Title of Session: Action Research
Moderator: Diane Painter
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Room: Action Research Group

DianeDP joined the room.

DianeDP: Hey there everyone- this is Diane Painter

StephaniP1: Hi, Dr. Painter!

DrChristo: Hi. I'm Betty

DianeDP: Hi Stephanie. Who else do we have?

SusanR joined the room.

DianeDP: Betty- Steph and I are from Shenandoah University in VA. Where are you from?

DrChristo: I'm a chemistry teacher in Connecticut

SusanR: I am from Ottawa, Ontario Canada

DianeDP: Well, this will be a very nice group.

StephaniP1: We have a regionally diverse mix.

DianeDP: Susan- I know Jackie Delong in ON- do you know her?

DianeDP: International conversation!

StephaniP1: This is my first time in a chat session like this.

DianeDP: As we get ready for this session, you may want to go to actions in the top right of this screen and scroll down to detach this chat box- then you can see the whiteboard better.

SusanR: No I don't know Jackie Delong .. should I know her

DianeDP: Jackie Delong is a superintendent in Ontario somewhere and supports action research as the main form of staff development.

DianeDP: As you take a look at the whiteboard, what topic strikes you that you may want to chat about?

SusanR: http://schools.gedsb.net/ar/passion/pppii/jackie_heather.html

DrChristo: I have only done a little action research, for a class. I don't know quite how to go about it.

DianeDP: Susan- tell us a bit about the URL you just posted, please

StephaniP1: I would be interested in discussing how to filter the research (literature review) for AR.

DianeDP: Betty- I take it you will be doing AR? Steph is doing it now at SU

SusanR: She works out of Nippissing University

DrChristo: I'd like to.

SusanR: Nippissing has an excellent teaching program for preservice teachers

SusanR: called iteach .. all teachers are required to have their own laptops

DianeDP: Yes, it certainly is a fine school. At the International Teacher Research Conference we have people from there come to present.

DianeDP: Steph just asked about filtering information from the literature for her AR project. Any tips from anyone about that?

DrChristo: I think the secret with literature searches is to be very specific about your topic.

DrChristo: It's easy to get lost in a lot of information.

DrChristo: I look for review articles to get me started.

StephaniP1: Do you think it's okay to reference articles that are not directly involved with your topic, yet support philosophies behind it?

DianeDP: I have one tip for Steph. First determine what puzzles you about your teaching and learning and then begin a search related specifically to those puzzlements. Then narrow down what you are most interested in and begin to search in academic databases based on keywords related to that puzzlement.

DrChristo: Yes. Your topic presumably has not been done before, so you will need related articles in that sense.

StephaniP1: Right now, I am researching silent reading (aka SSR, DEAR...) and how to improve it to improve students' attitude toward reading.

DianeDP: Yes, as you search you will find related articles that support theories and philosophies. What you are trying to do is get background information that will frame your guiding question and from there, sub-questions that will get at specifically what you will want to investigate.

DrChristo: I researched the SMART Board in chemistry. There was nothing specifically about that, so I relied on articles about the board in younger grades.

StephaniP1: I have found a fair amount on SSR/DEAR, fortunately. My fear is I will start to branch out too much.

DrChristo: That's where you have to be very specific.

StephaniP1: Were you looking at how to integrate the SB in chem?

SusanR: What is SSR

StephaniP1: SSR is Silent Sustained Reading.

DrChristo: Yes. Whether integrating it improved learning.

DianeDP: There are a number of studies on self-directed reading programs such as the one you are interested in. But what you need to ask yourself, what is it about DEAR in your teaching situation that puzzles you most?

StephaniP1: Curious, what were your findings.

DrChristo: That how the students use the board makes a huge difference in how successful it is in improving their learning.

DrChristo: It works best if the students are very interactive.

StephaniP1: I would agree that is important to what my research is telling me too about DEAR.

DrChristo: What is DEAR?

SusanR: I will be leaving you shortly. Please excuse me! I am in training for Dragon Boat Races

StephaniP1: Or, that the students take ownership of it.

DianeDP: were you looking at the types of interactions and reactions from what they were experiencing and how it may have related to specific learning objectives?

