve an information based problem, although most of us call them by other names

FerdiS: . o O ( everyone has their own process )

FerdiS: Here are the Big6:

FerdiS: First is Task Definition (I'll describe each in more detail as we go)

FerdiS: Second is Information Seeking Strategies

FerdiS: Third is Location and Access (most of us who didn't go to library school take a while to sort out what is Two and what is Three)

FerdiS: Fourth is Use of Information

FerdiS: Fifth is Synthesis

FerdiS: Sixth is Evaluation

FerdiS: As I show you my music project, I hope each of these will become clear to you

FerdiS: But since we have so many elementary folks here, I need to tell you that there is a simplified version called the Super 3, for kids K-3

FerdiS: The Super 3 boils it down to: Plan, Do, Review

RachelF: simple enough

MelissaMD: may I ask where the Big6 originated

FerdiS: Within either framework, we have a common language to address our tasks....sure Melissa...I'll explain

FerdiS: The Big6 originated in work done at Syracuse University, when the Internet was still an R&D project

FerdiS: But Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz saw that beyond technical skills, people needed to develop thinking skills to sort through all the information available to them, and to know how to apply it to tasks that they feel are important.

FerdiS: Around this time, Mike was developing AskEric...how many of us have used that service?

RachelF: me...great resource

PaulU: Just used it recently

MelissaMD: yes

KellyLG: yes, it's great

SusanR: Yes, I have used it!

FerdiS: Has anyone used GEM (Gateway to Educational Materials) yet?

MelissaMD: no

PaulU: Nope

RachelF: nope

SusanR: yes

FerdiS . o O ( that's the latest incarnation of great work coming from Syracuse Univ )

KellyLG: I just came across that today, but I haven't used it yet

NancyMcr: Eric, yes. Gem, no

FerdiS: When teachers think of the Internet, their first thought is finding lesson plans

FerdiS: When kids use the internet, their leading use is doing homework

FerdiS: But the real power can come when we use this information to build new knowledge, and rarely is that the task assigned to kids

FerdiS . o O ( oops, getting on my soapbox **again** )

FerdiS: The Big6 is not a step by step process...it is recursive....we go through any or all of the steps as often as we need to until we feel we are done...much as when I'm recording, I do as many "takes" as I must until I feel I've done my best

FerdiS: So I want to show you this at least two or three times....I'll start with my current project, and then show you how the Big6 can be shared with parents to help them know how to help their kids with homework

FerdiS: Then I'll open it up to questions, and show you the Big6 site, where you can find more on your own

FerdiS: When I realized I was going to teach music where I'd tried teaching computers, I asked the teachers if they'd mind having music play during "sustained silent reading"

FerdiS: My rationale was that "silent" meant the kids wouldn't talk, but didn't necessarily mean there had to be no sound

FerdiS: The teachers (and principal) said yes

FerdiS: So I asked "would you mind if the kids selected the music, and we burned it onto CDs?"

FerdiS: I got away with that too

FerdiS: So I set the following criteria: the kids could choose any music they wanted as long as it fit the mood of quiet, relaxed reading. they could choose other music to be played at lunchtime in the cafeteria...as long as they wrote about the music, why they picked it, who made it, and what there was in the music that made them like it

FerdiS: If the kids could do this, the increased amount of writing about something they cared about ought to improve their performance (that was my hunch)

PaulU: Sounds good

RachelF: the hook

FerdiS: Along the way, they'd master many of the ISTE NETS-Students goals, and they'd apply the musical concepts that form the basis of our music curriculum....and it would be fun

FerdiS: so now, I'll show you how the Big6 comes into play...please click on <http://oii.org/ferdi/EJStudio.html>

FerdiS . o O ( you should see this come up in a new window...did it? )

KellyLG: yes

PaulU: yes

NancyMc: yes

FerdiS . o O ( whew! )

MelissaMD: yes I was looking at it

FerdiS: I suggest you bookmark this and come back later....it may take the music a while to download

FerdiS: This page shows you the context of what we're doing, but for tonight, the main event is the link on that page to Big6...you can either click on that, or on this: <http://oii.org/ferdi/Big6Music.html>

FerdiS: The symbols you see on the left represent each of the Big6...in fact they are coded into Inspiration 7.0....how many of you use Inspiration?

RachelF: we do not have it

NancyMc: One of the basic necessities for the classroom!

RachelF: however, i have used it

PaulU: Heard of it, haven't used it yet.

MelissaMD: don't use

KellyLG: have it, but haven't used it

FerdiS: Well, you can try it for free for 30 days, by downloading a demo from their site...I've been using it since 1994...turns out I am a visual thinker, and it allows me to "see" what I'm talking about **before** I get locked into the linear form of writing

FerdiS: draw your mind map (or concept map) click a button, and it turns into an outline...

