

Title of Session: Problem Based Learning

Moderator: BJ Berquist

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Room: After School Online

BJB2: as soon as Chris logs back in we'll start with introductions

ChrisA joined the room.

ChrisA: wow

BJB2 waves hi to Chris.

DavidWe waves to Chris

ChrisA waves back and says hi to the rest of the group

BJB2: Chris has run into a conflict in his schedule and has to cancel the discussion tonight....

ChrisA: My name is Chris Aguirre and I lead the problem based curriculum group

BJB2: does anyone have any questions for Chris before he leaves?

ChrisA: unfortunately I am on the road today subbing at buildings in our district and will not be able to attend

DavidWe: oops!

DavidWe: Good luck, Chris

MelissaLG: no problem!

BJB2: Maybe Chris has a question for the group to discuss?

ChrisA: I apologize for the inconvenience : thanks David

MikeyM: Life is full of the unexpected

ChrisA: I will catch up with everyone next month

BJB2 nods. Take care, Chris.

ChrisA: thanks bye everyone

ChrisA left the room (signed off).

BJB2 sighs...I think we can still discuss Problem Based Learning if you're all game

BJB2: I often confuse problem based learning and project based learning

MelissaLG: I think many people do

MelissaLG: two totally different things though

BJB2 nods. Can you clarify, Melissa?

MelissaLG: well...problem based learning stems from one presented problem. The end result of the learning can be in many different forms

MelissaLG: project based learning is where there is a project assigned, and the learning comes with the project

DavidWe: Example?

MelissaLG: problem based is a little more student guided, and project based is more teacher guided

DavidWe tends to conflate the two

BJB2: FIRST Robotics is an example...right?

BJB2: the contest tells the students that they have to build a robot that can...throw a ball a certain distance, etc

MelissaLG: yes...

MelissaLG: it's usually a problem that somehow relates to real life

MikeyM: I am new at this but I would think that projects have tangible milestones to measure achievement. Whereas, problem solutions are harder to assess because they have variable results

BJB2 . o O (good thing there are so many real life problems!)

MelissaLG: that is true

MelissaLG: what I've done in the past is created rubrics for each possible outcome (a lot of work I know)

MelissaLG: I give my class choices of end results they would like to create...can be a report, powerpoint, brochure, etc

MelissaLG: based on that, I give them a rubric that is specific to their end product

CeceliaB joined the room.

MelissaLG: but the problem itself really guides the learning

MelissaLG: they need to learn certain concepts before they can solve or help the problem

BJB2: welcome, Cecelia. We're discussing the difference between problem based and project based learning

DavidWe feels whether it is a problem OR a project, it tends to guide the learning

CeceliaB: Good, I am reading the description. I suppose I'll catch on soon.

MelissaLG: I feel like a project is more structured by the teacher, and has only certain results

MelissaLG: I think that's the main difference

MelissaLG: problem based learning is more student guided, with the teacher as a facilitator

BJB2: project based is doing a water quality study. Project based is providing clean drinking water for a community?

MelissaLG: yes

MelissaLG: you mean problem based is clean drinking water...

DavidWe: 1 = project and 2 = problem, Bj?

DavidWe laughs

BJB2 hangs her head

MelissaLG smiles

DavidWe encourages BJ to explain again

CeceliaB: BJ are we following the bullets under description? Or should I just read and learn?

BJB2: project based is doing a water quality study. Problem based is providing clean drinking water for a community?

MelissaLG: that's it!!

DavidWe hits the Tapped In lottery

BJB2: just read and learn...but don't listen to me, Cecelia!

DavidWe sends a typist over immediately

BJB2: have you had any experience with problem based learning, Cecelia?

MikeyM: I would assume that a problem solution should lead to a project to vindicate the solution

CeceliaB: Thanks, I'm new at using tapped in so I will read, learn, and ask a question if something is unclear.

MelissaLG: It can be, but it doesn't necessarily have to

CeceliaB: No, I am a kindergarten teacher.

DavidWe thinks the respective definitions are less important than the curriculum focus

BJB2: a great place to start students learning and thinking, Cecelia

CeceliaB: Swell, I'm glad that I am not out of place. I can use what I learn today.

BJB2: what kind of problem based lessons can Cecelia use in her classroom?

BJB2: . o O (write a newsletter? give a daily weather report?)

DavidWe: Where there is a product of the learning that is shared with others

MelissaLG: What about something with zoo animals?

DavidWe: Create a guide to the animals at the zoo - a map, descriptions, etc.

MelissaLG: that's a good one

BJB2: make the guide into a book that other classes can share

MelissaLG: I've done one with my 5th graders where they have to create a story book about Native Americans to teach younger children

DavidWe nods

MelissaLG: maybe you can do a cross-grades project like that

CeceliaB: Good thanks for helping me. I am getting a feel for what Problem Based Curriculum is all about.

MikeyM: When my daughter was in high school, they used to visit an elementary school and work with the young students. My daughter is now in training to become a Middle School teacher. Cross-grade activities can be very helpful to all involved.

BJB2 smiles. Nice, Mikey

BJB2: do you have an opportunity to collaborate like that, Cecelia?

CeceliaB: No. I am on a pacing plan and others at the school are on pacing plans. Lessons are scripted and we must read the script as is. We are watched carefully.

MelissaLG: so you can't really implement your own lessons?

BJB2: yikes. Who writes the pacing plans?

CeceliaB: No, lessons are planned for us. We can not bring in our own supplies. We must use those provided by the publisher.

MelissaLG: wow

MelissaLG: I've never heard of that

CeceliaB: I do not know but they are approved by the district.

DavidWe: Is that new, Cecelia, at your school?

CeceliaB: No, it is at all schools in my district.