StephaniP1: DEAR is Drop Everything and Read.

SusanR: very popular here

DrChristo: Oh. Thanks.

DianeDP: My goodness, Susan, that sounds like fun

SusanR: as is reading buddies

StephaniP1: Susan-How have you used Reading Buddies?

DrChristo: What I did was teach a topic to one section using the smartboards and then to another section not using the smartboards and tried to see if one section learned it better.

DianeDP: please let us know what that was all about- you can post to the discussion board later

DrChristo: Stephanie, how are you planning to study SSR?

DianeDP: Ah, that must have been interesting to see what it was about the use of the interactive whiteboard that had an impact- I assume from what you are saying that it did

StephaniP1: I wanted to use teacher and student surveys and/or interviews as well as observations.

DrChristo: It did. But only if the students got to make lessons on it, rather than treat it as a simple whiteboard.

StephaniP1: I have found some potential observation forms and surveys in a couple articles.

DrChristo: I did something similar for my data.

StephaniP1: A SmartBoard is just an expensive chalkboard, then, unless we use it to its potential, right?

DrChristo: Yes. Very much so.

DianeDP: since you are a special ed teacher, you may want to look at specific reading strategies students may use when engaged in self-directed reading such as DEAR

DrChristo: It is not being used effectively in many classrooms, I think.

StephaniP1: Yes, I have also found that DEAR was most effective when reading strategies were discretely taught. DEAR provided the opportunity for kids to employ them, but in a leisurely way.

DianeDP: I did a teacher research study with gr 2 students and we were looking for evidence of effective teaching and learning strategies that Marzano and others identified related to the use of technology

StephaniP1: Have you been able to relate your findings about the SB with colleagues?

DrChristo: Some. Not as much as I'd like. That's why I want to do some more research, and maybe publish the findings.

DianeDP: Well there you go, that seems to focus your study a bit and is a way to focus your attention on specifically what might work when providing students opportunities to engage in DEAR

StephaniP1: I assume you are teaching at the high school level?

DrChristo: Yes.

DianeDP: You may want to take a look at the study we did and see the elements we were looking for- you can relate them very easily to high school

DrChristo: Do you have a reference?

StephaniP1: In my ideal world, I could relay my findings to teachers, but as Dr Christo implied not everyone accepts it or listens.

DrChristo: What kind of mechanism do you have for conveying your results to your colleagues at your school?

DrChristo: I did a talk at a faculty meeting, but that's it.

StephaniP1: A supportive administration

DrChristo: That's important!

DianeDP: Betty- look under featured items- in the links section in this AR room- for The Use of an Interactive Whiteboard This is an action research study conducted by Diane Painter and others at Deer Park ES

DrChristo: Thanks so much! I will definitely look at it!

StephaniP1: We also have a "share fair" at the start of the year. However, the deadline

was before I started my AR.

DianeDP: Do you get release time, Betty, to work with others to do AR at school?

DrChristo: No. I was taking a class, so I did it as part of the class.

DrChristo: I like the idea of a "share fair". I should start one at my school.

StephaniP1: When I have a class, I am always more effective of researching.

DianeDP: Oh- our school integrates TR into staff development- people do it as a part of a class, or for re-certification credit- or as a part of a grant to support new initiatives

StephaniP1: Our school board administration implemented to use the wealth of resources we already have in our division. Teachers also have choice what they attend and it's people they know, making them generally more receptive. An added bonus is it saves money.

DianeDP: Steph- two reasons for that. One, you are under the gun to produce, and two, you get support from others in class as well as the instructor. That is why my county supports TR as staff development with others involved.

StephaniP1: What does TR stand for?

StephaniP1: Oh, teacher research!

DianeDP: TR is teacher research- some districts use that term instead of AR since it is practitioner-based research in the field

DianeDP: Betty- any thoughts about the importance of doing the literature search to support AR?

StephaniP1: My school administration eats it up, too, when teachers are researching. Obviously, they can't read and do it all, so it is a gateway to help stay current as well as continue to implement best practices.

DrChristo: Stephanie, I really do like that idea.

DrChristo: I think you definitely need to do a literature search - you don't want to reinvent the wheel.