FerdiS: so it works for all kinds of learners

FerdiS: Anyhow, the Big6 existed long before these symbols were in Inspiration, so it's helpful rather than essential

FerdiS: Let's look at how each of these skills contributes to the goal

MelissaMD: You know, these steps seem to be similar to problem solving steps we use in math

FerdiS: It is amazing how often kids don't reach the level of performance we want, because they don't really understand that the task is

FerdiS: We just assume that they do, perhaps fooled by the heads nodding "yes"...and we don't find out otherwise until it is too late

FerdiS: Some tasks I give my kids are tasks I've defined in advance. In other cases, part of the goal is for the kids to define their task....and as Melissa pointed out, these are common sense....

FerdiS: Many Big6ers say "it just works"

FerdiS: So for my kids, the information they needed was: what kind of music will work for silent reading?

FerdiS: As well as "what music can we get away with using in the cafeteria at lunch"

FerdiS: The second skill involved developing strategies for finding this information

FerdiS: Beyond knowing what music to use, they had to learn how to record it, how to burn it onto CDs and a host of other tech skills

FerdiS: As you read the other skills, is it making sense?

NancyMc: Yes

FerdiS: o O ( note this is not a typical use of the Big6...but if I can apply it to music, it kinda shows it can apply to anything )

SusanR: You are covering numerous skills and strands in the curriculum with this music program,

FerdiS: Yes, that's why I wanted to teach music...it can be a link to anything, and I want to collaborate with the classroom teachers in a more direct way than I could with computers

MelissaMD: I like how it seems to separate ideas or processes such as first deciding what type or where you could find the resources for research then actually doing the research

RachelF: I wish all music teachers did that

FerdiS: Yes, it is a guide for thorough and complete work

FerdiS: Thanks Rachel ;->

FerdiS: Can you guess what skill seems to be the most difficult for students, across the board, regardless of grade level?

SusanR: This is certainly a unique way to approach instrumental music.

FerdiS: Susan, the funny part is I'm teaching general music

RachelF: I would think the skill that was most difficult was the why part

MelissaMD: It is wonderful because it is difficult to get students to step back and approach a math problem in a systematic manor and to not just try to jump to the answer. This seems like it would help them to be trained on focusing on a process as opposed to just a final product

FerdiS: That is a hard one, but it's not been the top of the list....85,000 teachers are using the Big6, BTW (of course that's over 20 years)

FerdiS: Yes, Melissa, and it has more lasting benefit than cramming for the mandated annual test

FerdiS . o O ( oops, there's that soapbox again )

MelissaMD: I'm guessing the use of information stage?

FerdiS: I won't keep you in suspense any longer: it's Synthesis

MelissaMD: darn that was my second choice

FerdiS: Synthesis is where you organize your material from many sources, and then present it to make a point to your audience. Even if your audience is the essay on a state test

NancyMcR: We are using this in a science class and all of us are having trouble with synthesis because it is not detailed exactly what it should be.

MelissaMD: they definitely don't like to take risks

FerdiS: Of course this is much harder if you don't completely understand the task, or where to get the information, or if any of what you've found is any good (all contributing Big6 skills)

RachelF: niether do adults

FerdiS . o O ( I was too polite to say that, but thanks for doing so )

FerdiS: OK, next question: how many people leave out step 6: Evaluation?

MelissaMD: most?

FerdiS: How often to we, or our kids, get to judge whether our product has been effective, or our process has been efficient? what would we do differently if we were to tackle a particular task again?

RachelF: not me...it is the most important part of first grade

NancyMc: Reflective practices is required for most of my classes and professional development

FerdiS: That confirms again for me that the best teachers show up at Tapped In, Rachel!

FerdiS: And Nancy too!

RachelF: thanks:-)

FerdiS: It is important to note that you don't need to teach every lesson as a big6 lesson....

SusanR: Primary grades are keeping reflective journals

FerdiS: if people developed and did two or three a year, kids would get the point

FerdiS: and they'd be learning a consistent language that would go with them all the way from elementary to high school

MelissaMD: I have a hard time getting the kids to check an answer

RachelF: how to we get the rest of the staff and principal involved?

FerdiS: Rachel, I just wrote a book on that, which should be out by NECC

FerdiS . o O ( would you like a shameless plug for the book? )

RachelF: when?

RachelF: yep

FerdiS: Hopefully this summer, Information Technology for Learning: No School Left Behind, will be in print

RachelF: interesting title

FerdiS: until then, check <http://oii.org/ferdi/ITforLearning.htm>

NancyMc: Big six task was presented as an essential question that could not be answered easily. What are the difficulties with time management?

