

**Title of Session:** Problem Based Curriculum

**Moderator:** Chris Aguirre

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Room: Problem Based Curriculum Group

**BJB2:** shall we start with introductions, Chris?

**ChrisA:** ya sure lets get started

**BJB2:** please tell us where you are located, Chrystal, and what you teach

**ChrisA:** I am not sure we all know each other so let me start

**ChrisA:** I am Chris and I am a principal in New York City

**DavidWe:** I'm David Weksler. I am one of the HelpDesk volunteers and I lead a math education and technology discussion. I'm not far from New York City in New Jersey

**ChrystalA:** I am in Houston, Tx and I am currently teaching 4th grade.

**BJB2:** I'm a communications teacher in Pennsylvania

**ChrisA:** cool so we are all over the place that's the fun of TI

**DavidWe** agrees

**ChrisA:** So let's start by with a simple question?

**ChrisA:** has anyone found a good problem lately?

**DavidWe** smiles

**ChrystalA:** Well I am a student teacher and my SBTE rarely integrates curriculum.

**ChrisA:** OK that's not a bad place to jump in

**ChrystalA:** Technology is available at the school, but hardly ever fully utilized. The students have enjoyed the technology enhanced lessons I have integrated.

**ChrisA:** sometimes I think its easier to see the connections ( and thus a good question) when you are able to back away from the class

**ChrisA:** Hey that's great Chrystal would you mind sharing one so we can hear what you doing

**ChrisA:** I know lately I have been doing some research on bringing in a math program as a support structure for our math department

**ChrisA:** Cognitive Tutor - David do you use that by any chance?

**ChrystalA:** I created a powerpoint presentation for Social Studies (Impresarios Austin, DeWitt, and De Leon)

**ChrisA:** That's great can I ask how the lesson went?

**ChrystalA:** Great, the students were curious on how I created it.

**ChrisA:** What Grade, Chrystal?

**ChrystalA:** 4th Grade- the students aren't regularly exposed to technology.

**ChrisA:** What kind of things would you like to do?

**ChrystalA:** I want to make learning exciting again for the students. In the schools I have observed, I have noticed students feel stagnant in their learning.

**ChrisA:** That is a great goal let me ask you something

**ChrystalA:** Yes?

**ChrisA:** is it the technology that will make it exciting or is what you will create with the technology that will make it exciting?

**ChrisA:** the reason I ask is that a great problem to pull in tech from a lot of different levels and it would also help move students towards your desired goal (learning)

**ChrystalA:** it's alright. It's a combination of factors, including the teacher's personality and own ability to learn, technology can make instruction and curriculum more exciting and what is created by the teacher and the students that also make it exciting.

**ChrisA:** Like you I share a passion for using technology in the classroom but over the years I have come to realize that the problem is the journey - the tech is just a way to get there

**BJB2** agrees

**ChrisA:** I agree that tech can enhance curriculum on many different levels in this case you used it as a device to tell a story or deliver content

**ChrisA:** Powerpoint really does that well but embedded in your lesson is content right?

**ChrisA:** content that you feel is important and that your students need to internalize

**ChrisA:** ask yourself how would tech help you do that?

**ChrystalA:** Yes, in the sense that it can gain their attention. It is what I do with the instruction and how I present it to them that counts.

**ChrisA:** I think you're right how you present it to them is what counts. I would say that is the essence of education (communication) and how well we do that ultimately determines how successful we are

**ChrisA:** but if you look at the problem from another angle allowing for problems to be built into the experience will help students to not only learn the lesson objective but also the embedded lesson inside the lesson: organization, being proactive, asking probing questions, problem solving

**ChrystalA:** True.

**ChrisA:** so if we took your original idea one step further we might ask them to storyboard out a presentation in a small group on the subject you just taught then turn those storyboards into powerpoint presentations for them to present to the class

**ChrisA:** that way you have a built in assessment that is authentic of the content you just taught. You gave students a way to process the information which is critical for all students when developing and understanding of topic and it would allow them to work on the embedded problems inside the lesson

**ChrisA:** it's just a thought but that's how I might take what you're doing and put it into a problem based container

**ChrystalA:** Great Idea! However, I do feel limited in what I could do with the students.

**ChrisA:** why?

**BJB2 . o O ( perhaps you can give us an example, Chris? )**

**ChrisA:** um sure

**ChrisA:** I am sure we have all used powerpoint to outline a topic right?

**ChrisA:** it's an open question guys

**ChrystalA:** I'm only teaching the classroom for 6 weeks and my SBTE would not let me take the time to teach students how to use powerpoint or other technology.

