

Title of Session: The Big6
Moderator: Ferdi Serim
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FerdiS: Sandy, what are your impressions/questions about the big6 so far? what is your job in your school?

SandyG: well, I just changed jobs

SandyG: I was the technology coordinator

FerdiS: and now?

SandyG: working very closely with the media specialist

DavidWe: Do you have the "Math_Meets!" group, Sandy?

SandyG: now I am the math content specialist for a 7 school K-8 district

DavidWe hopes Sandy knows about the Math Forum

SandyG nods her head

DavidWe smiles

FerdiS: So, Sandy, since we have such a cozy group here, do you mind if we use the Big6 to see how to get used to a new job (something I'm doing on a daily basis myself)

SandyG: that's fine

FerdiS: My guess is that your background gives you a deeper knowledge of the potentials and the pitfalls of using technology in a curricular context

SandyG: yes it does

FerdiS: Have you determined your "task definition" for the first part of your new work?

SandyG: I have determined what i think the task definition is

FerdiS: for full disclosure, I now have responsibility for the content area specialists for the state of NM, so I'd like to compare our experiences...

FerdiS: care to share your definition?

SandyG: wow, I'm really on the spot here, I've only been in the position 2 days, but I'll give you my thoughts

FerdiS: fresh is fine

SusanR joined the room.

SandyG: I believe it is my job to have a thorough knowledge of the content

SusanR waves

SandyG: keep up to date on changes, innovations

DavidWe congratulates Sandy on her new position

DavidWe waves to Susan

SandyG waves back to Susan

SandyG thanks David

SandyG: relay this information to teachers

FerdiS: yes

SandyG: be there to support them, provide professional development for them

FerdiS: right on!

SandyG: I'm actually working on a workshop tonight

SandyG: for next week

SandyG feels relieved

FerdiS: what's the audience, and what's the topic

SandyG: the audience is the new teachers in the district

FerdiS: cool

DavidWe offers Sandy assistance if possible

SandyG: who will be using our new math curriculum for the first time

SandyG gladly accepts David's offer

FerdiS: your task is well defined....what do you need to know to do it well?

SandyG: let's see, knowledge of the content, understanding of the audience

FerdiS: yes! you need both

SandyG: good communication skills and the ability to listen

FerdiS: I'm finding that it makes a tremendous difference, knowing the readiness level of the audience

SandyG: I agree

FerdiS: Susan, what about you....what's your role?

SusanR: oops sorry

DavidWe pokes Susan

FerdiS: I know, it's late back east ;->

SandyG: we actually just wrote our information & technology skills curriculum based on the big 6

KarenL joined the room.

DavidWe . o O (neat)

DavidWe waves to Karen

SusanR: Wonderful Sandy

FerdiS: wow! did you send it to Carrie Lowe?

SandyG: I must admit the media specialist was more of the expert than me

SandyG: it's still hot off the press, waiting for board of ed approval

FerdiS: yes, but the power of the team is unbeatable...I hope one exists or grows in your new school

SusanR . o O (wonders if Sandy could describe the new math curriculum)

KarenL waves to everyone.

BjB: glad you could join us, Karen

FerdiS: HI Karen....where are you, and what is your role (so we can keep things as relevant and helpful as possible)

SandyG: the new math program we are implementing is Investigations

SusanR: welcome Karen

SandyG waves to Karen

KarenL: Karen Lemmons. library media specialist in Detroit, Michigan

FerdiS: How long has Investigations been used in your school/district?

FerdiS: glad you're here Karen!

SandyG: they began with kindergarten last year and now first grade will start it this year

SandyG: in the district I just left we switched over to trailblazers and connected math last year

DavidWe congratulates Sandy and her district on choosing Investigations

SusanR: Sue Roseman K to 8 Occasional Teacher and K to 3 Great Resources presenter here at TI

JeffC joined the room.

SandyG waves to Jeff

KarenL: Glad to be here! If you're talking scientific investigations, I would say many years. If you're talking investigation from a language arts perspective, just recently.

SusanR: Are you using a particular text, Sandy

KarenL: The district adopted a reading program that has an inquiry/investigation component.

SandyG: joint usage with TERC's Investigations and SFAW's Mathematics

KarenL: Ooh, yes, we are using TERC, too. But we may be getting Accelerated Math. Don't ask.

FerdiS: So how does this implementation work for teachers at each grade level (both those using it this year and those who will use it later on), and how does that shape your workshop?

SandyG: my workshop is for new teachers only so I will be able to focus more on the components of the new series

SandyG: if I were working with teachers who had been using the other text I would have to approach it differently

SandyG: I believe that will be my next workshop.