DrChristo: I have a Ph.D., so literature support is in the blood.

DrChristo: We did a lot of it in grad school.

StephaniP1: The lit search helps solidify why you are doing what you are doing.

DrChristo: And clarifies what is known and what is not known.

DrChristo: It gives you a path to follow.

DianeDP: That, too... it supports the fact that others think it is important in education

StephaniP1: Plus, it has helped add to the language I communicate with my students when explaining our purpose for various strategies.

DrChristo: Good point - the proper language is very important.

DianeDP: Betty- did you get your study published?

StephaniP1: Betty-what is your Ph. D. in?

DrChristo: Not yet. It needs more work.

DrChristo: My Ph.D. is in physical chemistry - we did research with a laser.

StephaniP1: and your undergrad? chem, too?

DianeDP: I am thinking that this AR group setting may be a place to share drafts for feedback. What do you think?

DrChristo: Oh, yes. Education classes came later.

DianeDP: How do you find teaching at the HS level, Betty?

BJB2: I agree, Diane, about sharing drafts

DrChristo: I really love it. I teach at a private girls' school.

BJB2 . o O (for feedback)

BJB2: any member of the group can download a file in this room...

BJB2: and then post to the discussion board alerting members of the group that there is a new draft posted

StephaniP1: Even though I have a critical friend, having multiple perspectives is helpful

DianeDP: That is right- then they are alerted that there is something to read

DrChristo: It would help keep one writing, to have feedback.

BJB2 . o O (and it would be asynch so that time constraints don't conflict)

DianeDP: Yes, indeed. What we have found is that doing AR at a school can be a lonely experience if you do not have a critical friend, as Steph just mentioned.

DrChristo: I agree with that.

StephaniP1: It's good to have the feedback, accountability, and support.

DianeDP: So, I would like to invite you and Steph to consider that!

DrChristo: I will.

StephaniP1: For sure.

DianeDP: Good- looking forward to seeing what you are doing

StephaniP1: Plus, reading others helps to be more metacognitive about your own research.

DianeDP: I have another question, Betty, how did you go about analyzing data from your two different groups?

DrChristo: I did a KWL for each group at the beginning. Then, at the end, I gave quizzes to each class and compared the grades.

DianeDP: Did you do structured observation of student engagement, too?

StephaniP1: Were you classes' abilities grouped similarly?

DrChristo: I did observe. It ended up being less structured than I wanted, b/c it was just me and it kind of got away from me.

DianeDP: what were your findings?

DrChristo: The classes' abilities were very similar. It was two sections of the same class, so essentially random who was in each class.

DrChristo: There were some issues with the design - there were more variables than there should have been. But in general, the Smartboard students were more engaged and learned better.

StephaniP1: Did you have an opportunity to get student feedback on the lessons?

DianeDP: That is a problem- containing the variables. So many factors play into teaching and student engagement.

DrChristo: Yes. The students felt there was a learning curve to the board, but, in general, liked using it.

DrChristo: I'd design it better now, I think. That was my first experience with AR.

StephaniP1: AR is a learning process.

DrChristo: It was a great experience, though. I hadn't realized how much I'd missed researching.

DianeDP: Now it will be interesting to see how they do in future lessons once that "learning curve" is not such a factor. As they become familiar with its use and can concentrate more on the content and actual involvement with lesson rather than how do I do this... that sort of thing

DrChristo: I think I was the only one in the class that liked it, though.

StephaniP1: Do you find yourself still "researching" it, just not formally?

DrChristo: I agree, Diane. I try to use the board enough that the learning curve goes away.

DianeDP: why do you suppose that was the case?

DrChristo: I am still informally researching it, though I'd like to do a formal study again.

StephaniP1: Were you also learning how to use the SB?

DrChristo: I don't know, Diane. I think most people just weren't that experienced doing research, and it scared them.

DianeDP: that is a good question Steph– I am interested in sustainability for doing research once one learns how to do it- and why teachers continue in the process

DrChristo: I'm pretty experienced at the board, but there are always new things to learn.

StephaniP1: I'd be curious, too, to compare student learning with interactive whiteboards compared to traditional interactive activities.