BJB2: hi, Teresa. Welcome

BJB2: where are you located, Cecelia?

CeceliaB: I am located in Los Angeles, California.

BJB2 apologizes for not doing introductions at the beginning of the discussion

BJB2: thanks, Cecelia.

DavidWe: I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

MelissaLG: me too

BJB2: I'm in Pennsylvania

CeceliaB: Swell, that's okay, I am sure we are all teachers

DavidWe mostly helps teachers learn more about ed. tech

BJB2 nods. And each district has their own way of dealing with NCLB

MikeyM: My daughter went to a school yesterday as part of her teaching practicum, and the young kids and the student teachers drew pictures of apples together. They had a great time. It has been awhile since I had one of my kids picture my fridge. Same idea of cross-grade, but done within accepted process within the plan.

DavidWe . o O (on Sunday?)

CeceliaB: Mercy me, I thought everyone was from Southern California.

DavidWe: Tapped In has teachers from all around the world, Cecelia

MikeyM: I'm from BC Canada

DavidWe: Do you know the initials, NCLB, Mikey?

MelissaLG: No child left behind

MikeyM: no

DavidWe smiles

DavidWe: Now you do

MikeyM: Yes

DavidWe: It's prompted a lot of test preparation for high-stakes tests in American schools

BJB2: how do you account for different learning rates and styles at the kindergarten level, Cecelia?!

CeceliaB: We do not. All students are taught the same thing.

BJB2: yowza! I would like to see these kids in 10 years

DavidWe: There isn't much opportunity, then, Cecelia, to introduce anything in particular you enjoy teaching. Is that right?

CeceliaB: Yes, I enjoy teaching. I know that this too will pass.

BJB2 chuckles..spoken like a seasoned veteran!

DavidWe appreciates Cecelia's equanimity

CeceliaB: Fads and fashions come and go in education but the circle comes back to basic center, always!

DavidWe smiles

DavidWe: How long have you been teaching, Cecelia?

CeceliaB: Seven years now but three before I took a leave.

DavidWe: Do you find teachers wanting to change careers after a few years of teaching?

DavidWe: My understanding is that the average teacher "lifetime" is about 5 years

MelissaLG: really? It's that low?

DavidWe: That's what I've read and been told

MelissaLG: David...out of curiosity ..where do you teach in NJ?

DavidWe: It will vary widely in different districts

CeceliaB: No, I am so busy reading the scripted pacing plan and preparing materials that I don't have much time for anything else.

DavidWe: I'm not a classroom teacher, Melissa.

MikeyM: Is that for all grade levels for career changes?

DavidWe: I was in Whippany Park High School last week working with high school math teachers

DavidWe . o O (and Hanover HS)

MelissaLG: I see

DavidWe: I mostly do teacher professional development, but I'm not in a school district

DavidWe . o O (consultant)

DavidWe: There's a big web site - the Math Forum - www.mathforum.org - that we began in 1993

DavidWe: I started helping teachers learn how to use technology then

MelissaLG: ohhh

MelissaLG: I get it

DavidWe smiles

DavidWe: Not too complicated

BJB2: any questions on our discussion of Problem Based Learning?

DavidWe: I've done some high school teaching in Philadelphia at Quaker schools

DavidWe: Melissa, do you have opportunities to do PBL?

BJB2: Chris will be back on March 20, barring any scheduling crisis

MelissaLG: yes, actually my school district had consultants working with us for the past three or four years just on implementing PBL in our curriculum

DavidWe: At all grades?

MelissaLG: yes

MikeyM: Sorry, but what is PBL?

MelissaLG: Problem based learning

MikeyM: Thanks,

MelissaLG: and I began teaching three years ago, so I basically started out using it in my classroom

CeceliaB: Mickey, PBL stands for Problem Based Learning

MikeyM: Not a term we use

MelissaLG: I have to say..it is effective, but there also needs to be a balance between this and general skill building

MelissaLG: I think my district figured that out the hard way when test scores came back

CeceliaB: Melissa, tell me more, I am listening to learn.

MelissaLG: we had been so focused on teaching general concepts through the presentation of a problem, that we were instructed to teach less lessons

MelissaLG: and therefore, the actual skills of the students became low

MelissaLG: so there needed to be a balance between the two..so that kids would still be learning their times tables, and we could still apply it to the real world

DavidWe: Seems sensible - balance

MelissaLG: well..it's been great chatting with all of you

TeresaE: that makes a lot of sense to me, so basically teaching just the strategies were not enough. They needed to be able to make connections to real world applications

MelissaLG: yes

MelissaLG: well I have to run

MelissaLG: bye!

DavidWe waves

TeresaE: thanks for the insight

MelissaLG left the room (signed off).

BJB2: Thanks for your input, everyone!

DavidWe: Good job, BJ

BJB2 . o O (PBL can also be project based learning, Mikey)

DavidWe . o O (on the fly discussion)

DavidWe: indeed!

BJB2 winks

MikeyM: See you again, bye

DavidWe waves

CeceliaB: I am getting the feel that problem based learning connects to the real world but that basic skills must be made a deliberate part of the experience. Am I correct?

DavidWe: I would think that's true, Cecelia

BJB2 agrees

TeresaE: sounds reasonable to me

DavidWe: The AutoDesk software company used to fund an educational foundation that supported Project/Problem Based Learning in schools around the country

DavidWe: They had some wonderful conferences in San Francisco

DavidWe met Linda Ullah at one

BJB2: Linda leads a project based learning discussion each month...

DavidWe: Sadly, they closed down their Education Foundation, but I believe the conference is still being run by another group

BJB2: on global projects

CeceliaB: Thanks for the chat. I hope to chat again, soon. Bye!