FerdiS: So far, we've dealt with Task Definition, Information Seeking Strategies and Location & Access

KarenL: Well, I will be teaching the inquiry/investigation component this year. The teachers never had time to do this component and was very grateful that I decided to teach it.

SusanR: What grade levels Karen?

FerdiS: You've narrowed your task (good focus!), you've decided on what you'll address and where you'll find it...

SandyG: yes

KarenL: So I will let you know how this works for me. From what I have seen, the inquiry/investigation fits in quite well with library. K-5, Susan.

FerdiS: Next, let's consider: Use of Information (how do you want the new teachers to apply what they learn in your session?)

KarenL: Oops, I meant to say the inquiry/investigation has the same lessons I teach in the library.

SandyG: in their lesson planning, preparation for the lesson, delivery of the lesson and ongoing assessment of students

FerdiS: and anyone who's ever had the task of introducing a new approach, new curriculum, new technologies or anything else that starts with "new" is encouraged to contribute!

FerdiS: bueno!

SandyG: I want to be able to give them a blueprint to follow

DavidWe smiles

FerdiS: structure is vital!

SandyG: to help them sort out ALL the information that is provided in the teacher's manual

SandyG: it's a lot to digest and structure, as you say Ferdi, will help them to implement it more easily

KarenL: To help them see the relevance of the "new" stuff and how to integrate with what they already teach without adding more responsibility.

FerdiS: which then leads to the next step: Synthesis (what they do with the information they've sorted out, when they move on to putting it back together)...yes Karen.....we're going for "improvement" and that means working smarter, not necessarily harder

KarenL: Which I need to learn and do myself:)

FerdiS: Knowing if that has happened brings us to Evaluation (have we been effective? have we been efficient?)

FerdiS: Now, this question is for everyone: how does the presence (or absence) of ICT Literacy relate to effectiveness in Sandy's task (and the task of her teachers)?

SandyG: yes, I will be visiting their classrooms and offering assistance if needed

FerdiS: that support is the best part of your job (for you and them)!

FerdiS: ICT= Information & Communications Technologies

KarenL: so true.

FerdiS: otherwise known as 21st century skills, among other aliases

SusanR: was the program field tested, Sandy

SusanR: or piloted

SandyG: yes it was piloted

SandyG: in several schools

DavidWe . o O (in a number of schools)

SandyG: yes David many schools

FerdiS: Just for curiosity's sake, how many of us here tonight know upon which evidence the decisions about the curriculum we are using have been based?

DavidWe knows some of the early implementers

SandyG wonders if he knows if they are still happy with the product

SusanR: Do you use those teachers as part of your in-servicing? I find their experiences and tips in using new programs invaluable.

KarenL: well, for the reading curriculum, supposedly data that "said" our students needed more phonics instruction than other types of reading instruction.

SandyG: I'm sorry that I have to leave, as I said before my daughter is leaving for college tomorrow and I need to help her with some things.

SandyG: I have enjoyed the discussion

SusanR . o O (formal reading testing)

FerdiS: bon voyage!

DavidWe . o O (which college?)

SandyG: it will help me finalize my workshop

KarenL: and the fact that we have low reading scores and money from the federal government to go along with that "data."

SandyG: thanks everyone

SusanR: Good luck Sandy.

DavidWe offers some contacts with Investigations folks if she would like

BjB waves bye to Sandy

SandyG: thanks

KarenL: Bye, Sandy!

FerdiS: this brings us to the difference between "data" and "information"

KarenL: ooh, good point.

SandyG: bye

KarenL: never thought about it from that perspective, Ferdi.

FerdiS: "ants 1-100 died at 8:58 AM" is data

DavidWe . o O (or a poorly constructed sentence)

FerdiS: "ants 1-100 ate mayonnaise from the cafeteria at 8:51 AM and died at 8:58 AM" is information

FerdiS: correlation requires context

SusanR: data can be manipulated

FerdiS: the fact that you have low reading scores is data

KarenL: so true, Susan!

FerdiS: (unfortunately all too common)

KarenL: okay but the information could be they have low reading stores because they are not comprehending certain topics?

FerdiS: so the rules about what we'll accept as evidence become pretty important to the discussion, eh?

DavidWe nods

KarenL: yes.

FerdiS: and in other areas of knowledge work, replicability is important. The Wrights were the first to fly in powered aircraft, but not the only ones to do so.

DavidWe doesn't follow that example

FerdiS: That implies we must ask each other about our experience, about what we've done, how we've done it, and whether anyone else has had similar results...does that help?

DavidWe . o O (May not know about similar results)

KarenL: Okay. . .if it someone replicated what we did, that someone would have the same results, right?