DrChristo: That's a good topic, Stephanie.

DianeDP: That was another reason for establishing a teacher research netwok in my district- for support and guidance through the process

DrChristo: Smartboards are expensive, and I get into discussions with educators about

whether they are worth the money.

DianeDP: Steph- you might want to look at that article I mentioned to Betty- I reference what we found with special needs learners

DrChristo: That's one of the reasons I studied the topic, and want to continue.

DianeDP: I met with a teacher last week who said she moved from a school that had boards to one that does not and she is really have a time adjusting. She used hers all the time

DrChristo: Yet we have some at our school that are never used.

StephaniP1: Definitely, Our school system first received grant money for SB for sped students. However, when reg ed teachers saw how cool they were, well, the SB somehow disappeared from the sped classrooms.

DianeDP: Betty- ISTE is having the NECC conference here in DC at the end of the month through July 3. Go to www.iste.org to learn more. This may interest you. It is the largest educational technology conference in North America.

DrChristo: There were articles in the literature about the "cool" factor wearing off, and then the boards weren't really used as much.

StephaniP1: Fortunately, our principals have found the means to equip just about every classroom with a SB. They value their importance for all learners.

DrChristo: Thanks, Diane. I'll look into it.

StephaniP1: So, then, how do we as teachers keep it "cool?"

DrChristo: I think interactivity is a big part.

DrChristo: We need to treat it differently than a regular white board.

StephaniP1: Probably, we have to vary the activities (both in the lessons and with SB)

DrChristo: Which isn't always done.

DianeDP: I think if teachers are trained properly in their use and integrate them into their delivery of instruction as well as provide time for students to use them as tools for learning then they are used quite often

DrChristo: A big "if"

StephaniP1: Professional development is key,

DrChristo: We weren't really trained. Just presented with them.

StephaniP1: Have either of you heard of NTTI?

DrChristo: No

DianeDP: No- TNLI I have...

StephaniP1: It stands for National Teacher's Technology Institute (I think I have it right).

DianeDP: tell us more

StephaniP1: Dr. Painter, in our area, JMU has grant money for it. I can find the website for it and pass it on to you.

DianeDP: Thank you- I would like to know about it

DrChristo: Me, too.

StephaniP1: Anyway, it is a certification-type training, where you attend 3 days of workshops, all about integrating technology. Then, you create a technology-based lesson plan. Follow-up sessions are part of it, too.

DianeDP: So what do you two think about this international chat experience?

DrChristo: I've learned a lot. Thanks!

StephaniP1: Very cool. I never got into chatrooms, but having a professional dialog is much more time efficient!

StephaniP1: It is also invigorating, spurring more ideas.

DrChristo: Teaching can be isolating. It's nice to have colleagues to share with.

DianeDP: What I want to encourage you to do, Steph, is share the experience with us (in our class at SU) and Betty, share your work as you feel comfortable for feedback.

DrChristo: Thank you. I will.

StephaniP1: For sure. I wasn't sure what to expect. I imagine the experience varies depending on the topic as well as how many people are involved in the discussion.

DianeDP: I will also post a call for papers- but it is for those teaching early childhood education. So if you know anyone doing ECE AR projects, call their attention to our AR group and the discussion board where I will post the message.

DrChristo: I have been to many chats here. It is always a learning experience.

DianeDP: I think I have seen your name appear before, Betty

DrChristo: I haven't been here in a while, b/c my mother has been sick, but I have my evenings free again.

DianeDP: I am sorry to hear that- in fact, I am going home to Wisconsin on Thursday to visit my stepmother who broke her hip

DrChristo: Ooooh. I'm sorry to hear that. I hope she is doing well.

StephaniP1: Oh, my.

DianeDP: Well, Stephanie and Betty- you may want to explore TI a bit and see what else is going on tonight.

BJB2: Diane, you are the star event today!

BJB2 . o O (summer break and vacations)

DianeDP: Well, what do you know about that...

BJB2 . o O (although you are always welcome to explore!)

StephaniP1: Earlier today, I explored. BJ helped a great deal.

DrChristo: I have found Tapped In to be a great place for office hours for my students.

