

Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - June Bugs are Bustin' Out All Over

Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.

Title of File: 20030610nan

Date: June 10, 2003

Room: Tree House Conference Room

BillHi joined the room.

BillHi: BJ, we seem to have a full Tree House. Shall we begin?

BJ nods to Bill.

BJ: Let's start with introductions, please.

RalphE: I'm a 6th grade Math Teacher!

BillHi: Where?

RalphE: Edison, NJ

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for TAPPED IN

RalphE: Middle School of 800 kids, 6-8.

SusanR: K to 8 OT (Occasional Teacher) from Ottawa, Ontario. Grade 3 today... grade 6/7/8 French Immersion and Computer Lab yesterday.

ClaudiaCM: Hello, everyone. I'm a Kindergarten teacher in Neptune, New Jersey.\

RalphE: One of four Middle school in Edison.

TerriK: Hi, everybody! I am a Supervisor at Antrim Elementary School and I teach two writing classes. My school is located in Point Pleasant Beach, NJ.

BillHi: I'm Bill Hilton Jr., an educator-naturalist who taught umpteen years of high school biology and now direct Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York, South Carolina.

BillHi: First of all, I'm elated. this is the most people we've ever had for one of my sessions! :-)

RalphE: Want to learn new things!

JenniferLS: thanks

BillHi: I'm still elated.

SusanR: I am a lifelong learner..

JenniferLS: yes, I am in an online class and need to create a write-up...it sounded very interesting

BillHi: "June (Bugs) is Bustin' Out All Over" is the general theme for the evening, but we can talk about anything related to getting kids excited about nature learning.

BillHi: And for the writing teacher, pardon the grammatical error in the title. :-)

TerriK: No problem!

ClaudiaCM: I'm interested in finding out ways to turn young children on to Science in a hands-on approach.

BillHi: First question. Yes, or no whether you've ever been to the Web site for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History.

ClaudiaCM: No.

RalphE: This is great for our 5th graders (about 1,500 of them) in town, because every year they go away fro 3 days to explore the outdoors. Pond ecology, nature walks, and so on!

RalphE: Never seen it.

BillHi: Ralph, getting them outdoors is much better than doing it virtually, but the Internet provides great pre- and post-trip activities.

JenniferLS: They do that in Andrew Clements new book...sounds neat

RalphE: exactly, something we don't do now!

BillHi: Hmm. First question didn't get many responses. Y'all must be shy.

TerriK: Our district encourages cross-curricular writing. Would you have any suggestions concerning how to make writing "fun" and more engaging in Science for elementary students?

JenniferLS: yes...went to the web site

BillHi: Oh, Terri, you and I need to have a long-term relationship. :-)

BillHi: My forte is cross-disciplinary activities and teaching science across the curriculum.

RalphE: Like the rain forest?

BillHi: Whatcha mean, Ralph?

JenniferLS: rainforest can be science, social studies (ecology), art...sorry I teach that and it's really fun to do cross-curr. stuff

RalphE: Our 6th grade interdisciplinary unit is the rain forest. We tie it into math & science (the different times and so forth).

TerriK: That sounds very interesting. Sometimes, though, it seems to me that students have so much fun with the actual "hands on" learning of science that when it comes time to write, they lose interest. Any suggestions?

RalphE: Scientific notation, etc.

BillHi: Ralph. Great, but I think you're barking up the wrong tree. Why study the rain forest when the area around you is chock full of things to study?

BillHi: Terri, Ralph, , everybody, let's go to the Hilton Pond Web site and take a look at June Bugs.

RalphE: Great point. We here in Edison have the Dismal Swamp, I'm sure more interesting than a book!

ClaudiaCM: I agree about staying close to home. Our 5th graders do lots of things on a boat in the nearby Shark River and along the coast.

BillHi: Click on <<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek020708.html>>

BillHi: Okay, here's the deal. Every week I post a photo essay about some aspect of nature at Hilton Pond. On this particular week the topic was June Bugs. Everybody there?

MariaS: yes

BillHi: Everybody else?

JenniferLS: yes

RalphE: Beetles and humming birds

FrankMD: yes, this is great, these pictures must really grab the students' attention

BillHi: Okay, that's good enough. :-)

BillHi: First of all, June Bugs are really June Beetles, a type of scarab.

KellyT: Yes, pretty interesting stuff

BillHi: Thanks, Frank.

RalphE: kids love bugs

BillHi: Everybody scroll down to the middle photo--the one of the beetle in profile.

FrankMD: Its one thing to read about bugs or see one or two little pictures in a book, but these pictures look real I am sure that the students love this

BillHi: Quickly, now. Everybody type in ONE WORD that describes that beetle in the middle photo.

RalphE: big

SusanR: Yucky

MariaS: interesting

JenniferLS: yuck

ClaudiaCM: colorful

SusanR: realistic

FrankMD: which picture are we looking at now? Is it the one with the beetle in between the fingers?

SusanR: I think I feel a scream coming on.

BillHi: Okay, in my opinion, Jennifer and Susan have a problem. When a teacher stands up and says "Yucky" it quickly turns off young kids to nature learning.