FerdiS: To answer Rachel's question, we advocate forming IT Teams at the building level, consisting of the principal, library media specialist, teacher leader, technical specialist, working with the district tech coordinator

FerdiS: In short, it takes a team to make this work school wide

FerdiS: As for time management, that is part of the instructional design

MelissaMD: Ferdi, since Math is such a skill oriented subject, do you know of many math teachers that utilize this?

FerdiS: Melissa, I will research that and get back to you (send me an email to [ferdi@oii.org](mailto:ferdi@oii.org)) one of my other jobs is editing the Big6 eNewsletter, and it rings a bell

RachelF: i would think that would be the best place to use it(math)



MelissaMD: ok

FerdiS: It is most used in research oriented tasks: social studies, science projects, literature research, etc

FerdiS: but the only limits are imagination

RachelF: oh

MelissaMD: I would think it would be beneficial but I would need some assistance in some actual application

FerdiS: Before we end, I want to show you a set of pages I developed to help parents

FerdiS: But before I do that, Melissa's comment makes me want to tell you....and you will be among the first to know....

FerdiS: that the University of Washington has engaged Janet Murray and I to develop an online course for Big6 (we call it Big6 101) that will be offered starting in late June...and it is a rolling start, so you can begin any time you want....they haven't given me the url yet, but it will be announced soon

FerdiS: Now for Helping with Homework:

<http://oii.org/ferdi/ParentWorkshops.html>

MelissaMD: where will it be announced? I'm taking 2 courses already this summer so are there other times?

FerdiS: BJ, can we include the info in the TappedIn newsletter or somewhere in TI?

BJ nods to Ferdi. You send me the information and I'll put it in

FerdiS: Melissa, we will start a new section every time we have 40 people signed up

FerdiS: The helping with homework pages are designed to help parents and teachers understand how to work together in the context of Big6 to make parental involvement more effective

FerdiS: You may want to bookmark this and explore it when you have more time

FerdiS: The last things I'll show you before I open it up to questions are the Big6 site and the new Big6 Kids site

FerdiS: The Big6 is found at <http://www.big6.com/>

FerdiS: And the Kids site is at: <http://www.big6.com/kids/>

FerdiS: So now, I'd like to address any questions or comments you have for me, following this brief intro to the Big6

RachelF: I need to explore...to many thoughts

BJ . o O ( a reminder that Ferdi will present this discussion again on May 20 in TI2 )

FerdiS: that's the beauty of reflection

FerdiS . o O ( BJ, you know I never do anything the same way twice )

Rachelf: thanks..I will probably see you then

BJ nods...but you'll be here to answer all the questions!

FerdiS: looking forward!

NancyMc: This process seems basic procedure to develop any project or solve problems

Rachelf waves goodbye..I will see you then

FerdiS: Bye Rachel

KathyR: Do you think you could compare this to Blooms Tax?

FerdiS: Yes Nancy, it can work for anything...and after a while...it just goes away....it becomes second nature

FerdiS: Kathy, it is based on Bloom to some extent

FerdiS: It is compatible with many other problem solving strategies (CRISS, KWL, etc)

KathyR: I see

FerdiS: Its DNA is in information science, so it enhances these methods by taking an information literacy focus

PaulU waves goodbye

KathyR: right

FerdiS: bye Paul!

PaulU left the room.

SusanR: Can it be used with the Jigsaw method of group learning?

FerdiS: Yes...

FerdiS: collaboration requires deeper understanding of task, method and evaluation, and in a recursive way

FerdiS: It doesn't replace anything, it works alongside any method you find to be effective

FerdiS: In this era of No Child Left Behind, it is good to know that there is a solid research basis for this approach too, but that would be another topic for another night

SusanR: Thanks Ferdi.. a refreshing session!

FerdiS: The sun has now set here, and the winds have died down....it is no longer snowing (we're at 7600 feet in Santa Fe)...and I've certainly enjoyed my time with you

NancyMc: Thanks for the information as I develop a better understanding for the Big Six process. Bye.

KathyR: This was my first session and informative...thanks

KellyLG: this may be a silly question, but I'm new to this.... is there is a way to email or print a copy of our chat.

FerdiS: Glad you enjoyed it and found it useful. BJ can tell you about transcripts, right BJ?

BJ: Kelly, when you log out, you'll get a transcript of this discussion

FerdiS . o O ( wow! that's a great improvement over the old TI )

BJ . o O ( if you missed some of the discussion, the transcript will be archived at [www.tappedin.org/transcripts](http://www.tappedin.org/transcripts) )

KathyR: bye everyone

FerdiS: OK folks, as is my custom following these sessions, I gotta go cook dinner! thanks for coming!

KellyLG: thanks! this was a great session - very informative

FerdiS: See you next time!