StephaniP1: My office is finally set up in a scheme that I like.

BJB2: The next AR discussion will be on July 21

DianeDP: BJ- while I have you online, I will be in Spain the middle of July so let's convene with AR chats in August if that is OK

StephaniP1: Betty-that's an interesting idea. Do they use it for hw help?

DrChristo: I'm jealous.

BJB2 smiles...that's fine, Diane

DrChristo: Yes. They do. Especially the upper grades.

DrChristo: My AP students were on just about every night.

BJB2 . o O (although Spain is a fine excuse for not logging in ;-))

StephaniP1: Can they meet w/o you there, to have study groups?

DrChristo: Yes, they can. And I still get a transcript of what they say.

DianeDP: I will be at a conference for international special educators- I should have lots to report!

StephaniP1: One of our science teachers used yahoo messenger to help get kids studying.

StephaniP1: This might be another avenue for her to try.

DrChristo: I think it's important for students to have help while they are actually sitting down with the HW.

DianeDP: I am going to sign off our chat- but keep going- you guys are on a roll! Bye-

DrChristo: Bye Diane - thanks again.

BJB2: Thanks, Diane. Have a fabulous trip

StephaniP1: http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/ntti/ Here's the site for NTTI

DrChristo: Thanks.

StephaniP1: Take care everyone!

DrChristo: Goodnight.

JeffC joined the room.

JeffC waves

DrChristo: Hi Jeff.

JeffC: Hi Dr. Christo.

JeffC: How was the meeting?

DrChristo: It was excellent. There were some good resources shared.

JeffC: I usually make them, but was busy afk today.

JeffC: cool

JeffC: I'm thinking of incorporating AR into a proposal I'm going to make to the new superintendent of my school district.

DrChristo: What about?

JeffC: For 5 years now I've been trying to get some sort of consultancy position with my district... involving tech/curricular support.

JeffC: The outgoing supe didn't get tech... thought of it mainly for grading/testing.

DrChristo: Aaaargh.

JeffC: I'm going to propose (in these very difficult times when 20-30 teachers were laid off in my district) that this superintendent hires me.

JeffC: I'm thinking of hiring me on a $100 retainer out of her own paycheck for a month.

DrChristo: To do what, specifically? (I'm trying to change my position a little to focus on integration help)

JeffC: That way I can show her what I can do and get my foot in the door.

DrChristo: Sounds like a good idea.

JeffC: Let me give you an example of what I can do (and have done).

JeffC: Over 10 years ago I taught English and ESL at Richmond High in California.

DianeDP left the room.

JeffC: You might have heard of it if you ever saw the movie Coach Carter.

DrChristo: Never saw it, sorry.

JeffC: Rather than reiterate, at some point take a look at http://snurl.com/netc1

JeffC left the room (signed off).

JeffC joined the room.

JeffC: now... skip forward a dozen years to this school year.

JeffC: I helped my son's 2nd grade class create books online at http://www.tikatok.com

JeffC: and three years ago I created a virtual classroom here for my daughter's class, who corresponded with another as well as made powerpoints on the solar system.

JeffC: bottom line is if you want to raise test scores, standards, whatever, you have to transform curriculum through technology... not just "integrate."

DrChristo: So your idea is that increasing the student's audience increases their motivations.

JeffC: and I can do that with all the teachers and all the students.

JeffC: yes.

DrChristo: Do you have hard data you can show to your administration?

JeffC: and tech increases motivation if/when properly supported and kids aren't just wanting to play games (although there are some game things I would definitely encourage).

JeffC: well... I'd think there might be quantitative research out there... but I'm not a researcher. furthermore this is more of a qualitative, indeed action research sort of thing I'm proposing.

JeffC: it's intuitive.

DrChristo: I agree with you. My thing is always to get my teachers to use the technology we have better.

JeffC: if you want kids to score better in writing, then having them write full articles, letters to epals, etc. and engaging in global project based research, etc., then they need someone who knows what they're doing supporting their teachers along the way.

JeffC: and that's exactly where I come in

JeffC: I know where to go and what to do

JeffC: I've been doing it for over a dozen years online...

DrChristo: I agree with you fully. Good luck!