SusanR: Ooops sorry.

TerriK: That bug looked like a jigsaw puzzle to me!

RalphE: you turn off the ladies

JenniferLS: gross?

JenniferLS: that would be sick to touch

BillHi: Kids are natural scientists, curious beyond belief, but they are easily swayed away from nature study by cultural and social experiences.

MariaS: I grew up in a country with a lot of bugs and it is still not easy to get used to them, but I see what you mean about the teacher's reaction affecting the way students look at things

FrankMD: The best way to learn about nature is to go on a nature hike or go out there and learn, but if that is an unrealistic goal in your school then exploring nature through internet sites such as this one seems to be a good alternative

JenniferLS: it seems whatever the teacher's opinion, as long as it's genuine and their own, would excite kids...when I say something is gross, they all strain to see it and absolutely love it

RalphE: Same as parents saying I'm no good in that subject.

SusanR agrees with Jennifer.

BillHi: Jennifer, I understand what you're saying, but it's very difficult for young minds to understand the difference between "gross" and "gross." :-)

JenniferLS: I must have smart kids! :)

JenniferLS: the picture is interesting though

FrankMD: BillHi, do you have any other links for nature sights or possibly a virtual field trip geared towards nature?

BillHi: When I taught I started out at the beginning of the year drawing a hard line with my biology students. they weren't allowed to use words like "ugly" or beautiful" to refer to organisms. My position was that in nature, beauty lies in function, not appearance, and I didn't allow HVJs (Human value Judgments).

MariaS: I think that since not everyone has an opportunity to experience nature first hand, allowing the students the opportunity to see a web site is great. Another alternative is to check with the local universities. Sometimes you can arrange tours of their science departments and take the children on a hands on field trip. I did that two years ago here in Ohio

BillHi: I WOULD allow them to say "I think that bug is yucky," but not "That bug is yucky."

MariaS: They were able to see different bugs and spiders

MichaelPra: Can someone tell me a really good insect website, with lots of colorful photos of bugs?

BillHi: This all goes back to the original question of writing about science and in a cross-disciplinary fashion. Kids need to learn when to be subjective and objective in their writing, and science writing more often than not needs to be objective.

RalphE: we have a nature guy come in and bring many bugs and reptiles.

BJ: Michael, Bill has some great photos. Please be patient and let Bill share what he has prepared

KellyT: The younger students would definitely love this stuff

BillHi: Thanks, BJ. This must be a Montessori class. :-)

FrankMD: BillHi, Do you know of any virtual field trips geared towards nature?

BillHi: Okay, we're almost back on track. When kids write about science, they need to learn when to use words like "big," "metallic-looking," "six-legged," "shiny," "smooth," etc., and when to use words like "beautiful," "ugly," "yucky," etc.

TerriK: Excellent point.

ClaudiaCM: Enlarging adjective vocab is something even K's can learn.

MichaelPra: Yes, thank you for the tip on teaching kids to use objective scientific language.

BillHi: If you go back and look at the June Bug page, you'll see that it includes hard science information (genus & species), but there's also an interesting phrase at the beginning of the paragraph just above the bottom beetle photo.

KellyT: Those words are definitely more descriptive.

MichaelPra: What's the addr. for the June Bug page?

BJ: <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek020708.html>

MichaelPra: Thanks.

BillHi: The phrase I refer to is "June Beetles are pleasing to the eye." Is that phrase about the beetle itself, or is it about the observer?

KellyT: What should I click on to go to the genus & species?

BJ: I vote for observer, Bill...same as yucky

BillHi: Scientific name is in paragraph 3.

FrankMD: check out this sight everyone, here are some cool bugs, how about that Elasmucha Grisea, <http://www.david.element.ukgateway.net/bugs2shieldbugs2.htm>

BillHi: Oh, well

TerriK: Your statement seems to be subjective but you support your statement with vivid descriptions.

BJ: nice comment, Terri

BillHi: Thanks, Terri. "June Bugs are pleasing to the eye" is like saying "I THINK June bugs are pretty or beautiful or neat" or, conversely, "I THINK they're yucky."

MichaelPra: Great webpage Bill @ hiltonpond - thank you! And Frank, thanks for the new addr.

BillHi: Again, this distinction is not merely some academic exercise, but a way to show students the difference between subjective and objective thinking and writing.

ClaudiaCM: Young students are often very black-and-white about rules, so I would probably try to just use objective descriptors with them,

MichaelPra: Would this be a good example to teach the diff: write on the board for the kids: "subjective: this bug is beautiful; objective: this bug has many colors including ..."

ClaudiaCM: Yes, great idea, Michael.

BillHi: Great, Michael, that's EXACTLY what teachers should be doing! :-)

TerriK: This would probably be a good opportunity to introduce synonyms too. This would increase their overall vocabulary.

JenniferLS: they could use a thesaurus

BillHi: So how early is TOO early for kids to start learning this distinction?

JenniferLS: increase language fluency too

TerriK: Definitely.