**BJB2** nods to Chris

**ChrisA:** that's cool I understand where you're at Chrystal I think you should keep going with the tech and you find ways to get it in students hands

**ChrystalA:** I agree that students should use technology as much as the teacher.

**ChrisA:** Ya I agree I think that is a great way of putting that A student should use tech as much as a teacher

**ChrisA:** Okay BJB you asked me a good clarifying question I am ready to go

**BJB2** listens

**ChrisA:** my last PP was on bringing teacher and student voice into the decision making process of schools

**ChrisA:** it was about as exciting as watching goldfish eat

**ChrisA:** so my big idea was to toss it back at my audience

**ChrisA:** once my points were made and my research sited I ended on these questions

**ChrisA:** Please take a 5 minutes in your small groups to come up with some way you could build in student voice into your leadership committee (because all schools have a leadership committee) then turn you idea into a slide and place it on my jump drive (no network)

**ChrisA:** the idea was two fold

**ChrisA:** first I needed a question that allowed my audience to actually do what I was talking about: That also allowed me a form of assessment

**BJB2** nods

**ChrisA:** second I put them in action by building in another facet to the problem I had them create something and deliver it to a certain spot in a given amount of time

**ChrisA:** a skill we are constantly practicing: working towards a goal with time constraints. Forcing you to organize for effort

**ChrisA:** I think one the most valuable skills I have learned while doing this is that everyone's time is important and that you should be very clear on your purpose before asking people to take on problems

**ChrystalA:** That is a good outline for student learning and performance.

**ChrisA:** I don't think that there is anything that bums a teacher out faster than to think their work was not valued

**BJB2** . o O ( same with students )

**ChrisA:** and lastly I used technology for this because I knew that in my audience I had a lot of people that were just starting to form their own mental models about what tech was and how it could be used and I think an experience is way better than a demo problem or self help book

**ChrisA:** I am happy to report that things came together pretty smoothly I took in the four slides from the four groups, read through them, brought out one central theme: tapping student leadership groups as committee members

**ChrisA:** then asked the question "what were the pros and cons for taking this approach?" and let that conversation end my discussion

**ChrisA:** in that way we created a document that people took away with them and experience that allowed them to experience the process on a few different levels

**ChrisA:** which I think is the hallmark of a great problme

**BJB2:** so who was responsible for reaching a conclusion and implementing (or not) student leadership groups?

**ChrisA:** the ability to force you solve it on a few different levels

**ChrisA:** um in this case we all are as group of people learning this profession

**BJB2** nods. And assessment of implementation?

**ChrisA:** I think a good problem should possess an element of impossibility and allow the person who solved it the experience of appreciation

**ChrisA:** well in my world implementation is a developing process I think the merits of student voice is clear it creates ownership

**BJB2** nods...same as teacher voice in the decision

**ChrisA:** and since it can be argued that schools are essentially learning communities getting kids to take ownership ripples into every facet of instruction

**ChrisA:** Ya I agree but I think giving teachers a voice is actually deeper

**BJB2:** deeper as in more meaningful?

**ChrisA:** I agree it gives teachers ownership but it also gives teacher a degree of self determination

**BJB2:** ahhhhhh....not many teachers experience that!

**ChrisA:** self determination in the sense that they have a say in the direction of the school, how the school runs and what goals

**BJB2:** yes!

**BJB2:** do you think that this is how most schools are run?

**ChrisA:** I know I am pretty simple minded but I think that is how you create happy, motivated instructors

**BJB2** thinks Chris' teachers are very fortunate to have him!

**BJB2:** our time is almost up, Chrystal. Did you have any questions for Chris?

**ChrisA:** hey Chrystal it was great talking to you

**BJB2:** the next PBC discussion will be on December 18 barring illness or too much holiday celebrations

**ChrystalA:** No, thank you. Chris has left me thinking. I have taken much with me.

**ChrisA** smiles

**BJB2:** thanks for leading the discussion, Chris. Stay well.

**BJB2:** Happy Thanksgiving, everyone

**BJB2** waves goodnight