FerdiS: Yes, that's what I mean by replication...although we also have to discount alternative explanations for what we see (what I call the "stopped clock is right twice a day" phenomenon)

FerdiS: when we talk about the "art" and "science" of teaching (and learning for that matter) we need to know just how far the metaphor of "science" can take us, and go no further than that

DavidWe believes teaching is an art

FerdiS: the charismatic teacher is more effective than the drone, eh?

FerdiS: scripting all education to make it "teacher proof" is as bad, on the other end of the spectrum

DavidWe nods

SusanR agrees

FerdiS: that's where I think moving to evidence can help us

KarenL: speaking of scripting, our reading program is scripted.

FerdiS: it moves the discussion beyond preference and opinion and focuses, instead, on the kids

KarenL: So much for the "art" of teaching.

FerdiS: these are indeed confusing, conflicted times

DavidWe: NCLB?

KarenL nods.

SusanR is quite surprised about the scripting component in some areas

FerdiS: we've never had enough "master teachers" to go around....how many of the teachers in your personal history rise to that level?

SusanR: not advocated in Ontario, Canada

KarenL: I have had the privilege of meeting 3, but they have retired. Did not get a chance to see them in action or talked with them about teaching.

DavidWe . o O (I think 3 or 4)

FerdiS: I know my 5th grade teacher is probably why I became a teacher

DavidWe smiles - one of them is MY 5th grade teacher

FerdiS: and yet, we remember these folks, over a lifetime

DavidWe wanted to repeat 5th grade the next year

SusanR: It was my Grade 6 teacher that inspired me.

FerdiS: now, the rub is that every child deserves to have a teacher who can help them learn whatever is their appropriate next step toward their goals, eh?

FerdiS: And like Sandy, we are better able to help them when we know what they bring with them to our classroom

KarenL: hmmm "highly qualified."

DavidWe agrees - but wonders if one needs one or two of those teachers to connect with

DavidWe . o O (and if that is enough)

FerdiS: I've floated the idea in my state that we need to shift the focus from "highly qualified" to "high performing"

KarenL: Oooh, I like that term so much better like your "moving every child ahead"

DavidWe: What's "high performing"?

FerdiS: and then study success wherever we find it, to see what can be learned to extend that success

SusanR: Is teacher mentoring popular in your district, David and Ferdi

KarenL: Agree, Ferdi.

FerdiS: qualified means what are my credentials; performing means that applying my experience results in growth

DavidWe: I'm not sure Susan if I know of any formal mentoring programs

FerdiS: Susan, we've started "three tier licensure" where the third level is about leadership, and mentoring is certainly one way to demonstrate it

KarenL: good point. So we would be looking at teacher behaviors. . .

FerdiS: and beyond that to student behaviors...mainly learning

DavidWe . o O (measuring growth how?)

FerdiS: that's where the Big6 is so important

FerdiS: unless you know what your task was, going in (which includes what success looks like) how can you know if you learned what you set out to learn?

FerdiS: synthesis (building knowledge) in many cases provides us the evidence that learning has taken place

FerdiS: it's so much easier in music

FerdiS: I want to learn a particular tune

FerdiS: either I can play the melody fluently, or I can't (missed notes, rhythm off, etc)

FerdiS: either I can play in tempo, or I can't...in tune, or not...etc

KarenL: or in physical ed, either you can play soccer, or you can't (miss the ball, runs too slow)

DavidWe: playing competently or playing artistically?

DavidWe: competent soccer players or Pél 

FerdiS: but the result is observable, and if I can't play it because my foundation is lacking, practice alone won't fix that...instead, the coaching provided by a "high performing" teacher will detect what's needed and give me the tasks I need to master to move to competent and artistic

DavidWe thinks this is much more of what a coach does

FerdiS: David, how far I go is my choice, but that choice is shaped by prior choices I've made

DavidWe: well, and how well you connect with the coach/teacher/mentor

FerdiS: yes, how is a "teacher" the same as a "learning coach", especially when we shift the goal from "learning content" to "learning how to learn" and "learning how to apply our learning"

KarenL: learning how to learn and learning how to apply our learning is what we our focus should be

FerdiS: By the next time we meet, I hope to have a couple databases publicly published on the NM Public Education Department server, so we can see some of this in action (I couldn't get it so you could see it from my home machine tonight)

FerdiS: Yes, Karen, this is the heart of the 21st century skills efforts

DavidWe wishes Ferdi good luck with New Mexico teachers

FerdiS: Thanks David

SusanR . o O (best practices in education)

KarenL: Ah!

FerdiS: Thanks for joining us tonight...it was a bit "free form" discussion, but I learned a lot and hope you did as well

DavidWe thanks Ferdi for a stimulating discussion

KarenL: I did. . .and I am so glad I was able to join the discussion. You have me thinking about much, Ferdi.

SusanR: quite a philosophical discussion...Thank you

FerdiS: thanks!