JenniferLS: grade 2 could easily do it

ClaudiaCM: I have many K's who could comprehend the distinction.

MichaelPra: make a word list w/ kids (A Bug Word Wall) with good bug descriptors ...

BillHi: earlier, earlier. :-)

SusanR: grade one as well

SusanR: I like the idea of a word wall, Michael.

ClaudiaCM: Probably could be introduced to Pre3s and reinforced with Pre4s.

BillHi: Bug Word wall is another excellent idea.

BillHi: Okay, since Michael is really into bugs, let's look at last week's installment of "This week at Hilton Pond." it's at <<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek030522.html>>

TerriK: Generally speaking, this activity could increase any student's overall literacy.

MichaelPra: thank you.

BillHi: The millipede opens up all sorts of math problems. :-)

MichaelPra: Yes - lots of good math problems.

TerriK: This discussion has been very interesting and helpful. Thanks and good bye, all!

FrankMD: I can see how this bug could be integrated into the math curriculum. It would definitely grab the students' attention because they would not just be dealing with numbers

BillHi: Well, we're about out of time. If you'd like get a weekly e-mail reminder about each new installment of "This Week at Hilton Pond" to share with your students, just send an e-mail to <mailto:thisweek@hiltonpond.org> with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

MichaelPra: thank you so much Bill

BillHi: And, so you'll know there's more to Hilton Pond than just bugs, check out <<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek030601.html>>.

KellyT: That's pretty interesting. I wish that would work with Health & PE

FrankMD: Thank you Bill this was a great discussion, I was wondering if you know of any virtual field trips that are nature related?

ClaudiaCM: Thanks, Bill. I'll try out the adjectives tomorrow.

BJ: Frank, try www.field-trips.org

BillHi: Kelly, couldn't kids in PE get involved physically by trying to become a giant millipede?

BillHi: Imagine how difficult it is for a millipede to coordinate all those legs, or for a group of kids to do the same.

SusanR: <http://www.field-guides.com/sci/minibeast/index.htm>

MichaelPra: Bill - I'm a sub. teacher in San Diego. I look forward to bringing kids to Hilton webpage.

KellyT: That's so funny... I never thought of that idea

FrankMD: good idea of how to incorporate nature into PE

KellyT: However, my high school kids may think it silly

EdwardA: Having the kids coordinate all the legs at the same time would incorporate cooperative learning and teamwork in PE

FrankMD: I play a game with my kids called Squirrels, trees, and the fox . They love acting like creatures

KellyT: The younger students would enjoy that a lot more

BillHi: Hit them with the challenge and see what they say. tell them they'd never be able to be as coordinated as a millipede.

KellyT: That's true!

EdwardA: My elementary PE kids would love it! Well, maybe not the 6th graders

MichaelPra: I only make 80 bucks per day right now , but, when I get a contract, how do I

subscribe BJ? Thank you.

BillHi: Have them work it out mathematically and then see if it works in reality.

FrankMD: isn't it interesting how all of the subjects relate to each other in some way or another

BillHi: Ah, yes, here's that cross-disciplinary concept again

MichaelPra: Yes - the universe and reality are all tied together. Glory!

SusanR: Thanks for some useful ideas, Bill. I am definitely starting to look at bugs from a child's viewpoint. I like the cross curricular ideas.

FrankMD: Interdisciplinary thematic units work great with the children, they get hooked on a topic and are interested to apply that topic to all of their classes, this is a great instructional tool

EdwardA: I incorporate math into my PE lessons all the time. The little kids love it. I never thought about science as being part of elementary PE.

BillHi: Frank, check out my OTHER Web site for "Operation RubyThroat: The Hummingbird Project" at <http://www.rubythroat.org>. It's REALLY cross-disciplinary. :-)

FrankMD: I am going to take a look at it now, thank you

BillHi: Folks, we're running over our time limit here, so I'm going to sign off. Thanks for your input and interest. I'll see you on the Internet. Feel free to contact me at education@hiltonpond.org.

BJ: Thanks, Bill!

SusanR left the room (signed off).

DNiseGuest4: Thanks Bill, hope to catch the beginning of the discussion next time!

EdwardA: Frank, we have to try and think of a kindergarten PE activity that incorporates science.

BillHi: Thanks, BJ. Goodnight hugs.

EdwardA: Thanks! Bill

BJ hugs goodnight

MichaelPra: For P.E., we could have kids do math, by having them count bugs outside - a real leg workout as one peers down at the earth.

FrankMD: good night and thank you

KellyT: Thanks so much!

EdwardA: I am sure we would get phone calls from parents about that activity!

KellyT: I enjoyed the websites

EdwardA: I enjoyed the pictures.

EdwardA: I am a VISUAL learner!

MichaelPra: The bugs are truly a never-ending reason to be in awe; their colors, their shapes, their size I believe they all were designed by a God.

MichaelPra: Michael - signing off; I was blessed being here and being hooked up to Hilton. Thanks again Bill. Your work is great.

BJ: Thanks, Michael. I'll make sure Bill gets your message

BJ waves goodnight

BJ . o O (Bill leads this discussion once a month)